

INSPECTION REPORT

SAVIO HIGH SCHOOL

Bootle

LEA area: Sefton

Unique reference number: 104959

Headteacher: Fr F Mageean

Reporting inspector: Mr J Bald
17932

Dates of inspection: 11th to 15th March, 2002

Inspection number: 190328

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Voluntary aided

Age range of pupils: 11 to 18

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Netherton Way
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Merseyside

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr T Lawless

Date of previous inspection: November 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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17932	John Bald	Registered inspector	Equal Opportunities	<p>What sort of school is it?</p> <p>The school's results and pupils' achievements.</p> <p>How well are the pupils taught?</p> <p>How well is the school led and managed?</p> <p>What should the school do to improve further?</p>
9843	Sarah Drake	Lay inspector		<p>Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development.</p> <p>How well does the school care for its pupils?</p> <p>How well does the school work in partnership with parents?</p>
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19056	Graham Leech	Team inspector	English	
4922	Mike Driver	Team inspector	Science	
27351	Mike Stanton	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
8090	Frank Turns	Team inspector	Art and design	
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17272	Bob Morris	Team inspector	Geography	
15576	David Nebesnuick	Team inspector	History Business (6 th form)	How good are the curriculum and other opportunities offered to pupils?

28178	John Connor	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages Special educational needs English as an additional language	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Savio Catholic High School is a voluntary aided comprehensive school for pupils aged 11 to 18. The school is small, with 776 pupils, including 60 in the sixth form. There are rather more boys than girls. Almost all pupils are White, but a very small number are Black, of African heritage, and a smaller number still have English as an additional language. The standards reached by pupils joining the school are below average, but are rising towards average levels. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is well above average, and an average proportion have statements of special educational needs. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is well above average, and pupils often have difficult and sometimes unsettled lives outside school. Many have had poor attendance records in their primary schools. The school is some distance from pupils' homes, and transport is difficult.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Savio school provides satisfactory education. Standards are well below average in Year 11, but are rising sharply in Year 9. Care of pupils and support for their personal development are very good. There is strong leadership, and a very good climate for learning, but management systems are not strong enough. The cost per pupil is very high, and value for money is unsatisfactory.

What the school does well

- Standards in Year 9 are much higher than in most similar schools.
- There is good overall achievement in English, design and technology, history, physical education, and sociology.
- Provision for business studies in the main school is very good.
- There is a good range of learning opportunities for pupils in Years 10 and 11.
- Pupils have good attitudes to work, behave very well and form good relationships.
- There is very good provision for pupils' personal development and for their welfare.
- All adults in the school have a strong sense of service to the pupils.

What could be improved

- Management is not having a direct enough impact on teaching, learning and standards.
- Financial and development planning need to be improved.
- Standards at GCSE could be improved in most subjects, particularly in mathematics and science.
- Teaching is unsatisfactory in just under a tenth of lessons.
- Resources for learning, including computers and the library, are inadequate.
- Many pupils have poor attendance records, and receive too little support from home.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in November 1996. Since then it has made satisfactory improvements in its work. Standards have risen in Year 9, and have followed the national trend at GCSE. Teaching has improved, and provision for pupils with special educational needs is now satisfactory, with good features. There has been very good improvement in business studies. On the other hand, new management systems are not having enough impact on the school's remaining weaknesses, and some health and safety issues have not been tackled. Improvement in some subjects, notably music, has been held back by staffing problems. The sixth form has significant weaknesses in some aspects of its work. The headteacher, senior managers and governors understand what they need to do to improve the school further, and are well placed to take the action that is needed.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	E	E	E	C
A-levels/AS-levels	D	B	N/A	

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

In comparison with similar schools, GCSE results in 2001 were well above average in English, above average in mathematics and average in science. Work seen during the inspection reached national average standards more consistently in English than in mathematics and science. Results in Year 9 have improved at an above average rate, particularly in the last two years, and in 2001 were in the top five per cent of schools with similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals. A and AS level results are below average overall, but represent good progress from the standards reached at GCSE in most subjects. Results in mathematics, however, have been poor over the past three years, and provision for this subject is unsatisfactory. There were significant failure rates at AS level in some other subjects in 2001. Sixth formers' work during the inspection showed some improvement from these results, and was close to average in most subjects. There is, however, some under-achievement among the lowest-attaining students.

A high proportion of pupils pass GCSE at good grades in business studies. These pupils often achieve more than in their other subjects. Standards in other subjects range from average to below average across the school, but there is a trend of rising standards among younger pupils. In subjects where pupils are achieving well, the teaching is consistently good and courses are well thought out. In some subjects, such as history, the improvement is recent, and not yet reflected in examination success. Overall, pupils with special educational needs achieve satisfactory standards across the school, but gifted and talented pupils are not consistently achieving as much as they should. Standards and achievement at GCSE and in the sixth form are affected by high rates of absence. While the school has met its recent targets, these have been set at a relatively low level. Targets for 2002, are suitably demanding. All in all, achievement in the school is satisfactory, and set to improve.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Very good for most pupils, who enjoy school and work hard. A small but significant minority have poor attitudes.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good overall, and very good from most pupils in lessons and around the school. A small minority of pupils do not behave as they should.
Personal development and relationships	Personal development is good and relationships very good. Most pupils have a strong sense of right and wrong, accept responsibility and form friendships. A significant minority of older pupils, have not learned to take responsibility for their work.
Attendance	Well below average, with too much lateness in the morning.

There is very good racial harmony in the school. Poor attendance, which begins with almost a third of pupils in Year 7, is the biggest single obstacle to raising standards across the school.

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 teaching of English is good throughout the school. Pupils study a good range of books, and their confidence in speaking is reinforced by good drama teaching. The teaching of mathematics and science in the main school is satisfactory overall, though there is a significant proportion of unsatisfactory teaching in science in Years 10 and 11, caused by a lack of challenge in some classes.

The teaching of literacy is satisfactory, with good work in some subjects, notably history and business studies, but there is no effective approach to weaknesses in spelling. Numeracy is taught to a satisfactory standard in mathematics lessons, but is not re-inforced and used across the school.

Teaching is very good, and often excellent, in history. It is good, and sometimes very good, in business studies, sociology, design and technology, physical education, and in specialist teaching for pupils with special educational needs. The school's good teaching is well-planned, pitched at the right level for pupils, and attractively presented. It builds well on pupils' attitudes to promote good learning. Where the teaching is satisfactory, and in the small proportion of lessons where it is not, time within the lesson is not managed well, and teachers do not match work closely enough to what pupils most need to learn. These weaknesses affect the learning of all pupils, but most often the highest-attaining.

Teaching across the main school is made difficult by a serious lack of resources, ranging from text books to computers. Most teachers do not have enough access to computers to use them effectively. Overall, teaching meets the needs of all pupils in the main school to a satisfactory standard.

Teaching in the sixth form is good in most subjects. It is very good in English, but unsatisfactory in mathematics. Most students' learning in lessons is good, but their learning and study outside lessons suffers from a lack of support, guidance and study facilities.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, good in Years 10 and 11. Good opportunities for learning and recreation outside the classroom.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory overall. Good specialist teaching, and good additional provision in Years 10 and 11. More attention needed in some lessons.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. The very small number of pupils with English as an additional language are fully included in the life and work of the school, and make good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Provision is very carefully planned, and central to the school's mission. Teachers set pupils an excellent example of care and consideration, and pupils learn to reflect on the world and on their place in it. They understand and respect other cultures and their own.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. Very good procedures for personal support and guidance. Guidance on pupils' work is satisfactory, but needs a closer focus.

The school's partnership with parents is satisfactory. Parents express positive views of the school, but a significant minority do not support their children enough, or ensure that they attend school. The school has developed good courses for older pupils, including business studies and sociology, and makes good provision for drama. Provision for music is weak, due to staffing difficulties, and there is too little use of

computers. Assemblies are good, but the legal requirements for collective worship are not fully met.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory. There is a strong personal lead, and all pupils are included in the school's work. However, management systems across the school do not have a direct enough impact on teaching and learning.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. The governors sustain the school's mission, but are not rigorous enough in analysing weaknesses as well as strengths.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Unsatisfactory. The school uses data well to identify areas of success, but does not use it effectively to identify and tackle weaknesses.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. Grants are used for their designated purposes, and resources are allocated to educational priorities. To protect staffing, however, the school has cut budgets for learning resources too much.

Staffing and accommodation are adequate in the main school. There are, however, far too few resources for learning in departments and in the library, and far too few computers.

Leadership and management create a strong sense of teamwork and of service to the pupils in the school, and there is very good co-operation between senior managers and governors. Both ensure that the school's guiding principle of "education in peace and friendship" is applied throughout its work. However, while they have put in place the management systems needed to get the most from the school's large budget, these systems are not close enough to day-to-day teaching and learning. Teaching is monitored, but not systematically enough to improve it when this is needed, and the school does not look closely enough at the benefit gained from each item of its spending and service to ensure that it is getting and giving the best possible value. The headteacher, governors and senior managers understand the issue and have the capacity to tackle it.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children are expected to work hard. • The school is approachable and helpful. • Leadership and management are good. • Children enjoy school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homework. • Co-operation with parents. • Activities outside lessons.

The proportion of parents expressing positive views was very high. Inspectors strongly agreed with most of the points these parents made, though they judged that strengths in the school's leadership needed to be backed up by more effective management systems. Inspectors found that homework was satisfactory overall, but that its quality could be improved in some subjects and classes. They did not agree with the smaller numbers of parents who did not believe that the school worked closely with them. Parents concerned about activities outside lessons were mostly those of sixth form students. Inspectors agreed with them, though they found these activities to be good in the main school.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form is small, with 60 students. Roughly three-quarters follow Advanced Level, Advanced Subsidiary Level, and advanced vocational courses, and the remainder an intermediate vocational course. Most students begin with below-average qualifications for their courses, but some have achieved good standards at GCSE. The sixth form has no entry requirement. Most students are guided towards suitable courses, but not in mathematics. The proportion of students with special educational needs is above average, and an above-average proportion are entitled to free school meals. Half of the pupils leaving Year 11 in 2001 joined the sixth form. None came from other schools, and there are no teaching arrangements with other sixth forms or colleges. The size of the sixth form has been falling in recent years, but the school believes it has prospects for expansion following improving standards in Year 9.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

While much of the work of the sixth form is satisfactory, and some is good, it has significant weaknesses. Examination results are below average, but represent satisfactory overall achievement for most students. However, there is too little provision for the lowest-attaining students, and activities outside lessons are very limited. Students do not use their time outside lessons well enough, and learning is restricted by a lack of resources. A third of teaching groups have four students or fewer. Value for money is unsatisfactory.

Strengths

- Teaching is good in most lessons, and very good in English.
- Results at A-level and AS-level represent satisfactory and often good achievement.
- Students work hard in class and relationships are good.

What could be improved

- The sixth form is not led and managed effectively.
- Attendance is very poor, and lower than in the main school.
- Teaching groups are often too small to provide value for money or promote good learning.
- Students receive too little support, provision and guidance for learning outside their lessons.
- Provision for mathematics is unsatisfactory.

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.

I am of the opinion, and HMCI agrees, that the school has an inadequate sixth form in terms of paragraph 1(2) of Schedule 7 of the Learning and Skills Act, because it has significant weaknesses in one or more of its areas of activity for pupils over compulsory school age.

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Biology	Satisfactory. Teaching and learning have good features, but resources do not meet all of the needs of the course. Two students only.
Business studies	Good. Well-organised and taught, with good use of computers.
Computer studies	Good. Students undertake advanced work confidently, teaching and

	learning are good, and progress is effectively tracked.
Art and design	Satisfactory. Enthusiastic work in lessons, and good use of the work of famous artists, but standards are affected by poor attendance.
English	Good. Teaching is very good, students work hard, and standards represent good achievement.

Teaching and learning were also sampled in mathematics, history, sociology, French, the advanced vocational course in leisure and tourism, and the intermediate vocational course in leisure and recreation. Standards and achievement in history during the inspection were broadly average. Recent results in mathematics have been poor and provision is unsatisfactory. The two students are reaching average standards and achieving well. The larger group of students taking the intermediate vocational course in leisure and recreation are achieving less than they should because they have too much free time and not enough guidance on using it effectively. It is not possible to assess trends in standards in some courses because the number of students is so small. In French, for example, there are only two students, and only during the inspection were taking the advanced vocational course in leisure and tourism. In sociology, standards are below average, but represent good achievement for the students.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Personal guidance from teachers is satisfactory and often good, but students do not have effective guidance and support in using their time outside lessons, and the library does not support independent study.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Unsatisfactory. There is no strategic planning, and teaching groups in a third of the courses are too small to provide an effective working atmosphere for the students. Teaching is not monitored closely enough to detect weaknesses before they have a serious impact on learning. Day-to-day management does not ensure that students work consistently across the week and develop key learning skills. The management of attendance is poor, and some teachers do not know which students should be in their class. Resources for learning are inadequate in several subjects.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school listens to students and gives them good personal support and guidance. Working relationships are good. Teachers "go the extra mile" to help students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There should be more activities outside lessons. There could be more careers guidance.

Inspectors agree with most of students' positive points, which were often very strongly expressed. However, they found that students did not receive enough support and guidance on using their time well outside lessons, and agreed that there were too few activities for them. They found that careers advice was satisfactory, and that many teachers gave students very good advice on higher education.

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. GCSE results show considerable variation between the success rates of different groups of pupils. While results overall are well below average, the proportion of pupils achieving five passes at grade C or above is much higher than in most schools with similar proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals. On the other hand, the proportion of pupils leaving without a graded pass is higher than in similar schools, and an average proportion leave with five passes at grade G or above. These results have not shown significant improvement over the past four years, although the school beat its agreed target in 2001 by two percentage points. While the overall results of all pupils are consistently well below average, girls' results are consistently higher than boys'. The trend in results over the past four years has been broadly average.
2. Standards at GCSE are strongly affected by the very poor attendance of a significant number of pupils, and boys are more often absent than girls. This was reflected in the quality of work during the inspection. Some classes, even where the teaching was good, had only half of the pupils who should have been present. Standards are also affected by variations in the quality of teaching. In some subjects, notably science and geography, teaching in Years 10 and 11 is less effective than in Years 7 to 9, and teaching in individual lessons in some other subjects is not pitched at the right level for the pupils. Where courses are well designed and taught, for example in English, business studies and sociology, results are better; standards in English, for example, were higher than in comparable schools in 2001. In business studies, the combination of a very well designed course, good teaching and extensive use of ICT leads to particularly high achievement, and many pupils whose grades elsewhere were mostly D earned grade C passes. The school monitors results carefully, and recognises its successful teaching. Monitoring of teaching, however, is not systematic enough to detect and tackle weaknesses in teaching before they begin to affect learning, and this is holding back its efforts to improve GCSE results.
3. The results of national tests in Year 9 have risen sharply since 1999. They are well above average overall in comparison with similar schools, and show very little difference between boys and girls. The improvements reflect a rising standard among pupils joining the school, slightly better attendance, and teaching which, while satisfactory overall, is better in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11. Variations between the results in each subject are the result of differences in the quality of teaching. In English, where the teaching is good, results have risen particularly rapidly over the past two years, and reached national average levels in 2001. In mathematics and science, where teaching is satisfactory overall, they remained respectively below and well below national average levels. There was a similar pattern in the standard of work seen during the inspection, except for science, where standards in Year 9 had improved from well below average to below average.
4. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in the main school. They learn well in response to good intensive specialist teaching of literacy and numeracy in small groups. Their learning in lessons is satisfactory, but the work they are given does not reflect targets in individual education plans closely enough. Lower-attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11 make good progress in lessons under the alternative achievement scheme. Gifted and talented pupils benefit from a range of additional activities, and some achieve A and A* grades at GCSE. However, work

across the school is not extending these pupils consistently, and many are achieving less than they should. Under half of one per cent of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, and fewer have English as an additional language. During the inspection, these pupils' achievements were good, but the group is too small to permit broader comparisons.

5. In English, physical education, history, design and technology, business studies and sociology, where the teaching is consistently good or better, achievement is good. Taking account of all of the circumstances of the school, and in particular of the great difficulties it faces in securing attendance from pupils who have too little support from their parents, the pattern of achievement is satisfactory. The school's targets for improvement for 2002 are set at a realistic level, and are similar to the standards currently achieved in subjects where the teaching is good. In sociology, for example, the proportion of pupils reaching grade C or above was in line with the school's target for 2002. The school is well placed to raise standards to good levels in comparison with similar schools by improving the consistency of its good teaching. Improvement beyond this depends on improvements in the contribution of parents.

Sixth form

6. Examination results in the sixth form are below average. Standards in most work seen during the inspection were broadly average, though numbers in some subjects were too small to allow comparison with standards in other schools. In English, where teaching is very good, pupils during the inspection reached average standards, and were achieving well. Achievement was also good in sociology, business studies, French. However, standards and achievement in Year 12, as in the main school, are affected by poor attendance, even in subjects, such as sociology, where provision is good, and there was a high failure rate at AS level in computer studies in 2001. Achievement in other advanced courses was satisfactory, except for mathematics, where standards are well below average and achievement is unsatisfactory.
7. Lower-attaining students, who include a substantial proportion with special educational needs, follow the intermediate vocational course in leisure and recreation. These students develop satisfactory understanding of the main issues of the course in lessons, and those who complete examination modules reach standards that are below average, but satisfactory in relation to the standards they have already reached, and to their learning difficulties. However, the overall achievement and progress of these pupils is unsatisfactory. They have no provision for a third of their time in school, and do not have the social and learning skills needed to use this time effectively. Standards in this course are particularly badly hit by poor attendance.
8. Standards and achievement in areas not directly linked to examination courses, including key skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT were unsatisfactory during the inspection, because there is scarcely any provision for them. Results in general studies at AS level were poor in 2001, and no teaching took place during the inspection. Key skills in ICT are set to improve once the new City Learning Centre opens, but there is hardly any planning for the development of other key skills. While some gifted and talented students in the sixth form reach very high standards, others are achieving lower grades than they could because of the lack of consistent provision for study and learning outside their lessons.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

9. At the time of the last inspection pupils' attitudes towards learning, their behaviour and the quality of relationships in the school were all judged to be good, while the level of exclusions was falling. Good attitudes have been maintained, and behaviour and relationships have improved further. This is a testament to the great commitment that staff show towards those in their care, supporting them through thick and thin and helping them to grow in self-discipline, self-esteem and self-confidence.
10. All pupils spoken with expressed very positive views about their school, mentioning in particular the friendliness of staff and other pupils. One group of Year 7 girls even stopped an inspector in the corridor to say how much they are enjoying their time at Savio. Evaluations from employers who have received Year 10 pupils on work experience are very positive about their attitudes towards work and willingness to learn from their mistakes. In the great majority of lessons pupils settle well to their work, listen attentively to teachers and are happy to volunteer their ideas or ask sensible questions to move their learning on. They are keen to learn and particularly enjoy practical subjects. In some instances, usually where the quality of teaching is weaker, pupils act as passive learners, waste time and grow restless, although in only one lesson did the poor behaviour of one boy disrupt the learning of the whole class.
11. The overall quality of behaviour is good, and that of the vast majority of pupils is very good. This helps to create a relaxed yet orderly atmosphere throughout the school. Pupils respond very well to the rewards system and consider that it is administered fairly by staff. They move around the site sensibly and are particularly well behaved in assemblies where they pay very good attention to what is being said and show true reverence and reflection during prayers and quiet moments. They are polite, automatically opening doors for example, and trustworthy which means that they are allowed in school during break times because teachers have confidence that they will treat property with respect. Year 13 students and the school's own records confirm that behaviour has improved over the years, with fewer pupils sent out of class to work in the separate "Red Room", and fewer exclusions. A significant number of pupils, however, do not behave properly. While other pupils do not allow this behaviour to affect their work, dealing with it places considerable demands on the time of senior staff. There has been only one permanent exclusion in the last five terms and, despite an increase in the number of pupils, the number of fixed period exclusions has dropped. At the end of each half-term more than two-thirds of pupils receive rewards for their good behaviour and attitudes towards work.
12. Relationships throughout the school are particularly strong. Staff treat all pupils and other adults as valuable individuals, which encourages pupils to respond in a similar manner. All pupils spoken with stated that bullying is a very rare occurrence, which is quickly nipped in the bud by staff or other pupils. The learning in many lessons is helped along by the use of humour, which is only possible because pupils and teachers trust each other and know exactly how far they can go. Pupils of different ages, abilities and ethnicity rub along well together and respond generously to others' misfortune or particular needs. In a personal and social education lesson, Year 8 pupils were quick to say that, however offensive their crime, prisoners should be treated well 'because they are human beings'. Throughout the school pupils are very supportive of each other and they co-operate well when, for instance, taking part in team games or science experiments. They are happy to take on responsibilities, such as helping younger pupils with their reading or organising a mini Commonwealth Games for primary school pupils, and many are confident to express their views in lessons or as representatives in year group meetings.

13. Despite their obvious liking for the school and their teachers, pupils' levels of attendance are poor, and too many arrive late in the morning. In the most recent academic year, only Year 7 pupils attended for more than ninety per cent of possible time. During the current year, only just over sixty per cent of pupils in Years 7 to 11 have attended for more than ninety per cent of the time, with the levels of attendance decreasing through the year groups. Almost fifteen per cent of pupils have the equivalent of one day a week absence throughout the year, while just over six per cent take two days out of five away from lessons. A considerable number of pupils lead very complicated lives outside of school, with responsibilities for other family members or other difficulties at home. However, all those who are working hard in the school to improve the attendance confirm that much absence is condoned by parents. Many pupils have already established very poor attendance records in primary school. Such erratic and intermittent attendance has a severe impact on standards in all subjects, particularly in Years 10 and 11, where pupils have to complete regular coursework.

Sixth form

14. Many students choose to stay on at Savio because of the very good relationships that they have built up with staff. They are staunchly loyal to the school, and feel that its reputation in the area is improving. Many of those in Year 13 are set on moving on to higher education, and understand what they need to do in order to achieve this goal. Some of the Year 12 students in particular are still too dependent on their teachers for direction and guidance, but generally in lessons students are co-operative and helpful towards each other, enjoy their work, take active part in discussions and behave well. For example, in a Year 12 business studies lesson, students worked together very well, exploring different scenarios and developing their ideas about the demands placed on customer relations staff at an airport. Year 13 students also thoroughly enjoy and benefit from their lessons, particularly in English, leisure and tourism or information technology.
15. Outside lessons, students do not spend enough time in study, and have too few responsibilities for helping with younger pupils. They do not play an active enough part in school life. Attendance is even poorer than in the main school. Only around two fifths of students attend for more than ninety per cent of possible time, while the same proportion take the equivalent of one day a week off school. Students openly said that, since teachers inform them of the content of the following lesson and do not insist that they attend, they sometimes prefer to work at home. These attitudes to study outside lessons are limiting students' chances of achieving high grades, and preventing lower-attaining students, including those with special educational needs, from achieving as much as they should in their courses.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

16. Teaching in the main school is satisfactory, and has significant strengths which provide a basis for further improvement. Over half of the teaching is good, and there is a small but significant proportion of excellent teaching. The weaknesses in the remaining lessons mostly concern planning and time management. In almost two fifths of lessons during the inspection, these led to teaching that was satisfactory rather than good. Teaching was unsatisfactory in roughly one lesson in fifteen. The overall quality of teaching is slightly better in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11, and this is reflected in the more rapid rate of improvement in results in Year 9. Since the last inspection, the amount of good and better teaching has risen substantially, and there is less than half as much unsatisfactory teaching. This is a satisfactory improvement, particularly since the remaining weaknesses in teaching are matters that can be addressed effectively by improving planning and by extending the use of the school's most effective teaching techniques.
17. Teachers throughout the school manage pupils well, interest them in learning, and establish good working relationships. Where the teaching is good or better, they provide a well-organised balance of explanation, practical work and discussion within the lesson, and sustain a brisk pace of work through good time management. In one very good business studies lesson in Year 11, for example, the teacher explained the purpose of each item on a credit note, building up a clear chart on the board while the pupils took their own notes. Pupils took their own notes, and the teacher used questions well to check that all understood. Pupils then switched their attention quickly to computers, and wrote up their notes more formally, with individual help when they needed it. By the end of the lesson, all, including those with special educational needs, understood the place of a credit note in book-keeping, and had a clear note for future reference.
18. Excellent teaching was most frequently seen in history, but there was excellent teaching in individual lessons in other subjects. Where the teaching is excellent, teachers have exceptionally clear understanding of the needs of all of the pupils in the class and of their subject. They plan exciting and challenging work, and create a dynamic learning atmosphere in which all pupils, including those with special educational needs and those with particular gifts for the subject, achieve as much as they can. This teaching makes the most of the good attitudes pupils bring to their work, and has an immediate impact on standards in the class. It was seen most frequently in history, where the overall quality of teaching is very good.
19. In most subjects, however, notably in mathematics and science, teachers do not use all of the information available to them to pitch work at the best possible level for the pupils. In mathematics, for example, some pupils who had already reached above average standards in their primary school were repeating work at a similar level rather than immediately moving on. In science, significant numbers of pupils are not sufficiently challenged, either in the complexity of practical work or in their thinking. These pupils are mostly in Years 10 and 11. The weakness is most significant in higher-attaining classes, but some of the higher-attaining pupils in lower sets are also working below their capabilities. The overall quality of teaching in both subjects is satisfactory, but there is a significant proportion of unsatisfactory teaching in Years 10 and 11 in science.
20. The teaching of number work in mathematics is satisfactory, but too little takes place across the school. This limits the quality of learning, both in numeracy itself and in subjects, such as science and geography, where number work is an important

element in work of high quality. Teaching and learning in almost all subjects are held back by the school's inadequate resources for learning. Teachers have to spend more time than they should in creating and improvising resources – in sociology, for example, the teacher has written a complete course herself, for both GCSE and A level – and in some cases, notably French, resources make it extremely difficult for teachers to provide the full programmes of the National Curriculum. Most teachers have too little access to ICT to use it effectively. At the time of the inspection, they had not all been trained in using computers. The potential contribution of computers to learning has been thought through only in isolated subjects, such as English and business studies.

21. English is well taught, with an interesting range of work that gives pupils an insight into a broad range of cultures and extends their ability to communicate. Provision for literacy across the school is satisfactory, with good work in history and business studies, but spelling weaknesses are not tackled consistently enough. The teaching of drama is good, and helps pupils learn to work together. English teachers, and teachers in some other subjects, including history, develop pupils' speaking and listening skills well, but opportunities for speaking, and particularly for sustained speaking, are not consistently planned in each subject.
22. Teaching in physical education is well-organised and dynamic. It leads to good learning for pupils taking part, but too many, particularly among the older pupils, find ways of avoiding the subject. Teaching is also good throughout the school in design and technology, where teachers interest all pupils through well-designed practical work and their enthusiastic presentation. There is good teaching in the business studies and sociology courses in Years 10 and 11. In both cases, good teaching is founded on well-designed courses, which have involved exceptional effort from the teachers, both in coping with syllabus changes and in designing materials. However, the presentation of some of the more complex topics in each subject is not thought out clearly enough, and the teaching of legal topics in business studies during the inspection was unsatisfactory. Teaching in ICT during the inspection was satisfactory, and benefited from the work of skilled supply teachers. The quality of teaching in music was satisfactory in lessons because of the work of a temporary teacher, but the overall quality of learning in the subject has suffered severely from the lack of a permanent qualified teacher, and is unsatisfactory. Teaching in art and design and in geography are satisfactory, with good and some very good teaching in individual lessons, particularly in Years 7 to 9.
23. Across the school, teachers set and mark homework regularly. Some of this homework, particularly GCSE coursework, is of a very good standard, but some is not challenging enough. Overall, the quality of homework is satisfactory, but homework planners are not used consistently enough by most parents and by some teachers. In most subjects, teachers mark work in pupils' books regularly, but only in a few subjects, such as English, is this linked to good guidance and targets for improvement. This is a significant issue, as it affects the consistency of learning and the development of a clear sense of purpose among the pupils.
24. Teachers in most lessons ensure that pupils with special educational needs are fully included, with suitable work. Their learning is satisfactory. The very small number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, including those with English as an additional language, are also fully involved in lessons, and their learning is good. Provision for the highest-attaining pupils is much less consistent. They are identified, and have additional activities in several subjects. Where assessment is good, as in sociology, teachers track their progress and make sure that they are reaching the standards

they should. More often, however, they are given the same work as others in the class, and teachers do not use the full range of provisions in the National Curriculum, particularly the more demanding level descriptions, to ensure that they are working to the highest possible standard.

Sixth form

25. The overall quality of teaching in the sixth form is good. In almost all courses and subjects, teachers know their subjects well, adapt work well to the needs of the students, and create a good working atmosphere in lessons. Teaching is very good in English, where it enables pupils consistently to achieve good results in relation to the standards they reach at GCSE.
26. Teaching in mathematics is unsatisfactory. Teachers do not challenge pupils to think hard enough about their work, and do not have effective systems for tracking progress over time. While most teaching in biology is good, teaching and learning are unsatisfactory in some aspects of the subject because of a lack of specialised equipment.
27. Teaching and learning of key skills are not effective. There is no systematic provision for lower-attaining students, and some classes are not attended by the pupils who need them. In one good lesson during the inspection, for example, only two pupils attended, both of them well qualified, and the teacher had been unable to obtain a clear list of students who should have been in the class.
28. In most subjects, standards and achievement are limited by erratic attendance and the lack of facilities for study and opportunities for learning outside lessons. Individual pupils are given strong support by the school's pastoral system. However, there is no provision for groups of students, such as the lower-attaining students taking advanced mathematics, who require additional help to succeed in their courses. This is leading to significant pockets of underachievement and failure in sixth form, and is a significant weakness in the school's provision.

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

29. Overall, the development of the curriculum since the last inspection has been satisfactory, with good features in Years 10 and 11. The curriculum is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. Since the last inspection, the school has introduced grouping by ability in a range of subjects, including mathematics and science. This is making some contribution to learning, but it is not consistent, as pupils, most often the higher-attaining, are not always stretched enough. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is good, and well adapted to the needs of the pupils. The business studies course has a strong and effective vocational strand, and prepares pupils well for an advanced course in the sixth form. The GCSE course in sociology is well designed, and presents pupils with an academic discipline in a realistic context. Since the last inspection, an alternative achievement programme has been developed for lower-attaining pupils. This is fully in place in Year 10, and includes a good balance of practical, vocational and academic work, pitched at a suitable level for the pupils. Learning in Years 10 and 11 benefits from the priority given to maintaining small class sizes, which allows teachers to give good individual help to pupils during lessons.
30. Provision for drama is good throughout the school, and helps build pupils' confidence. The curriculum includes good provision for personal social and health education,

including sex education and education against the misuse of drugs, though some lessons in this area are cut short when assemblies overrun. Assemblies are of good quality, but there are some lapses in the provision of a daily act of collective worship. Ethical issues, including those pertaining to sexuality and relationships are sensitively handled in a Christian moral framework.

31. Provision for literacy is satisfactory. Pupils learn to use the specialised language of each subject – there is, for example, a good glossary for ICT – and in most subjects make their own notes. Their extended writing in business studies is particularly good. However, the school does not have an effective approach to spelling, which is weaker than other aspects of pupils' writing, and pupils do not have enough practice in recording their own work in science. Across the school, pupils do not have enough opportunities to practise and consolidate their number work. Provision for numeracy is not planned, and most departments have not investigated the potential contribution of number work to their subjects. However, pupils learn to use formulae well in their work in ICT. Work in business studies, in which lessons are often based in computer suites, makes good use of computers, and there is also some effective use of computers in English. Across the school, however, ICT is not making the contribution it should to learning, and some departments, notably art and design, have much too little access to equipment. This situation is set to improve through the City Learning Centre, but the use of ICT in subjects still needs to be thought through. As at the time of the last inspection, the library is not providing sufficient learning opportunities.
32. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory, with good features in Years 10 and 11. There is effective additional support for pupils with very weak literacy and numeracy skills, and also for those whose behaviour puts them at risk of exclusion, although resources for learning in one withdrawal room for pupils with behavioural difficulties need to be brought into line with those in classes. A significant number of pupils with special educational needs benefit from the alternative achievement curriculum in Year 10; this is to be extended next year to Year 11.
33. The curriculum makes satisfactory provision for the very small numbers of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, including those with English as an additional language. Gifted and talented pupils are identified and have some valuable additional activities, but provision for them is not effectively built into planning for all subjects, and this limits their achievement. The curriculum enables boys and girls to achieve comparable standards in Years 7 to 9, and provision in lessons provides adequately for the needs of boys as well as girls at GCSE.
34. Provision for extra-curricular activities is good, and supports in particular the cultural and social development of the pupils. There are regular homework clubs after school, revision classes at Easter and literacy and numeracy workshops during the summer holidays. There is some analysis of the immediate benefits of these courses, but not of their longer term effects on standards. There are strong links with both Everton and Liverpool football clubs and the school is well represented in many district sporting organisations. All Year 11 pupils visit the Tate and Walker art galleries and the art clubs are very popular. The Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme is strongly supported as are the Army Challenge days held in school. Residential trips are organised to France including Lourdes and to Poland to remember the Holocaust.
35. There are good pastoral links with the primary schools although curriculum links are still relatively undeveloped. The main school's links with the local colleges of further

education are satisfactory, and pupils receive comprehensive advice about further study post 16.

36. The school has effective arrangements for careers guidance and work experience. Good links with the business community are forged through work experience and cover many commercial sectors including Mersey Docks and Harbour Company, the Inland Revenue, National Westminster Bank and Sefton Enterprises. All of these organisations have worked with the school for some time and have provided regular and extensive work experience. All pupils in Year 10 have two weeks' work experience during the summer term. The school has developed a good working relationship with Connexions, the careers advisory service.

Sixth form

37. The sixth form curriculum offers a satisfactory range of subjects at A and AS level. There is an advanced vocational course in business studies, and an intermediate course in leisure and tourism. With the exception of sociology and leisure and tourism, the take up in the other subjects is small – French is offered in Year 12 to an individual student, and several teaching groups have only two students. Such arrangements enable the school to meet individual needs and interests, but do not provide a basis for long-term development. At the time of the inspection, there was no established co-operation with other providers of post-16 education.
38. There are some extra-curricular activities. Business and travel and tourism students carry out work experience in Northern Italy, and the Italian students return to Bootle. Students provide a sixth form pensioners' party at Christmas and support pensioners' bingo activities. Sixth formers are also helpers on the pilgrimage to Lourdes.
39. Because of the need to respect the budget, the sixth form curriculum has been largely confined to the lessons needed for students' main courses and subjects. At the time of the inspection, there was no course in general studies, religious education or personal, social and health education. A key skills course is offered, but is not followed by most of the students who need it. Careers education and advice is available on request but is not built into the sixth form timetable; this was regretted by the students in their questionnaire. Students, particularly the lowest-attaining students, have too much free time and too little guidance on using it. Students taking the intermediate vocational course make up roughly a quarter of the sixth form, and most sixth form students with special educational needs take this course. They have no teaching or supervision for the third of their time which is free during the week, and do not have the personal and social skills they need to use this time effectively. Students following advanced courses have yet more unsupervised time, and only a small proportion during the inspection were using it as they should. During the inspection, this problem was made worse by the lack of study facilities and resources. While ICT resources are set to improve dramatically, there are no effective plans to improve library resources, or to improve guidance. The large amount of free time for students also has an effect on attendance, as sometimes students only have one lesson in a day. The lack of learning opportunities outside examination subjects is a significant weakness in the work of the sixth form.

Spiritual, moral and social and cultural development

40. Provision is very good, and is a major strength of the school. The school clearly lives out the Salesian ideals on which it is founded, successfully fostering a climate in which all pupils feel safe, cared for and respected.

41. The school and church year are clearly linked and provide a framework for prayer and Christian practice as well as an on-going spiritual dimension to the life of the school. Assemblies, linked to personal social and health education, are of a very high standard, and make a major and effective contribution to the spiritual, moral and social development of all pupils. The school chapel provides a unique spiritual focal point for the school and a haven for prayer, meditation, reflection, as well as social activity. Its success relies on the high degree of skill and dedication of the resident chaplain and pastoral workers.
42. The aims and ethos of the school provide a very good basis for the moral development of pupils. Pupils respect one another, teachers and visitors, as well as property. These qualities are very carefully fostered by all of the adults in the school, both in their day-to-day work with the pupils and with each other, and through the pastoral and disciplinary systems that focus closely developing each pupil's understanding of right and wrong. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those with English as an additional language are fully involved in all aspects of the work of the school, and parents told the inspectors that they appreciated their children's good relationships with other pupils, including the lack of bullying. Opportunities within the curriculum, in particular religious education, which was the object of a separate inspection, are fully used to explore and discuss moral issues. Pupils contribute extensively to local, national and international charities.
43. The school provides a wide range of opportunities to participate in social and cultural activity, including day trips to the theatre, museums, residential visits and holidays abroad. A popular and successful youth club operates on the site, with a parallel facility in the Chaplaincy. The school has positive links with the world of work and organises European work experience for business studies students. Pupils study a broad range of cultures, including non-European cultures, in their art and English, though the cultural contribution of music during the inspection was more limited because of staffing difficulties. The school promotes pupils' knowledge and understanding of other faiths and cultures, and creates a climate of respect which does full justice to its aim of promoting "education in peace and friendship". There is, for example, extensive work on persecution during the Nazi era, including opportunities to visit a concentration camp, and pupils understand that Christians as well as Jews were among the victims. Pupils develop good understanding of the range of cultures in modern British society.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

44. As at the time of the last inspection, the school is strongly committed to the support and guidance of those in its care. All staff treat pupils and students as individuals and work hard, and creatively, using a variety of strategies to support those who are in need. Pupils regularly comment on how very well supported they feel, and some parents mentioned this when returning their inspection questionnaires. It is due to the quality of this support that the school operates as a predictable and welcoming community in which everyone is given at least a second and, if necessary, a third or fourth, chance.
45. This approach is the cornerstone of the school's good provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety. It begins with the personal interviews conducted with all parents and pupils in Year 6 who are hoping to transfer to Savio. In these interviews, a senior member of staff outlines in very positive terms, the school's expectations, routines and understanding of any possible apprehensions, in the hope that both pupil and parent will feel comfortable to talk about any problems before they grow out of proportion. Whenever possible, heads of year and form tutors stay with the same pupils throughout their time at school, thus building up a very good knowledge of their particular strengths and needs. The office staff are very helpful to pupils and the recent addition to the staff of the pupil support officer and the learning mentor means that pupils have yet another channel for support. Both these posts have been established to help pupils who are struggling in school for any reason, with a particular emphasis on encouraging them to attend well and work through their difficulties. Staff and pupils both speak with admiration and appreciation about the friendliness and effectiveness of the work of these staff members. The school nurse provides a regular weekly 'drop in' session while Chaplaincy staff and those who run the Don Bosco Youth Centre offer another haven of support at lunch times and after school. The Year 10 alternative curriculum and similar arrangements for some in Year 11, provides those pupils with the possibility of succeeding when in other circumstances they may have struggled, while volunteer mentors from the community offer regular one to one support for pupils who do not appear to be quite reaching their potential. In the run up to GCSEs some Year 11 pupils will also have a senior staff member to monitor their progress. There are no formal systems for monitoring pupils' personal development but staff know them so well as individuals that the support offered on an informal basis is effective in helping pupils to grow in maturity.
46. Because of the respect with which staff and pupils regard each other, the behaviour and anti-bullying systems work well. All pupils know exactly what is expected and understand the system of rewards and sanctions. Staff are consistent in their application of these and pupils know that there will always be another start at the beginning of the following week. 'First Base', which was run as an independent area last year but has been incorporated into the wider Learning Support Unit this year, has had a very positive effect on that small number of pupils who find self-discipline extremely difficult. Procedures to promote good attendance are systematic, with regular monitoring, reporting, contact with parents on the first day of absence and follow up from the education welfare officer. Despite all this, the figures remain stubbornly low. Incentive schemes to promote good attendance have a target of 90%, and do not fully meet the needs of pupils who have a history of extremely poor attendance. Morning registration periods are very short, but are often too casual, and do not give pupils a good start to the day.

47. The school operates as a safe community. Hazards are dealt with, fire procedures are in order and teachers pay due attention to safety in lessons. However, the governors have failed to ensure that formal risk assessments are carried out on a regular basis, as required by law, nor have the portable electrical appliances throughout the site been tested. A number of issues relating to safety were raised with staff during the inspection. The care of those who have accidents or feel unwell is very good. The arrangements to ensure child protection are satisfactory, with staff proving to be alert to potential problems, but those responsible need to attend further training in order to ensure that they are up-to-date with current practice.
48. Arrangements to assess pupils work are satisfactory overall, and include minimum target grades for pupils in Years 10 and 11. Gifted and talented pupils are accurately identified. Assessment is good in English, but lacks detail in mathematics. In some subjects, such as French, assessment is adequate, but would benefit from closer links with the descriptions of standards set out in the National Curriculum. Where the teaching is good or better, teachers use assessment, either formally or informally, to plan pupils' work, track their progress and set targets. In most subjects, however, teachers do not use assessment to ensure that pupils are set consistently demanding work. This slows progress wherever it occurs, and is particularly significant in science in Years 10 and 11, and in work with higher-attaining pupils in mathematics.
49. The assessment of pupils with special educational needs has improved significantly since the last inspection, and is now good. Assessments meet legal requirements and are accurate. While the school is not yet using the full terminology of the newly revised Code of Practice, it is meeting its requirements. The local education authority's funding arrangements, which require proof of need, help ensure that the school is meticulous in analysing pupils' needs precisely. The school makes good use of standardised tests to set targets and track progress. Agencies outside the school are systematically involved and their advice is used well. The system is well understood by the school, but some contributions to assessment by departments, and some of the targets they set, are too vague to help learning. Parents are kept fully informed and their views and those of pupils are taken into account. However, not all parents contribute when asked.

Sixth form

Assessment

50. Teachers in almost all subjects use a good range of assessment procedures and give students helpful feedback and on their work. Teachers are quick to identify students with particular talents and to help them develop. They make satisfactory use of assessment in planning work, but, even in subjects where teaching is good overall, do not always follow this through into the detail of designing learning tasks. Students do not have formal targets for grades in their examinations. Assessment, both on a day-to-day basis and in the longer term, is unsatisfactory in mathematics. This prevents teachers from addressing students' weaknesses, and is a major obstacle to their success, particularly as so many begin with weak basic skills in the subject. The assessment of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory, but is not followed up by additional support where needed.

Advice, support and guidance

51. Sixth form students comment that one of their main reasons for choosing to stay at Savio is that they have felt so well supported by staff when in the main school that they do not want to leave. There is also evidence that some pupils who leave at the end of Year 11 and start their sixth form career elsewhere, swiftly return to where they feel more comfortable. However, despite the good relationships, the support provided for students is unsatisfactory because it is not sufficiently rigorous to help those who are struggling to get their heads down and work hard.
52. As in the main school, staff and students have a very good relationship, and this becomes even more relaxed when students return to the sixth form. The small group sizes for most subjects mean that students receive much individual support. Staff provide helpful advice about courses and possible careers when pupils are making their decisions in Year 11 but in some cases, such as mathematics, students who do not have a realistic chance of success are accepted on to A level courses. More general support for students, such as the monitoring of their overall progress and development, is very informal, and there is too little support for those who do not actively seek it. Students' progress reports are also insufficiently focussed, providing comments on their attitudes and, in some cases, level of work, but very few targets for improvement.
53. There is insufficient guidance for students about how to make best use of their free periods and on how to develop their key skills. Procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are a major weakness in the care of sixth formers. Some teachers do not know how many pupils should be attending their classes, and there are no systems in place to ensure that staff know who is, or is not, on the premises; this creates a serious health and safety concern. Staff are also too reluctant to chase up students' absence because they do not want to put so much pressure on them that they leave. As a result, too many students miss too many lessons, the numbers in many lessons are uneconomically small and it is too easy for students to drift away and fail to reach their full potential, despite all efforts to offer them personal support.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

54. Parents and carers view the school in a positive light, as they did at the time of the previous inspection. However, a small number of those who responded to the questionnaire consider that the school does not work sufficiently closely with them and that their children do not receive the right amount of homework. Inspectors consider that teachers expect pupils to complete reasonable amounts of homework. All pupils spoken with said that they receive it regularly and that teachers mark it when handed in. Inspectors did not agree with some parents' view that the school does not work with them closely enough. The school holds two review meetings each year, when parents and pupils have individual meetings with form tutors and may ask to see subject teachers as well. As part of the school's commitment to supporting pupils, staff, particularly heads of year and others with pastoral responsibility, make great efforts to work in partnership with parents keeping them informed about their children's successes as well as any causes for concern. Parents feel comfortable approaching staff and are pleased that their children like school and are expected to work hard.
55. Neither the governors' annual report nor the prospectus include all of the information required by law. The school places more importance on its personal communications with families than written documentation, relying on the comprehensive Year 7 handbook and pre-transition interview and meetings to convey information to parents. However, the many omissions from the documents mean that

there is no easy reference for parents about, for instance, the school admissions policy, the provision for pupils who have special educational needs or disabilities, or success in national examinations; nor is there an overall picture of life in school over the past year. Other information is adequate and keeps parents abreast of important dates, but teachers do not inform parents about what their children will be learning in the coming year, which makes it all the more difficult for them to help them. The consortium newspaper 'Education' acts as a good promotional vehicle in the community, but it is only issued once a year. Pupils' progress reports have some good features, but different departments use different formats, which can be confusing, and most entries do not give sufficiently focussed information about the standards that pupils are achieving. This led one parent to pose the question, 'Are the school's markings in the lower school comparable to GCSE markings? If not, why?'

56. Parents' attendance at the twice yearly review meetings is very impressive, at around ninety per cent. They clearly value the opportunities provided to discuss their children's progress and agree the targets that they should be aiming for. Most parents are also very supportive if teachers wish to raise concerns with them and some, but not many, use pupils' planners as a means of communication. Parents are generous in their support for fund-raising activities such as the current raffle for a new minibus, which in 4 weeks has raised around £750, but none is willing to help run the activities of the Parent Teacher Association. A substantial minority of parents condone their children's absence from school. This has a damaging effect on the standards that these pupils can achieve and, thus, on their future prospects for employment or further education.

Sixth form students' views

57. A small number of students completed a pre-inspection questionnaire, and inspectors spoke with many students during the week, all of whom were very positive about the school and showed much loyalty towards it. Almost all those expressing an opinion consider that they are well supported if they have personal problems and they all feel that the school listens to their views and treats them as responsible young adults. Significantly, all enjoy being in the sixth form and would advise other students to join it. However, a considerable number do not think that there is enough to do outside lessons, a view that is strongly endorsed by inspectors, or that they receive enough advice about what to do after school. Careers advice is available for students if they seek it out, and there is good provision for those who wish to progress to higher education but many of those in the sixth form need more direction about how to equip themselves for life after school.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

58. The overall quality of leadership and management are satisfactory. There are significant strengths in the quality of leadership, but weaknesses in management procedures need to be addressed.
59. The headteacher and senior managers are committed to providing the best possible educational opportunities for all of the pupils and to enabling them to achieve the highest possible standards. There is an inclusive and welcoming atmosphere in the school. The school's relationship with parents, and provision for pupils' personal development, are carefully and effectively managed. As a result, the school provides a calm and happy environment for learning, pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds learn well, and the rate of permanent exclusion is very low.

60. Since the last inspection, the school has reduced the amount of unsatisfactory teaching, and has raised standards in Year 9 at an above-average rate. It has made good progress in dealing with weaknesses in the management of provision for special educational needs. However, attempts to improve learning and standards consistently, and to eliminate the remaining unsatisfactory teaching, have been hindered by weaknesses in management systems. There has been very little monitoring of teaching, and it has not been used effectively to tackle weaknesses and promote strengths. A system of minimum target grades for pupils has been introduced. However, in a significant number of lessons, often in science and mathematics, teachers do not use this to set work at a suitably challenging level, most often for the highest-attaining pupils. Gifted and talented pupils are identified, but their progress is not tracked in sufficient detail to identify strengths and weaknesses in the teaching they receive.
61. Financial planning has been made very difficult by fluctuations in the number of pupils, and by the need to deal with a wide range of initiatives and sources of funds. Some provide money for one year only, and some major projects, particularly the City Learning Centre, have slipped in their time-scale, due to factors outside the school's control. Large-scale financial planning is satisfactory, and the surplus in the financial year 2000 to 2001 was set to reduce significantly in 2002 following the completion of capital projects. Nevertheless, the allocation of funds to priorities in the school development plan is too vague, and the school does not evaluate the educational benefits of each item of expenditure. The plan's criteria for success are too broadly worded to allow the school to determine what has and has not been achieved under each heading. The extensive funding provided under the Excellence in Cities initiative is contributing effectively to provision for lower-attaining pupils through the learning support unit and the learning mentor scheme, but is not tied closely enough into day-to-day provision to be fully effective in work with gifted and talented pupils. Funding from the European Social Fund Pathways initiative is applied appropriately to arrangements to promote attendance, but these have as yet made little impact on the problem. While the school obtains good value in its purchases, it does not assess the value provided by its work rigorously enough. As a result, it does not have a clear enough idea of how effectively it is using its resources to meet its educational goals.
62. The school makes effective use of computer systems to keep track of expenditure and to analyse data from examinations and tests. It is, however, not rigorous enough, either in the main school or in the sixth form, in examining weaknesses as well as strengths revealed by data, or analysing the impact of initiatives in the longer term. For example, pupils attending summer schools are tested at the end of the school, but the effects of their learning gains are not tracked through to test results in Year 9.
63. The governors understand the community which the school serves, ensure that the budget is carefully managed, and sustain the school's core values. They have a good system of co-operation with senior managers, two of whom sit on each of the governors' committees, and receive regular reports from heads of department. However, while governors have a clear idea of the central aims and values of the sixth form, they do not have an accurate picture of its current strengths and weaknesses. The governors do not ensure that all legal requirements are met in the provision of information to parents and in collective worship.
64. The school has sufficient staff to teach the National Curriculum. Most teachers are well qualified for their work, though some have only just adequate knowledge and understanding when they have to teach outside their main subject. The school's provision for the personal development of staff is not meeting all of their professional

needs and staff have not yet been fully trained in the use of computers. Arrangements for supporting and training newly qualified teachers and students training to be teachers are excellent. Their weekly professional interviews with a deputy headteacher have a strong practical focus, and equip them well for work in the classroom. Other teachers new to the school receive an effective introduction to its work, and the school is quick to recognise and develop the skills of newly appointed teachers.

65. Accommodation is adequate, and good for PE. However, since the last inspection, the school has invested too little money in renewing resources for learning, including computers. The library is seriously underfunded for the size of the school – under £1 per pupil was spent on it in the last financial year – and is not in a position to provide adequate support for learning across the school. Almost all departments have too little access to ICT, and almost all are short of basic textbooks. These shortages are holding back learning and teaching across the school. They limit the range of techniques teachers can use, and deprive pupils of basic reference materials. In some subjects, teachers have to rely too heavily on photocopied materials, and require pupils to copy out too many notes.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

66. The school is committed to providing a broad range of opportunities in its sixth form, and to enabling as many students as possible, whatever their background, to take part in education. This has enabled a small but significant number of students whose home circumstances were very difficult to proceed to university. Some courses, notably English, sociology and business studies, are well managed, and have good patterns of achievement. However, the overall strategic management of the sixth form is not effective. Not enough is done to build up the most successful courses, such as business studies, and weaknesses, such as the results in mathematics and 2001 AS results in several subjects, are not identified, analysed and tackled systematically.
67. Several teaching groups have only one or two students, and some subjects recruit one or two students in one year, and none in the next. This does not provide a basis for long-term planning and development as it is not possible to invest, for example in expensive scientific equipment or library resources, if they are not to be used by a reasonable number of students. Some of the smallest groups, containing one or two students, do not provide an effective climate for advanced study. Results in general studies at AS level were poor in 2001, and at the time of the inspection there was no general studies course, and no systematic provision for learning, study or recreation outside lessons. This leaves students with too many unsupervised free periods, which only a minority use responsibly. Where good additional courses have been built up, such as the key skills course, the school does not ensure that they are properly attended.
68. The head of the sixth form was absent on jury service at the start of the school year, and this made it difficult to get students off to a good start. Nevertheless, the day to day running of the sixth form, including the management of attendance, is poor. Some teachers cannot keep registers properly as they have not been able to find out how many students they are supposed to have in their classes, and the school does not know which students are present at any time. Teaching is not monitored closely enough either to build on the most effective work or to allow unsatisfactory teaching to be detected and dealt with at an early stage. The range of courses the school offers is

not planned strategically to ensure that courses are viable and meet the needs of the students, and the value provided by individual courses is not assessed. In particular, there are no plans to deal with the unsatisfactory provision and poor results obtained in recent years in mathematics. While the governors have a clear view of the central values of the sixth form, their role in strategic planning, particularly for additional support for students, is underdeveloped.

Resources

69. Despite good initiatives from individual teachers, resources for learning in the sixth form are seriously inadequate, and library provision is poor. These shortages limit the scope and quality of learning in most subjects, and often have a direct effect on standards, particularly in practical work in biology. The lack of resources for independent study makes it difficult for the highest-attaining students to develop the skills they need to obtain top grades in their courses. The school has very good plans to improve resources for ICT through the City Learning Centre, but not to improve other resources.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

70. In order to build on the satisfactory improvement it has made since the last inspection, the school needs to improve the operation of the systems by which its aims and policies, particularly those designed to promote standards and achievement, are put into practice. In particular, the headteacher and governors should take the following steps:

- (1) Strengthen the impact of management on teaching, learning and standards, by:
 - Monitoring teaching regularly, setting targets for improvement, and tracking progress towards them;
 - Improving arrangements for the management of departments by the senior management team;
 - Setting clear targets for standards in each subject, and tracking progress towards them.
Paragraphs 2, 23, 34, 58-64.
- (2) Improve financial and development planning, by:
 - Including precise costings, including the cost of teachers' time, in the school development plan;
 - Evaluating the contribution of each item of expenditure to teaching and learning;
Paragraphs 34, 61.
- (3) Raise standards at GCSE, particularly in mathematics and science, by:
 - Ensuring that all pupils are consistently working at the highest standards they can reach;
 - Using all of the information yielded by assessment to set demanding work for all pupils;
 - Identifying pupils who are not on track to reach target grades, and taking action to help them.
Paragraphs 23-4, 33, 48-9, 77-9, 82-88.
- (4) Improve teaching further, by:
 - Ensuring that all teachers have adequate knowledge and understanding of all subjects they teach;
 - Improving the management of time within lessons;
 - Identifying teaching techniques that work particularly well with its pupils, and using them consistently.
Paragraphs 16, 19 - 24.
- (5) Improve the provision of resources for learning throughout the school, by:
 - Carrying out an audit of resources in each department in the library;
 - Establishing a systematic programme of development and renewal of resources;
 - Building up a suitable collection of library and computer resources to support learning in all subjects.
Paragraphs 20, 31, 65.

- (6) Extend its efforts to improve attendance, by:
- Setting targets and providing more positive incentives for pupils whose attendance and punctuality is poor;
 - Improving the quality of morning registration periods;
 - Improving procedures for registration and monitoring attendance in the sixth form.
- Paragraphs 2, 5, 13, 46.*

Sixth form

- (1) Improve leadership and management, by:
- Establishing clear targets for the development of the sixth form, and monitoring progress towards them;
 - Setting up systems to monitor the quality of teaching and learning throughout the sixth form;
 - Ensuring that all subjects have the resources they need to promote effective learning;
 - Ensuring that the sixth form is effectively managed on a day-to-day basis.
- Paragraphs 15, 27-8, 37, 39, 57, 66-9, 153, 170-1.*
- (2) Improve the quality of learning outside lessons, by:
- Providing effective guidance, support and supervision to all students in their use of time;
 - Extending the range of learning activities and courses to supplement examination work;
 - Developing resources to support learning and private study in all subjects.
- Paragraphs 7, 8, 15, 27-8, 39, 50, 51, 53, 57, 170-1.*
- (3) Improve attendance, by
- Ensuring that all teachers have clear and up to date lists of students in their classes;
 - Establishing a habit among students of attending for the whole day, and giving them good reasons to do so;
 - Monitoring attendance closely, particularly to ensure that the school knows which students are present.
- Paragraphs 6, 15, 27-8, 39, 51, 53, 57, 170-1.*
- (4) Improve the quality of provision for mathematics, by:
- Establishing clear patterns and expectations of learning in development planning;
 - Monitoring the quality of teaching and learning, both in lessons and through students' work;
 - Matching teaching more effectively to the needs of all students, especially lower-attaining students.
- Paragraphs 6, 26, 50, 157.*

- (5) Improve the cost-effectiveness of sixth form provision, by
- Ensuring that all teaching groups are large enough to provide an effective climate for learning;
 - Improving recruitment to its most successful courses;
 - Developing more effective co-operation with other institutions.
- Paragraphs 37, 53, 67, 158, 184.*

Additional issues to be addressed in action planning.

- Meet all statutory requirements in the quality of information, the prospectus, the governors' annual report to parents, and reports to parents on pupils' work.
Paragraph 55.
- Improve its procedures for monitoring health and safety issues.
Paragraph 47.
- Make more consistent provision for collective worship.
Paragraph 30.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	137
	Sixth form	28
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		56

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 – 11							
Number	5	21	50	51	10	0	0
Percentage	4	15	36	37	7	0	0
Sixth form							
Number	0	7	13	5	3	0	0
Percentage	0	25	46	18	11	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting the percentages for the sixth form as each lesson represents more than three percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	716	60
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	359	19

Special educational needs	Year 7-Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	16	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	129	

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	3

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	9
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	13

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	9.1
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	3.8
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001	72	56	128

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	44	43	39
	Girls	45	30	27
	Total	89	73	66
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	70 (28)	57 (42)	52 (35)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	23 (3)	31 (20)	12 (12)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	33	39	34
	Girls	33	31	34
	Total	66	70	68
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	52 (60)	55 (47)	53 (41)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	20 (22)	36 (29)	15 (16)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	55	45	100

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	10	41	48
	Girls	18	33	40
	Total	28	74	88
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	28 (22)	74 (74)	88 (89)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	25 (26.4)
	National	39 (38.6)

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

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

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	15	14	29

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	15	14	29
	Average point score per candidate	10.9	9.3	10.3
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	18	17.5

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	14	13	27	4	5	9

	Average point score per candidate	11	7.8	9.4	13	10.8	11.8
National	Average point score per candidate	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

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	2
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	770
Any other minority ethnic group	0

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7– Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	53.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	14.5

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	10
Total aggregate hours worked per week	317

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	74.1
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13

Key Stage 3	24
Key Stage 3	17.9
Sixth form	7.3

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	7.5
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	12.5
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	3

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	46	1
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Financial information

Financial year	2000-2001
	£
Total income	2,262,314
Total expenditure	2,543,571
Expenditure per pupil	3,509
Balance brought forward from previous year	93,318
Balance carried forward to next year	186,061

Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	1
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	775
Number of questionnaires returned	181

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	48	48	3	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	50	44	4	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	40	52	4	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	30	48	14	6	2
The teaching is good.	49	45	2	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	49	44	7	1	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	66	32	1	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	70	29	1	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	46	43	9	0	2
The school is well led and managed.	56	38	2	1	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	53	41	2	1	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	40	41	8	1	9

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths:

- The quality of teaching is good.
- Relationships in the classroom are good.
- Curriculum planning is good.

Areas for improvement:

- Standards in GCSE examinations are well below average.
- Teaching and learning are not systematically monitored.
- The highest-attaining pupils are not challenged consistently enough.

- 71 Results in the Year 9 national tests have improved since the last inspection. In 2001 they were in line with the national average, and very high in relation to results in similar schools. Results in GCSE English language have remained below average. In 2001 they were well below average, but were well above the average for similar schools. Results in GCSE English literature, though below average, have been better than in English language. They were significantly better in 2001, although fewer pupils take the examination in literature than in language. In relation to standards on entry to the school, achievement is good. Girls reach higher standards than boys, to the same extent that they do nationally. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make good progress through good support. Gifted and talented pupils reach good standards, though they need additional challenge. The good quality of teaching and learning identified in the last inspection has been maintained. Standards in Years 7 to 9 have improved but progress in Years 10 and 11, as in other subjects, is still significantly hampered by poor attendance.
- 72 Standards by the end of Year 9 are broadly average. Higher-attaining pupils are mostly articulate speakers and active listeners, reading aloud without inhibition and answering questions readily. Lower-attaining pupils read slowly, lacking expression, and their answers are limited, however. Pupils share ideas freely, in Year 9, for example, enthusiastically explaining quotations from *Macbeth*. Reading skills are satisfactory. Pupils in Year 7, for example, take relevant details from the text to describe *The Pied Piper*. Lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs are well-supported with individual help and good task sheets. Writing is generally in line with national expectations, mostly legible and presented with care. Pupils plan, draft and redraft increasingly extended pieces. Higher-attaining pupils write correctly and at length, using good vocabulary. Lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs write clearly but more briefly, and have difficulty with grammar, punctuation and, particularly, spelling. They are much more reliant on the frameworks provided by teachers. Many pupils present work to a high standard using word processing.
- 73 Standards by the end of year 11 are significantly below average. Most pupils listen well and speak quite confidently, though lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs speak very briefly. Reading standards overall are below average. Pupils in general need the support of teachers and the frameworks they provide to help them understand texts. Pupils in Year 11, for example, understand *Blessing*

from the GCSE Anthology *Poems from other Cultures* by careful guidance through a worksheet. Standards in writing are below average, but pupils complete their coursework. Teachers' frameworks enable them to organise and extend their writing. Planning, drafting and re-drafting, with extensive use of word-processing benefit a significant number whose writing and presentation skills are poor. Higher-attaining pupils write carefully-crafted pieces with few technical problems, supporting their ideas in literature essays with relevant quotation. Most pupils, however, use limited vocabulary, and many have weak spelling.

- 74 The quality of teaching is good, and results in good learning across the department. Teaching was very good in half of the lessons observed, and excellent in one lesson. Lessons are well planned, informed by good knowledge and understanding of the curriculum. Pupils are stimulated and their attention maintained through good pace and a variety of activity, often with a lively combination of reading, oral and written work. Regular homework consolidates understanding and is carefully marked. Teachers make detailed and constructive comments, giving pupils a clear idea of the standard they have reached and identifying points for improvement. They prepare and present materials to support learning very well. In Years 10 and 11, this enables all pupils, particularly those of average and below-average ability, to complete the GCSE coursework requirements, including listening and speaking tasks. Teachers manage classes well to sustain a good pace of work, and relationships in the classroom are good humoured. This helps teachers build on pupils' good attitudes to work, which contribute consistently to learning. In a very small number of lessons, pupils' progress is only just adequate because they are not challenged enough. High-attaining pupils generally undertake the same tasks as other pupils and their needs, particularly in Years 7 to 9, should be met more specifically in lesson planning. Overall, however, the consistently good teaching pupils receive results in good learning across the department.
- 75 In Year 7, pupils' literacy skills are developed well through language work at word, sentence and text level following the National Literacy Strategy. Work in other subjects makes a satisfactory contribution to reading and writing, with good work in history and business studies, where pupils are effectively taught to make their own notes. Overall, the contribution to literacy in English is good, but there is no systematic approach to number work. ICT is used well, particularly in the completion of coursework, but specific tasks are not prescribed for all pupils. As at the time of the last inspection, the library is seriously under-stocked, and does not provide adequate support for learning in English.
- 76 Leadership is good. The head of department skilfully manages a team of experienced teachers who work well together. They share successful approaches to teaching, and have developed a very comprehensive scheme of work that contributes well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There is, however, no systematic monitoring of teaching and learning, and this makes it more difficult for the department to identify points for further improvement. The department manages its resources well, but the lack of books is preventing the pupils from gaining full benefit from good teaching. Because there are few specialist rooms, some time is wasted as teachers move around the school. There are good homework clubs and extra-curricular visits.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Standards in Year 9 are now well above those in similar schools.
- Pupils are beginning to discuss calculation strategies and standards of numeracy are improving
- Teachers are committed and caring and relationships are very good
- Pupils' behaviour is of a high standard

Areas for improvement

- GCSE results have shown relatively little improvement since the last inspection
- Inconsistent marking is holding back learning and standards.
- There is too little problem solving and use of computers or other resources
- Pupils are not prepared well for sixth form studies in mathematics

77 Standards are below average overall throughout the school, but results in national tests in Year 9 have improved markedly over the last few years and in 2001 were well above those in similar schools. GCSE results have improved a little since the last inspection, and were above those in similar schools in 2001. Since the last inspection pupils have been organised into ability sets. This has helped raise standards by enabling teachers to match work more closely to pupils' abilities. An increasing number of more able pupils are reaching higher levels in the Year 9 tests, and a good percentage do better than Grade C at GCSE. However, gifted and talented pupils, including those who may eventually take A-level in mathematics, are not challenged consistently enough, and their work in Years 10 and 11 does not take enough account of their future needs. The progress of pupils with special needs is generally satisfactory, and the proportion gaining GCSE success at the lower grades has increased steadily. There is no consistent difference in the performance of boys and girls in mathematics. Overall achievement is satisfactory, and the department is setting appropriate targets for further improvements to GCSE performance. It is in a good position to raise standards further.

78 The department has recognised the need to improve standards in numeracy, and some teachers are introducing aspects of the National Numeracy Strategy. There have been improvements in pupils' ability to do mental calculation and to look for different calculating strategies, but the planning and lesson structures of the strategy are not yet fully incorporated. Objectives are not always shared with the pupils, nor is their achievement checked at the end of the lesson in a session involving the whole class. In some lessons the level of work does not reflect sufficiently clearly the prior attainment of the pupils. For example the work planned for Year 7 pupils who had gained level 5 at Key Stage 2 did not sufficiently extend them, mainly revisiting work which had been covered earlier. Overall there is insufficient linking of planning to progress through the National Curriculum, either in individual lessons or through the schemes of work. The department would benefit from a clearer policy for the development of numeracy.

79 Teaching is satisfactory. Teachers are caring and concerned to help their pupils to improve, and relationships are very good. Since the last inspection, teachers have developed more effective approaches to whole-class teaching rather than the individualised work which was common at that time. In a few lessons observed, teaching and learning were very good. For example, pupils in Year 7 were

enthusiastic about finding how to combine numbers to make a target, looking for numbers to divide to make a given percentage, and discussing the significance of digits. Learning is more often satisfactory and sometimes good. Teachers often give clear presentations of the ideas required and sustain a generally sound pace of work, with a good working atmosphere. However, questions are not always focused closely enough to provide teachers with detailed information on what pupils have and have not understood, and pupils have too little scope to show initiative or to work together. Written work is of variable quality: much is well presented but some pupils are allowed to take little care with it. Teachers' marking is satisfactory, but pupils' own marking is not sufficiently supervised to ensure that work is finished or corrected where needed, so that pupils can learn from their mistakes. Insufficient use was made of practical equipment, which would illustrate difficult ideas. For example, a lesson with low attaining pupils on place value would have been greatly improved by the use of number cards.

- 80 The department is contributing to the development of literacy, for example through the display of key mathematical words, but incorrect spellings in exercise books are not always corrected. There is very little use of ICT, and the mathematics section in the library is not adequate. There are a few mathematics textbooks, but nothing of more general interest such as puzzles and problems, or the history of mathematics.
- 81 Management of mathematics in the main school is satisfactory. The development plan has appropriate priorities for improvement, but policies need to be more clearly expressed, and teaching needs to be monitored more consistently to identify what is working well and what needs to be improved. The departmental schemes of work give adequate information on topics to be covered and standards expected, but do not provide enough detail on practical teaching techniques, assessment and target setting, or on the use of ICT. Accommodation is adequate, with good displays, but the lack of specialist rooms makes it difficult for teachers to have ready access to practical materials.

SCIENCE

Overall, the quality of provision in science is **satisfactory**

Strengths

- Standards at the end of Year 9 were well above those in similar schools in 2001
- Teaching in Years 7 to 9 has improved since the last inspection.
- Teachers have good relationships with pupils.
- Procedures are in place to monitor progress more closely and to set targets for pupils.

Areas for improvement

- Girls do less well in science than in most of their other GCSE subjects.
- There is a significant amount of unsatisfactory teaching in Years 10 and 11.
- The range of teaching styles has recently been extended, but is still too narrow.
- Pupils' investigative skills are underdeveloped.
- Teaching is not monitored systematically.

82 Standards in national tests in Year 9 were well below average in 2001, but were well above those in similar schools. These results have improved in the last two years. Standards at GCSE in 2001 were significantly below average but were broadly in line with those in similar schools. For the last two years the results obtained by girls in science have been significantly below those in most of their other subjects. Standards seen during the inspection were significantly below average in Years 10 and 11. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. Gifted and talented pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 7, 8 and 9 but insufficient progress in Years 10 and 11. Overall pupils make just satisfactory progress in science.

83 Standards in Years 7 to 9 during the inspection were below average, but pupils make satisfactory and sometimes good progress in their factual knowledge and their understanding of concepts. Pupils can carry out practical tasks, but their investigative skills are underdeveloped, and measurements sometimes lack precision. Pupils are sometimes allowed to make predictions without giving a reason, and do not always present results with appropriate graphs, tables and conclusions. Pupils' planning skills are not as good as they should be because of insufficient opportunities within the curriculum to develop them. In Years 7 and 8 the introduction of the Cognitive Acceleration Through Science Education project (CASE) is strengthening pupils' understanding of what a fair test is and of the relationships between variables. In a Year 7 class, pupils extended their understanding of fair testing when asked to examine the notes produced by a variety of pipes, which were of different lengths and widths and made of a variety of materials. They were able to draw conclusions about the separate effect that length, width and material had on the note produced. In another Year 7 class pupils carried out a number of practical tasks and by the end of the lesson had an improved understanding of direct and inverse relationships between variables. Pupils' practical problem solving skills are underdeveloped because of limited genuine opportunities to practice them.

84 In Years 10 and 11 standards seen were significantly below average. The progress pupils make is just satisfactory, but it is hampered by attendance problems, particularly in lower sets. Pupils do broaden their scientific knowledge and understanding of concepts. However, in a significant number of lessons, particularly in top sets, more able pupils are not stretched and make insufficient progress. In one lesson, pupils saw a demonstration of total internal reflection in a glass pipe. They did not explore the conditions that are required for internal reflection to take place, however, and consequently gained no understanding that this only occurs if the angle

of incidence of the light ray exceeds a certain critical value. In a second lesson, the teacher spent too long introducing a very basic practical activity. Pupils were asked to make predictions but these lacked sufficient rigour and depth. The basic practical work took up most of the time remaining, and the real learning to be gained from discussion of the results in relation to predictions was too brief.

- 85 Overall, teaching is satisfactory and has shown some improvement since the last inspection, particularly in Years 7 to 9 where a little under half of the lessons observed were good. Pupils are generally well behaved, and in most lessons show a positive attitude. Attitudes are better in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11. The better lessons are well-planned to make efficient use of time, and provide a coherent learning experience. Clear time-scales are laid down for the pupils, there is a brisk and purposeful working atmosphere, questioning is used to check pupils' understanding and to elicit their ideas, and tasks set are well suited to their purpose. Teachers bring these lessons to a successful conclusion by reviewing with the pupils the key points that have been learned.
- 86 For example, in a good lesson in Year 7 on relationships between variables the teacher briskly questioned the pupils on earlier work and then moved promptly on to the main task. The pupils had clear timescales, and worked purposefully and with interest on the practical activities. The pace was maintained by the teacher's guidance. The questions on the worksheet developed pupils' understanding of direct and inverse relationships, and this was reinforced well at the end of the lesson by effective questioning directed at a range of pupils. This required pupils to apply their understanding to new situations. In a good Year 11 lesson with a top set, the teacher integrated work on gravity with work on comets and asteroids, and the dangers posed by a possible impact with the earth. A very good video involving simulations was used to develop pupils' understanding further. Pupils' imaginations were captured by this interesting context and progress was good.
- 87 While teaching is satisfactory overall, a significant amount of unsatisfactory teaching was seen, mainly with top sets in years 10 and 11. In these lessons pupils made insufficient progress for a number of reasons. These included: poor planning; a lack of coherence; too long being spent on routine practical tasks which have already been done in the lower school; teaching aimed 'at the middle' which does not extend the more able; slow pace and inefficient time management. In some lessons, there is over-reliance on worksheets, and in one lesson in Year 9 pupils' attitudes were unsatisfactory. In Year 7, there is some repetition of primary work, and standards of investigative work are below those expected from Year 6. Despite the introduction of CASE, the range of learning activities does not include enough group work, project work, research, debate and role-play. Some homework lacks challenge, and pupils do not have their own textbooks for background reading. Marking does not give pupils enough feedback about their performance.
- 88 Pupils ICT skills are underdeveloped in science. There is too little use of data-logging equipment, and a lack of computers and software limits pupils' learning opportunities. Literacy skills are satisfactory overall, although opportunities for pupils to write their own notes are too limited. Pupils' numeracy skills are below average, and teachers do not always consolidate and develop these sufficiently. The library resources are inadequate and are not well used.
- 89 Management of science is satisfactory overall, in the light of recent initiatives and the improvement in standards in Years 7 to 9. Development planning has improved but does not include sufficiently rigorous strategies to tackle the underachievement of

girls in Years 10 and 11. There is limited observation of one another's lessons by teachers but there is no formal and systematic programme to monitor and evaluate teaching. Assessment procedures have been improved and target setting has been introduced, although these need further refinement to make them fully effective. A limited number of extracurricular activities have been introduced. There are too few textbooks, and too little access to computers.

ART AND DESIGN

Overall the quality of provision in art and design is **satisfactory**

Strengths

- Pupils have a positive attitude to learning and enjoy the subject
- Behaviour in all lessons seen was good or very good
- All pupils make good use of sketchbooks for research and preparatory work

Areas for Improvement

- The teaching of drawing and composition needs to be improved
- There is much too little use of ICT
- Departmental development planning is weak
- There is no full-time head of department.

90 Standards are below average in Y11, both in examinations in students' work, but broadly average in Year 9. Girls do significantly better than boys in Year 11, but there is no significant difference in Year 9. Pupils with special educational needs, and gifted and talented pupils make satisfactory progress, and displays include attractive landscapes. There is good observational drawing in Year 10. However, the general standard of drawing is poor, and many pupils lack skills in composition. This limits the quality of much finished work. At the time of the last inspection, standards were below average throughout the school. The present pattern of results represents satisfactory improvement.

91 Teaching is satisfactory overall, and better in some lessons. No lessons observed were judged unsatisfactory. Teachers have strong subject knowledge and a good range of technical skills. Lessons are well planned, and learning goals are made clear to pupils. Teachers use a suitable range of resources, and most finished pieces of work are based on preparatory work and research done in sketchbooks. There is a good balance of work in two and three dimensions, and work is often linked by a common theme such as portraiture or Cubism. Teachers provide suitable work for pupils of all abilities, and assistants make a satisfactory contribution to learning. Homework is set regularly and work is regularly assessed. Teaching across the department, however, does not enable pupils to build compositional and drawing skills systematically enough, and this detracts from the effects of its good features.

92 In most lessons teachers help pupils develop language and art vocabulary, and pupils talk about their work with confidence. A variety of types of written work are evident in sketchbooks. There is little contribution to number work, however, and pupils do not have opportunities to use computers in art and design.

93 Art and design makes a good contribution to cultural development. Pupils are engaging strongly with, and gain inspiration from, the work of other artists. They can relate their work to relevant famous artists but during inspection there was no evidence of any reference to local artists. A Year 8 project based on Aborigine culture

clearly inspired pupils and was used to explore the links between art and culture. Cultural differences in the meanings associated with different symbols were used well to generate discussion. Additional extra curricular sessions are well attended.

- 94 The day-to-day management of the department is satisfactory, but longer-term planning suffers from the lack of a full-time head of department. This needs to be addressed, if the weaknesses in developing pupils' skills are to be tackled.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

The overall provision for design and technology is **good**.

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is good
- There is good provision for special educational needs.
- Assessment is thorough and used well in planning.
- Pupils develop confidence in their creative abilities,

Areas for improvement

- The department has no overall management structure.
- There are too few resources for learning, particularly in ICT.
- Standards in Year 11 are seriously affected by poor attendance.

- 95 Standards are below average throughout the school, and recent GCSE results have been well below average. There are, however, good features in pupils' work. In Year 9, for example, they show imagination and skill in following design briefs in textiles, food technology and resistant materials. Some pupils in GCSE options produce work that is in line with average standards in their coursework in resistant materials, textiles and food technology. In Year 9, girls reach somewhat higher standards than boys in textiles and food technology, but boys have better skills in designing and making with resistant materials, wood and metal. Pupils with special needs and those with talent are able to make relatively good progress due to the nature of project work, which allows for success at a wide range of levels.

- 96 Achievement and progress are satisfactory, with good features, by Year 9, but progress in Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory because of very high levels of absence among the pupils. This results in much unfinished GCSE project work, and is the main reason why examination results are lower than the quality of work produced by the pupils who were present during the inspection. Since the last inspection, there has been satisfactory improvement in Years 7 to 9. Pupils are no longer underachieving, and research skills are now satisfactory rather than weak. There has been no improvement in Years 10 and 11. Throughout the school, there is much too little use of ICT in all aspects of design and technology, and this is seriously limiting pupils' preparation for the modern world of work.

- 97 Pupils in Year 9 show good skills in the organisation and presentation of their work, and use hand tools well to cut and shape resistant materials. They have satisfactory skills in food technology and textiles. Standards are, however, held back by a lack of balance between different areas of work - resistant materials have twice as much time as either food technology or textiles. Pupils in Year 11 show good skills in designing and making furniture, stools and cupboards. They also show good designing and making skills in textiles and a good understanding of processes in food technology.

- 98 The overall quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school. Strengths in the teaching are the high level of commitment, good subject knowledge and expertise and sensitive individual tuition. This last quality promotes good learning generally, but particularly good learning by pupils with special needs and those with gifts and talents. Assessment is thorough and is used very effectively to monitor and promote pupils' progress. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good and help to promote a pleasant working atmosphere. This aids learning and helps pupils to develop creative self-confidence.
- 99 The teaching of basic skills in literacy and numeracy is satisfactory. Subject terms are analysed as they arise in discussion and lists are displayed in workshops. The development of numeracy is aided by measuring and calculation, which take place in almost all projects, and by the practical use of projections and scale drawings. Basic skills in information technology stand in serious need of development at all stages and in all areas within the department. The library provision for design and technology is also sparse and many books are out of date, though the provision is supplemented by books and other material kept in workshops.
- 100 The management of the separate areas, which constitute design and technology, is good. There is, however, a need to review the management structure of design and technology as a whole in order to secure recognition of the increasing importance of the subject. Textiles is an area of promise, which could beneficially be expanded. GNVQ courses, also, would help to fulfil the need for vocational courses in an area ideally equipped to provide them.

GEOGRAPHY

The quality of provision in geography is satisfactory.

Strengths

- The best teaching in Years 7 to 9 is very good .
- New schemes of work Years 7 to 9 promote good learning
- There are good relationships with pupils in Years 7 to 9
- Good development of geographical knowledge by many pupils in Years 7 to 9

Areas for improvement

- Standards, especially at GCSE, need to be improved.
- Teaching and learning, especially in Years 10 and 11, need further improvement.
- Learning is held back by a serious lack of resources, including computers.
- Arrangements to assess work and track progress are inadequate.

101 Results in GCSE are well below average and have fallen over the last three years. In 2001, no pupils achieved a result at grade C or above. The standard of work during the inspection showed some improvement in Years 10 and 11, but achievement is seriously impeded by some pupils' poor attendance. Standards in Year 9 have improved from well below average to below average over the past three years, and girls did particularly well in teachers' assessments in 2001.

102 During the inspection, most pupils in the higher-attaining sets in Year 9 were reaching average standards, and some were doing better. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, and some in Year 9 showed good understanding in their answers to teachers' questions. Few of the highest-attaining pupils were studying geography in Years 10 and 11 during the inspection, but gifted and talented pupils in Years 7 to 9 were reaching average standards. The two pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds who were observed were reaching above average standards. Overall standards in geography are satisfactory in relation to the standards of pupils joining the school. Since the last inspection, standards have improved in Years 7 to 9 but declined in Years 10 and 11.

103 Most pupils in Years 7 and 8 have basic map reading skills and can read an atlas competently. Most Year 7 pupils have sound knowledge of the local region. Many have a detailed understanding of river terminology, and of how river features are formed. Pupils in Year 8 develop good understanding of microclimates through work in the school grounds. Written work in Year 8 revealed a range of levels, from below to the national average, in the understanding of farming types in Britain. Lesson observations and written work of Year 9 clearly demonstrated a good knowledge of volcanoes. The standard of written work in Years 7 to 9 ranged from broadly average to well below average, and its quality and quantity, including the use of maps and diagrams, varied too much from one class to another.

104 In Years 10 and 11 most pupils made sound progress in the lessons observed, but some have rates of absence that give them little chance of success in examinations. Pupils in Year 10 showed a sound understanding of the causes and prevention of flooding through their oral and written answers, and were developing the skill of making a comparison table. However, only a minority of pupils in Year 11 were reaching average standards in their fieldwork on the location of shops. Year 11 pupils' school examination papers also showed a very broad range of standards, with many pupils needing to make substantial improvements if they were to do themselves

justice in examinations. Most pupils, however, had completed homework which is set regularly to consolidate coursework.

- 105 Teaching and learning are satisfactory, with good features, in Years 7 to 9. In Years 10 and 11, they are satisfactory in lessons, but unsatisfactory overall because of pupils' rates of absence. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of geography, and in the best lessons their professional skills are very good. Work is effectively planned and classes are well managed, with good relationships. In the most successful lessons, teachers use their extensive knowledge and understanding of the subject to ask and answer questions very effectively, and inspire pupils to work with a sense of urgency. This results in more and better writing than in classes where teaching is satisfactory. In some lessons in Years 10 and 11, teachers did not manage question and answer sessions as well as they might, and sometimes did not recognise and encourage pupils' contributions. Work is conscientiously marked, often with helpful guidance, but teachers do not refer closely enough to the National Curriculum when assessing pupils' work.
- 106 Pupils' literacy development is being effectively supported, for example by key-word displays in each classroom, solving anagrams and by reading aloud. Regular role-play presentations, and discussions in most lessons have developed pupils' speaking and listening skills. Numeracy development is part of the scheme of work and effectively delivered through work on maps, including scale, distance and grid-references, and climate graphs. This work is co-ordinated well with the mathematics department. The school library is not used regularly. Geography does not have access to ICT resources.
- 107 Leadership and management are satisfactory. The new head of department has written a handbook which contains a thoughtfully prepared guide to geography staff, including schemes of work, development plan, assessment, field work and ICT issues. She provides effective and frequent support to non-specialist geography teachers and to newly-qualified teachers. The well-planned schemes of work incorporate National Curriculum requirements, clear learning objectives and teaching resources. Learning resources are well cared for, but learning is restricted because text books were published 10 to 15 years ago, and there is too little audio-visual equipment and materials. Teachers take a pride in their classrooms but in one classroom in particular furniture is in sufficiently poor condition to have a negative effect on learning and pupils' attitudes. The head of department has good plans for the further development of work in geography.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Teaching is very good.
- There are very good displays of pupils' work in classrooms
- Leadership is excellent, and is leading to rapid improvements in the quality of work.

Areas for improvement

- Standards at GCSE need to be raised further.
- Pupils have too few opportunities to learn independently.
- There are too few resources, and too little use of ICT.

- 108 Standards in work seen during the inspection were broadly average the school. Pupils in Year 9 reached average standards in teachers' assessments in 2001, but GCSE results in 2001 fell sharply from broadly average standards during the previous four years, and were well below average. The quality of teaching and learning during the inspection, however, was very good, and standards are rising.
- 109 The current pattern of achievement is satisfactory for all groups of pupils, including those who are gifted and those with learning difficulties, particularly in the banded Year 9 classes. There has been good improvement since the last inspection, particularly in planning, leadership, teaching and relationships, and the department is making a significant contribution to the work of the school. The number of pupils choosing history in Year 10 rose very substantially in September 2001.
- 110 In Years 7 to 9, pupils develop a broad range of historical skills, including the interpretation of historical evidence and data, the analysis of difficult historical issues and the understanding of chronology. They use a wide range of learning materials including thematic worksheets, pictorial evidence, timelines, writing frames, videos and a comprehensive range of primary and secondary source material. The handling of different forms of historical data is good, and pupils work very well individually, in pairs and in small groups. In Year 7, pupils can sort the evidence of events in 1066 and put these events into chronological order. Pupils' historical understanding is extended in Year 8 by studying the map of Liverpool in the English Civil War and effectively interpreting primary evidence. By year 9, pupils can analyse the developments of the Bolshevik revolution and extract evidence from case study material.
- 111 By the end of Year 11, pupils have developed a good understanding of the importance of industrial changes for the development of the factory system, in particular the impact of Richard Arkwright on the textile industry. In these years there is a greater emphasis on developing extended writing skills particularly using writing frames, the making of their own notes, the answering of questions and the interpretation and use of primary and secondary source material. Achievement, by the end of Year 11 is satisfactory for all pupils studying history. Pupils are encouraged to make oral contributions and in many lessons to work in groups. Thorough examination preparation and revision are built into the framework of the lessons in these years.
- 112 The quality of teaching is very good overall, and much is excellent. Teachers plan very interesting lessons, with a broad range of teaching techniques, clear learning aims, and targeted help to pupils who need it. Historical ideas are clearly and

thoroughly explained and developed. Teachers are highly skilled in teaching pupils to interpret historical evidence, and are particularly good at ensuring that the full range of pupils are able to make an active contribution to the lesson. This produces a dynamic and purposeful approach to learning in each lesson, with very good participation from pupils in discussions, group work and writing. In the best lessons, learning aims are shared with the pupils and reviewed at the end of the lesson, so that the teacher can judge how much progress has taken place. Very good behaviour and attitudes underpin learning throughout the department, and the best teaching has an inclusive and democratic style that enables all pupils to produce their best work. Homework is set regularly and marking supports progress, learning and achievement.

- 113 The leadership and management of the department are excellent. The head of the department, appointed eighteen months ago, gives inspirational and strategic leadership and has a very comprehensive knowledge of how the department can build upon its existing strengths. The departmental handbook and schemes of work are comprehensive and up to date. Assessment procedures are effective; most pupils know how well they are doing and what they have to do to improve. The department makes a good contribution to literacy through its use of writing frames, and specific teaching of historical vocabulary. As a result of all of this work, standards and the quality of work are improving rapidly, and the history department is beginning to contribute to the development of teaching across the school.
- 114 The specialist classrooms have very attractive displays of historical material and pupils' work. However, resources are inadequate. There are too few textbooks, and the department has too little access to television and video resources, and to ICT. Library resources are very limited and do not provide a strong foundation for individual research, project and coursework. These factors limit the benefit to the pupils of improved teaching.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

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

Strengths

- Teachers' have good knowledge of the subject.
- Pupils receive good help and guidance.
- There are good relationships between teachers and pupils.
- There is good learning in Years 7 to 9.

Areas for improvement

- Teachers' assessment in Year 9 needs to be more accurate.
- The use of computers across the school is not co-ordinated effectively.
- Comments on annual reports to parents lack detail.
- There are too few computers, and some are almost worn out.

115 Standards are average in Year 9, but below average in Year 11. Achievement overall is satisfactory, and the school is currently taking effective steps to improve provision for all pupils. Changes to the ICT scheme of work are beginning to raise standards. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

116 Standards of work seen and the quality of learning in Years 7 to 9 during the inspection were satisfactory, and good or better in one-third of lessons. Except for ICT and English, however, pupils have too few opportunities to use ICT, and the role of the computer in learning in most subjects is not clearly thought out.

117 Pupils in Year 11 have a broad range of skills in ICT, and roughly half follow the GCSE course. While results are below average, they represent satisfactory achievement. The remaining pupils follow a basic ICT skills course with reasonable success. There is no significant difference between the performance of girls and boys. The quality of learning is satisfactory with good features, and Year 10 pupils are now building on their earlier achievement.

118 Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated with other pupils in lessons, and their learning is satisfactory. Although no special arrangements are made for gifted and talented pupils, a few produce work of a high standard. For example, there is good GCSE coursework showing an evaluation of a medical centre. The department provides good support for the development of literacy and numeracy skills – for example, each pupil is provided with an ICT glossary and classroom displays celebrate good examples of pupils' use of graphs and charts.

119 Teaching is satisfactory overall, and was good or better in a third of lessons. The main strength of the department lies in teachers' extensive knowledge and understanding of the subject. Lessons are well planned and presented, and relationships are good. Where the teaching is good, teachers adopt a lively, stimulating style, and provide all pupils with expert technical help and guidance. Where it is satisfactory, teachers do not always provide sufficient guidance before launching into applications. The school has had difficulty in recruiting teachers, and some have been ill. However, the standard of teaching has remained constant. Supply teachers are well supported by experienced teachers.

120 Management has recently improved, and the newly-appointed coordinator provides sound leadership. However, much work remains to be done. Development planning is

not yet fully in place and does not identify targets, responsibilities, success criteria, deadlines and finance systematically. Assessment in Year 9 is inaccurate. Pupils' reports do not clearly identify progress made and what they need to do to improve. Library facilities for ICT are poor. Since the last inspection there has been no systematic replacement of obsolete computers and consequently current systems are stretched to capacity. ICT technicians provide good technical support.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Relationships are good between teachers and pupils, and among pupils
- Pupils behave well and have good attitudes to learning.

Areas for improvement

- Teaching is not monitored effectively.
- Assessment is not linked clearly enough to National Curriculum levels and grade descriptions.

- 121 In 2001, standards in teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9, and among the small number of pupils taking French at GCSE, were below average. However, all pupils taking GCSE in 2001 achieved a graded result. There is little difference in standards reached by boys and girls in Year 9, but girls generally do better than boys at GCSE. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, but would do better if work were more carefully matched to their needs. In view of the standards in literacy and in speaking and listening among pupils joining the school, overall achievement in the subject is good in Year 9. The achievements of pupils taking French at GCSE are satisfactory, but this does not represent satisfactory achievement for the school as a whole because so few pupils study the subject.
- 122 Standards of work in Years 7 to 9 during the inspection were broadly average, and higher-attaining pupils were achieving above average standards. By the end of Year 9, these pupils can produce some extended writing and refer to past and future events. Some can speak confidently and accurately; for example one boy, without prompting and in clear French, asked the inspector if he spoke French. They can speak from memory in structured conversations. Some need visual support to prompt speech. Lower-attaining pupils can understand short passages and copy single words or short phrases correctly. When they speak their pronunciation is approximate, but their meaning is usually clear. They attempt to produce extended responses, but they are often inaccurate. All pupils behave well, remain keen to participate and listen with concentration to their teachers and to each other.
- 123 Pupils in Years 10 and 11 during the inspection produced work of average quality. There is more extended writing, and they can refer with greater accuracy and confidence to past and future events. They try to improve their writing by making it more complex. Pupils following the Entry Level course in French operate quite successfully in a limited number of very carefully defined situations, for example giving directions or ordering food in a café. They can take part in structured conversations of three or four exchanges and read simple instructions.
- 124 The department makes a satisfactory contribution to pupils' literacy through emphasis on spelling, grammar and sentence construction. They make a satisfactory

contribution to numeracy through the study of the counting system in French, currency conversions, the use of bar charts to represent survey information and the twenty-four hour clock. There is too little use of information and communication technology.

- 125 Overall teaching is satisfactory. It is good in roughly a third of lessons, satisfactory in over half, and unsatisfactory in one lesson in ten. In the good and very good lessons, teachers maintain a brisk pace, use a variety of tasks and working contexts to keep pupils' interest engaged, and have high expectations of them. This leads to good learning, most often among higher-attaining pupils. Where teaching is satisfactory, it often has good features, as in a Year 8 lesson in which the teacher played a difficult passage of material on audio tape without repetition or pausing. As a result, pupils were challenged to identify the main points with little support, and most completed the task accurately. However, in most of these lessons work needs to be more closely matched to pupils' learning needs, and pace needs to be more tightly controlled. Unsatisfactory teaching during the inspection was caused by the teacher's limited knowledge and understanding of French, which led to a slow pace and too limited use of French by either teacher or pupils.
- 126 Leadership and management are satisfactory. The head of department has a clear vision for the subject, and teachers have a good idea of the standards required by the National Curriculum and the GCSE examination. Pupils' written work is assessed accurately, though notes could usefully be more detailed, but assessment of work in Years 7 to 9 does not contain examples of speaking, reading or listening tasks. Marking is regular and thorough, but lacks detailed guidance for pupils on how to improve the next similar piece of work, or how to advance to the next National Curriculum level. Teaching is not effectively monitored with a view to raising standards. The department's long-term planning is adequate, but its contribution to effective teaching and assessment is limited by a lack of detail.
- 127 There are too few resources in Years 7 to 9. The main textbook for these pupils does not meet National Curriculum requirements and is outdated. The department has too little access to computers, and there are too few books and other resources in the library. Accommodation is satisfactory, except for one room which has poor acoustics due to a lack of carpeting. This makes speaking and listening work more difficult for pupils than it need be.
- 128 Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. There have been improvements in the use of French in lessons by teachers, pupils have more opportunities to work in pairs or groups, and marking is more consistent across the department. Pupils still do not speak French often enough for routine purposes in lessons.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- There is pleasant accommodation, with some suitable resources.
- Some instrumental teaching is good
- There is good emphasis on keyboard work.

Areas for improvement

- There are no permanent teachers, and no head of department.
- Standards throughout the school need to be improved.
- Very few pupils choose to continue music lessons in Year 10.
- Too few pupils take instrumental lessons, and there is little extra-curricular work.
- There are no effective arrangements to manage the department.
- Work is not matched to the needs of gifted and talented pupils.

- 129 At the time of the inspection, there was no permanent music teacher, and the school had had no response to an advertisement. The small number of pupils taking music in Year 11 during the inspection were reaching close to average standards in performing, but below average standards in composing, and well below average standards in appraising music. Standards among the small numbers of pupils taking GCSE examinations are low; in 2001, for example, only one pupil passed with grade C or above. Standards in Year 9 are below average in composing and performing, and well below average in listening to music and appraising it.
- 130 Progress and development for pupils with special educational needs are satisfactory throughout the school. When work is designed especially to cater for pupils of differing abilities, and pupils with special educational needs are given additional classroom support, progress is better. Gifted and talented pupils do not always enjoy sufficient challenge in music lessons, and do not make satisfactory long-term progress. Standards in Years 7 to 9 represent satisfactory achievement in view of the standards reached by pupils joining the school, but standards in Year 11 do not represent satisfactory achievement, especially as so few pupils continue with the subject.
- 131 Despite good progress in some aspects of music, including keyboard work, musical notation, and pupils' enjoyment of music lessons, overall progress since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory. The use of singing, opportunities for learning outside lessons, the variety of tasks in lessons, and standards in Years 7 to 9, all require further development, and provision for ICT has declined.
- 132 Keyboard work is used to good effect in Years 7 to 9. For example, in a Year 8 lesson on the Blues, pupils could use keyboards in combination with a backing track. By the end of Year 9 pupils are able to use electronic keyboards for performance. Progress in listening and appraisal work in Years 10 and 11 is helped in some measure by the emphasis that the department places on key words. However, more is needed to help them to develop the technical vocabulary they need in order to describe the music they hear fully and accurately. Pupils' compositions display competence in work derived mainly from classroom projects, and are well presented. However, pupils do not develop a broad enough range of skills and techniques in composing music. There are few current opportunities for vocal performance or for pupils to use information and communication technology appropriately for composition. Pupils often

work satisfactorily individually and in small groups. However, they require regular input from the teacher when working in groups, and are not always confident when working independently. Pupils' work is not routinely assessed, and few records are kept. As a result, there are no clear targets for pupils, and progress suffers. The department does not analyse GCSE results in each part of the syllabus.

- 133 Teaching is satisfactory, and there is some good practice, for example in keyboard work. Teachers have sound knowledge and understanding of the subject. Work is usually matched to most pupils' abilities and teaching helps many pupils to expand and consolidate their learning. The balance in tasks tends towards keyboard work and on occasion lessons concentrate too long on a single topic or activity, leading some pupils to lose concentration. Teachers do not assess pupils' work effectively, and there is too little target-setting. Visiting instrumental teachers make a worthwhile contribution to the curriculum and their work is integrated into the work of the department. There are six visiting teachers and slightly below average numbers of pupils take lessons. Instrumental teaching is often of good quality. Pupils have the opportunity to take instrumental grade examinations and have begun a record of success in this area.
- 134 The absence of a permanent head of department has left too few systems of organisation. While work meets most of the requirements of the National Curriculum, there is too little use of computers, and too little singing. Accommodation is suitable for most musical activities, and is managed well. Extra-curricular activity in music is currently suspended but there are a small number of opportunities for individual pupils to perform in public. One girl, for example, sang two songs at a celebration of achievement in the Anglican Cathedral during the inspection, supported by over seventy fellow-pupils. Such opportunities for performance have a strong impact on the cultural and social development of pupils; they also foster important links with parents and the community. Computers are currently not used for composition, and pupils have too few opportunities to develop individual enthusiasms and support composition with their own instrumental skills and ICT. This limits moderate progress for most pupils.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 promotes learning in depth
- There are good extra-curricular activities, within and beyond the school
- There is a strong team of specialists, backed up by knowledgeable volunteers from the rest of the staff.
- The department is well led, and has an excellent handbook
- Resources are good, with very good outdoor facilities.

Areas for improvement

- Teaching is not monitored effectively.
- Health-related fitness issues are not included in all lessons.
- Pupils need better information on options at GCSE.
- Pupils not representing the school need more opportunities for competition.
- Provision in Years 10 and 11 needs to be better co-ordinated.
- Strong sunlight in the gymnasium hinders teaching and learning .
- There is too little use of computers to promote learning.

135 Standards are broadly average in Year 9. Boys and girls in Years 7 to 9 develop precision and control in a range of basic skills. Most can link skills and techniques accurately. When asked, they can analyse their own and others' performance and suggest improvements. Some apply their knowledge to develop strategies and tactics in small-sided games. Most pupils expect to warm up. Pupils make good progress in Years 7 to 9, moving from generally below average standards when they join the school to broadly average standards by the end of Year 9. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. There has been good improvement in planning, but the rate of participation in lessons in Years 10 and 11 is still much lower than it should be.

136 Standards in Year 11, at GCSE and in pupils' work, are below average, overall, though some higher-attaining pupils achieve good standards. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are given opportunities to draw on their own knowledge to develop advanced tactics and plan ways to improve their own and others' performance. Many work hard to develop their knowledge and understanding of the principles of invasion games. A significant number of pupils achieve very good standards in extra-curricular activities at local, regional and international levels. Progress in Years 10 and 11 is good for those following GCSE courses, but often unsatisfactory for those who do not, chiefly because of high levels of absence and high numbers of pupils who do not take part in lessons, for example because they do not have kit. Pupils with special educational needs or other behaviour difficulties do make progress because teachers have an understanding of their particular needs.

137 Teaching is good. It is never less than satisfactory, and is sometimes very good. Teachers foster good relationships, creating a positive ethos for activity learning and enjoyment. The natural enthusiasm of the teacher is passed on to the pupils who are encouraged to attempt new skills and accept responsibility. Pupils have many opportunities to demonstrate what they can do, and to plan and evaluate their performance, although in a minority of lessons they are not given sufficient guidance on what to look for. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of a broad range of disciplines within the subject, and use this to plan progress across a series

of lessons effectively. Teachers have high expectations, and work hard to meet the needs of all pupils. Lessons are well structured and managed, with a brisk pace of work.

- 138 Learning activities are interesting and challenge pupils progressively. All teachers use a good range of teaching methods. They give clear demonstrations and explanations of skills, and question pupils well to help them recall what they have learned. Pupils are set targets, and in most lessons teachers use competition to motivate and interest them. Homework is regularly set; marking is consistent, and informs pupils about the standards they are achieving. Learning benefits greatly from the co-operation and enthusiasm on the part of the pupils who take part in lessons. There is good reference to health in most lessons, but not in all; for example, pupils do not consistently use warm down exercises.
- 139 Leadership and management are good, and there have been good developments in the use of assessment. The teaching staff make a well-balanced team who support each other well, have a commitment to continuous improvement, and are deployed to meet the requirements of the curriculum. Day to day routines are well established, supported by an excellent staff handbook, which promotes consistency and high standards. Indoor accommodation is good, and outdoor facilities are very good, with extensive playing fields and netball courts. Good use is made of the very adjacent public recreation area for orienteering. There are, however, too few ICT resources.

VOCATIONAL COURSES

No subject was fully inspected, but provision for the vocational course in business studies was sampled.

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

- 140 Examination results are much higher than in most other subjects. In 2001, 90 per cent of pupils taking business studies achieved two grade C passes or above, often achieving significantly more than in their other subjects. These results were reflected in pupils' course-work. They produce thoughtful work, showing good understanding of business principles, and higher-attaining pupils complete lengthy and challenging assignments. There is a very good blend of practical and theoretical work, and pupils develop good skills in analysing the problems faced by a range of local businesses. The overall standard of this coursework is above national average levels.
- 141 Lessons are taught to a good overall standard, and the course has been carefully designed to meet the requirements of a syllabus that has recently undergone extensive change. . Teaching and learning were not effective in one lesson seen during the inspection, in which legal aspects of the course were not presented clearly enough, and pupils became distracted from their main task by concentrating too much on the design of a leaflet rather than its content. The other lesson observed was, however, very good, and much more typical of the standard of pupils' coursework, which makes very good use of ICT, and applies and develops writing skills very well.
- 142 Assessment is good, and work is carefully matched to individual needs. Pupils with special educational needs, for example, are likely to study simpler types of business, such as a sandwich bar, while higher-attaining pupils carry out complex analysis of management structures. The business studies course is an important strength of the

curriculum in Years 10 and 11, and prepares pupils well for work in the sixth form. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good.

DRAMA

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is good
- Relationships in the classroom are good
- Curriculum planning is good

Area for development

- There are no extra-curricular activities

- 143 Standards by the end of Year 9 are broadly average. Results in the GCSE have been consistently below average, and were well below average in 2001. The groups have been small, and poor attendance has slowed progress. There is no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls, though many more girls than boys choose the subject in Years 10 and 11. All pupils are able to participate fully in lessons and pupils with special educational needs, those for whom English is an additional language and gifted and talented pupils all make good progress. The good quality of teaching and learning identified in the last inspection has been maintained. The number of pupils choosing the subject in Years 10 and 11 has increased. However, while achievement in the subject is good in Year 9, standards are lower than they should be in Year 11 because of the poor attendance of a significant proportion of pupils.
- 144 By the end of Year 9, pupils have benefited from taking drama as a separate subject. They learn to work co-operatively, developing satisfactory skills in voice, movement and improvisation. Pupils in Year 7, particularly boys, find it difficult to adapt to the subject, but respond well to firm management. By Year 8, pupils work confidently, capably miming mirror images and presenting tableaux. In Year 9, pupils work well together preparing for presentations of *Teenage Years*. They move confidently, speak unselfconsciously and take roles capably. Standards of performance in Years 10 and 11 during the inspection were broadly average, but the range of ability among the students is wide. This is reflected in the quality of working notebooks, which benefit from redrafting using word processing. Pupils are familiar with the language of the subject and understand the elements of staging a play. In Year 10 they responded thoughtfully to a text when presenting stage pictures of *Billy Liar*. Year 11 pupils planned effective group responses to the theme of *Ambition* for their controlled test, adapting well to the absence of some pupils who should have been taking part. Their responses are naturalistic rather than imaginative, but confident, with a good sense of the use of space and movement.
- 145 Teaching is good, informed by good specialist knowledge and understanding of the subject. Pupils are managed firmly but with good humour, and the broad range of needs in each class is met by well-planned lessons. Because relationships in the classroom are good, pupils feel comfortable. They respond with interest, enjoy a variety of stimulating activities and make good progress.

- 146 Drama contributes well to pupils' literacy development, particularly in speaking and listening, but not to numeracy development. There are too few resources in the library, but ICT is used well by pupils in Years 10 and 11.
- 147 Leadership and management are good. A very well-designed scheme of work develops drama skills systematically within interesting themes, links well with other subjects, particularly English, and contributes to pupils' personal development. Assessment, a weakness at the time of the last inspection, is now good. At present there is no extra-curricular drama, though there have been major productions in the past.

SOCIOLOGY

Sociology was not inspected fully, but two lessons were observed, and pupils' course work was sampled.

Overall, the provision for sociology is **good**.

- 148 Pupils follow a carefully-planned two-year course that introduces them to the key ideas of the subject, and prepares them well for their GCSE examinations. The course is chosen by almost half of the pupils in each year group. GCSE results in sociology were below average in 2001, but were slightly higher than results in most other subjects. Some higher-attaining pupils each year obtain A and A* grades. Sociology was a successful subject at the time of the last inspection, and the quality of provision has been maintained.
- 149 The quality of teaching is good. The teacher understands the discipline of sociology well, and presents it to pupils in a context that is relevant to their lives. Complex ideas are carefully explained, and all pupils receive a thorough grounding that prepares them well for further study. Analysis of their work, however, showed that some stick too closely to the teacher's printed notes in their writing, and in some parts of lessons the initial presentation of ideas was too complex, leaving the teacher with too much explanation to do at one time. The teacher uses the school's assessment system very well to track progress against pupils' target grades. Her records of pupils' performance in tests and coursework, and pupils' replies to questions in lessons, showed that all groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and those identified as having high academic ability, were learning well. The progress of a significant number of pupils in Year 11, however, was hindered by poor attendance.

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

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

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

GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	2	0	62	0	15	0	1.51
ICT	5	60	N/A	0	N/A	0.6	N/A
Physical education	4	50	N/A	0	N/A	1	N/A
Art	3	100	N/A	0	N/A	2	N/A
Music	1	100	N/A	0	N/A	2	N/A
History	11	64	N/A	27	N/A	1.4	N/A
Sociology	8	88	N/A	25	N/A	3.1	N/A
General Studies	17	53	N/A	6	N/A	1.5	N/A

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-B		% gaining grades A-E		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art	2	0	46	100	96	4.0	6.6
Computer Studies	7	0	23	57	86	2.3	4.6
English Literature	9	33	37	100	95	4.9	5.9
History	4	25	35	100	88	5.0	5.5
Other social studies	6	0	34	100	87	4.0	5.3
Sociology	12	17	35	83	86	4.3	5.3
Sports/PE studies	4	0	25	50	92	1.5	5.1
Business	2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	8.3	10.5
Leisure and Tourism	5	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	7.2	10.1

Intermediate vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Business	4	100	N/A	0	N/A	0	N/A
GNVQ Part 1 Intermediate	1	100	N/A	100	N/A	0	N/A

Note. Full national comparative data for some subjects and courses were not available at the time of publication of this report.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

151 The school offers AS and A level mathematics, and has recently begun to offer an AS course in biology. The biology course, which had students in Year 12 only, was fully inspected, and the mathematics course was sampled. There are as yet no examination results in biology, but results in mathematics over the past three years have been poor. The number of pupils following each subject is very small, and only two students were studying biology at the time of the inspection.

Biology

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

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching is satisfactory, with good features • Students' attitudes are positive <p>Areas for improvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is too little independent work, use of ICT and development of key skills • Development planning is weak • Teaching and learning are sometimes held back by a lack of specialist resources • Library resources are inadequate
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152 The AS/A level course was introduced this summer, and no examination results are yet available. The students have taken two modular examinations early; their results are broadly average, and represent satisfactory progress from their GCSE results.

153 Students were reaching average standards during the inspection. They showed a sound understanding of water transport in plants and the effects of factors such as temperature, humidity, air movement and light intensity. They understand the basics of cell structure and the functions of organelles such as mitochondria. Students are weaker in their understanding of some areas of biochemistry, such as the structure and functions of proteins, and in topics such as the counterflow system for gas exchange in fish. Practical work is a little below average in terms of evaluation skills and is not always followed up with appropriate graph work. In one lesson, students'

progress and the standards achieved were adversely affected by the lack of certain specialist equipment.

- 154 In most of the lessons seen, the teaching was good. Once account is taken of students' work over the year, teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. The teacher has a very good knowledge of his subject and explanation is clear, methodical and well-structured. The pace is brisk. Students' understanding is regularly checked through questioning and they are given questions which require them to apply their knowledge and understanding. They undertake a range of practical work but this is restricted in some topics by a lack of specialist resources. When doing the genetics topic, for example, the lack of fruit flies prevented students gaining practical experience of genetic crosses. The lack of resources also hindered progress in lessons on enzyme activity and in work on gases.
- 155 The range of learning activities is too restricted, and too much use is made of worksheets. There is insufficient emphasis on research, independent work, extended work and the use of ICT. Standards of literacy and numeracy are average. Students' ICT skills are underdeveloped because of a lack of resources. Library provision is inadequate.
- 156 Management of this newly introduced subject is satisfactory, but development planning needs to be undertaken on a more formal basis, and bids need to be prepared for specialist resources required. Students' work is marked conscientiously but they need more specific feedback on their performance in terms of examination grades.

Mathematics

- 157 Provision is unsatisfactory. Over the last four years only small numbers of pupils have taken A or AS level courses, and there has been very little examination success. The department has opened recruitment to as broad a range of students as possible, and a significant proportion of students have not done well enough at GCSE to give them a good background for advanced work. Two lessons of mathematics were observed, one of which was satisfactory, the other unsatisfactory. Analysis of students' work over the year showed that the overall quality of teaching was unsatisfactory. Overall, teaching is not ensuring that students have a clear grasp of the ideas being discussed, and they are not using marking to keep track of what students do and do not understand. Too much work is left incomplete. As a result of these factors, and the erratic attendance of some students, the standards are well below average, and too little is being achieved.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

No courses are offered in this section.

BUSINESS

158 The school offers an advanced vocational course in business studies, which was inspected. Results in the advanced GNVQ examination were below average in 2001, but three quarters of the students entered passed, one with distinction and three with merit. This represents satisfactory achievement, and the trend of results over time is improving. The number of students taking the course has grown in recent years, and there is good scope for further expansion.

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

Strengths

- Teachers know the subject well and plan effectively.
- Relationships between staff and students are good.
- There is a good range of research and writing.
- Monitoring and assessment support learning and progress.
- There is good use of ICT.

Areas for improvement

- Standards, particularly in the higher grades, need to be raised.
- The range of teaching styles could be broader.
- Too few students take up the subject, despite the good course in the main school

159 Students were reaching average standards during the inspection. In Year 12, they can analyse the impact of different customer service scenarios at Manchester Airport, and identify which approaches are most effective. A role-play exercise underlined the points that the students had learnt. It was a very effective and illuminating exercise for the entire group. The Year 13 group showed broadly average understanding of a range of theories of human needs and motivation, and of their significance in the work place. For example, in discussing Herzberg's theories, they reflected on their own experiences of work to identify factors that will motivate workers to do better, and those that will simply satisfy them. By the second year of the course, students have gained in confidence, and in their ability to express their ideas both orally and in writing.

160 Teaching is good overall, although one lesson observed was unsatisfactory. In this lesson, the teaching strategies used to tackle a difficult legal aspect of the syllabus did not make it clear to the students. Teachers are secure in their own knowledge of the subject and manage learning well, transmitting their enthusiasm to the students. Relationships between students and with staff are strong and this encourages students to exchange ideas, to listen to each other and to work together. In the best lessons, planning is good and a range of learning opportunities ensures that students are sufficiently challenged. Students use ICT confidently in their folders and course work, though some of the computers they use are out of date. Facilities for ICT will be improved soon when the City Learning Centre opens. There are many examples of well-researched assignments, particularly using local industrial and commercial companies. The coursework is well organised and is supported by rigorous monitoring and assessment procedures. By Year 13, students are confident independent learners.

161 Leadership and management are satisfactory. There are regular staff meetings where students' progress is discussed and monitored. Resources are adequate, but there is little material available for individual research in the library. The departmental handbook needs to be updated, and there is no systematic monitoring of teaching and learning. Too few students are joining this successful course following the effective and popular business studies course in Years 10 and 11.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

162 The school offers an AS and A-level course in information and communication technology. The most recent examination results are from very small group sizes. A level results were close to national average levels in 2001, and have improved since the last inspection. However, AS level results in 2001 were well below average.

Information and communication technology (ICT)

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

Strengths

- Standards in work seen during the inspection were broadly average.
- Students create complex data systems confidently.
- All of the teaching is good, and much is better.
- Students are enthusiastic and committed

Areas for improvement

- Computer resources at the time of the inspection were outdated.
- Comments on annual reports to parents lack detail.

163 The standard of work seen in lessons and in students' portfolios were broadly average, and represent good achievement for students still taking the subject. In general, students do well on those parts of the course, which are concerned with their own ability to use software. They confidently create complex data systems, using linked spreadsheets with macros and data entry screens, and are designing and starting to create relational databases. Standards are also consistently satisfactory in students' analyses and evaluation of sort and search systems. Most students can explain their investigations with growing confidence and are able to relate these to the real world of work. There is no significant difference between the performance of female and male students.

164 All students show interest and enthusiasm for the subject. When they are working individually on computers in lessons, they are good at helping each other and discussions are common, always relevant to the work and contributing to good learning. Many students are able to do some of their work on computers at home. Students who do not have such facilities at home are able to use those in school.

165 Overall, teaching is good. In half of the lessons seen it was very good. Teachers have a very good command of the subject, including some first-hand experience of uses of ICT in organisations other than the school. Teachers transmit their enthusiasm for the subject to their students. They are good at anticipating aspects that are likely to be misunderstood, and make good use of tutorial sessions to check on students' understanding. When students are working individually, teachers make good use of

their time. They discuss work with students and stretch them by asking challenging questions, and showing them further possibilities.

- 166 Further development is needed so that students are provided with more opportunities to visit organisations to investigate their use of ICT and to have outside speakers come to talk about their use of ICT.
- 167 In most respects the subject is well led and managed. A well-organised system of recording individual results for each unit, and comparing current standards with previous attainment, ensures effective monitoring individual students' progress. However, students' annual reports do not clearly identify progress made and what they need to do to improve. As with the main school there has been no systematic replacement of obsolete computers and consequently current systems are stretched to capacity. However, students do have access to a few better machines in the department for private study.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

- 168 No subject was fully inspected. The intermediate vocational course on leisure and recreation, and the advanced vocational course on leisure and tourism were sampled.
- 169 Two students were following the advanced course in Year 13, but there were none in Year 12. Teaching and learning observed were good. Resources and activities were well matched to students' needs, and students' written work and their understanding in lessons were both above the standard expected for the course.
- 170 Twenty students had begun the intermediate vocational course in Year 12, of whom a substantial proportion had learning difficulties. By the time of the inspection, 12 remained, and eight took part in the lesson observed. The quality of teaching and learning in this lesson were satisfactory, with some good features. The teacher adapted the course effectively to enable the students to learn basic features of the course, such as the role of customer care, and provided very good personal support for them, even when they found some aspects of the work, such as making presentations to the class, extremely difficult. Those students who had completed recent examined units had reached below average standards, but this represented satisfactory achievement. The course has a good system of work placements, which gives students experience at a level that is likely to help them find employment.
- 171 On the other hand, these students' timetable leaves a third of their time free each week, and most do not use this effectively for study. There is no additional support outside lessons for those with special educational needs, and the proportion of pupils failing to complete the course is particularly high. The school accepts that it needs to do more to make effective provision for these students.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

- 172 The school does not offer courses in this area.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

173 There is one combined class offering Art at A and AS level. This was inspected. The numbers of students taking A-level over the last few years have varied between zero and four, and results have been well below national average. There was, however, evidence of improvement in work seen during the inspection.

Art

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

Strengths

- Standards are rising
- There is good use of personal sketchbooks
- Students refer to the work of a broad range of artists
- The department is committed to further improvement.

Areas for improvement

- Standards in basic drawing and composition require improvement
- ICT is not used enough for research and to produce work

175 Work seen during inspection suggests that standards are improving and that some students are on track to achieve above average standards this year, subject to full attendance. Years 12 and 13 are timetabled together and during inspection none of the combined lessons comprised more than five students. Only one student from Year 12 intends to continue through to A level.

176 The standard of drawing across sixth form is a noticeable weakness, and below average for this age group. Poor drawing technique constitutes one of the main barriers to the department's efforts to raise standards of examination achievement at A/S and A2 level. This reflects weaknesses in drawing in the main school.

177 Teaching during the inspection was satisfactory overall, and a friendly rapport exists between teacher and students. In one lesson, the grade criteria laid down in the new syllabus were interpreted and discussed, then used effectively to assess some finished artwork, provided by the teacher. In another lesson, Year 13 students were reaching broadly average standards in studies of their chosen artist. One student was drawing inspiration from the work of Kandinsky, and developing interesting work of good quality. Colour work is a clear strength of the department.

178 Although attendance is a problem in the sixth form, students in lessons seen were very hard working and committed. They are coping well with the new syllabus requirements, particularly the personal study and the reference to chosen artists. On a number of occasions sixth form students were seen working independently in the art room in non-lesson time.

179 Management is satisfactory, and a recently qualified full-time teacher of art has successfully taken on much of the day-to-day responsibility for the sixth form. However, the department needs to produce a development plan for the sixth form, featuring short and long term goals and clear strategies to improve standards, attract more students and address its current weaknesses. Key steps needed to improve the work of the department are to make much more systematic provision for the teaching of drawing and composition, and to provide students with access to art

production software and digital photography. Students also need to use ICT much more for personal research.

HUMANITIES

180 No subject was fully inspected. History and sociology were sampled.

History

181 Provision for history is **satisfactory**. A level results were below average in 2001, but all pupils entered for the examination passed. At AS level, 11 students studied the subject and eight achieved an A-D grade. In the recent 2002 January examination, all students . Students show good commitment to their work in history, and were using time outside lessons well for private study during the inspection.

182 Three lessons were observed. Two were satisfactory and one was very good. This lesson included clear analysis of the implications of the Versailles Peace Treaty and the active involvement of all the students in debating and evaluating the possible outcomes of the various elements of the treaty. The students, working in groups, drew their own conclusions and the learning was effectively brought together in the whole class discussion at the end of the lesson. Where the teaching was satisfactory, the teacher gave students a clear outline of the topic, but did not involve them enough in discussion, and did not explain clearly enough what they had to do to achieve high grades. As a result, lessons lacked challenge, and the teacher did not have a clear idea of what students had and had not understood. There are, however, too few resources to support advanced study in the library, and they have poor access to computers.

Sociology

183 Provision for sociology is **good**. While AS and A-level results are below average overall, over four fifths of students passed in 2001 both examinations in 2001. A small but significant number of higher-attaining students regularly achieve high grades at AS and A-level and use the subject as a basis for higher education.

184 Teaching in the two lessons observed was good. The teacher had prepared comprehensive course notes that enabled all students to understand the course well enough to gain a pass, and gave clear explanations of technical vocabulary and the thinking behind it. This helped students who were not confident in using formal language to engage with abstract ideas, and ensured that higher-attaining students were able to work at a suitably challenging level.

185 The teacher provides private study facilities for students in a large converted room, and encourages private reading and study, for example by selecting suitable periodicals. At the time of the inspection, however, students did not have enough ICT facilities, either for research or to present their work. Despite the good quality of the course, and consistent personal encouragement and feedback from the teacher, the achievement of roughly a third during the inspection, especially in Year 12, was limited by poor attendance.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

186 English was fully inspected and the AS course in French was sampled. English is more successful than most subjects in recruiting students, and its entry numbers have been maintained. It is also successful in retaining students – of the seven candidates entering for AS English in 2001, six have remained to follow the A level course. Students taking English believe they have benefited from staying in the school for their post-16 education. They enjoy the courses and profit from the thorough and helpful assessment of their work. They feel that relationships with teachers are friendly but appropriately formal when required and they appreciate the personal support and encouragement. The AS course for French had only one student at the time of the inspection. This student has no contact with other advanced language students, and the school cannot offer a suitably challenging and stimulating environment for learning outside lessons.

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

Strengths:

- The quality of teaching is very good.
- Relationships in the classroom are good.

Area for development:

- Students need more encouragement and opportunity to learn independently.

187 Comparative judgements on the standards at A level are difficult because of the small numbers of students entered. Overall, results are below average, but they have improved since the last inspection, and are good in relation to the standards reached by students joining the sixth form. In 2001, all candidates achieved pass grades, including three B grades, and all Year 12 students taking AS level passed. There is no significant difference between the attainment of male and female students. Since 1999 all students taking A level English have achieved a pass grade.

188 Standards in Year 13 during the inspection showed further improvement from the most recent A level results, and were broadly average. In class and in written work, students show the capacity to read and respond to literature perceptively and in detail. They use evidence from texts well to support their oral and written answers, and inform their answers by referring to critical material, both from books and the Internet. Students in Year 12 showed good knowledge and understanding of *Hamlet* in preparing for and participating in an exercise in answering questions in the role of Gertrude. They responded confidently and articulately about “her” feelings, showing good knowledge of the play. In the study of *Death of a Salesman*, students read the text expressively, not afraid to attempt the appropriate accent, and responded well to questions, showing some perception of Willy as a tragic hero. Students in year 13 recognised the satirical implications in *The Prologue to the Canterbury Tales*, coped with the middle English text and confidently prepared an essay on the different levels of satire used for four characters. In practice for the unseen criticism paper, students worked well in groups to prepare critical responses to an extract from Iris Murdoch’s *The Sea, The Sea*. They presented their findings articulately.

189 In discussion and in writing, students can justify their conclusions, but are not yet able to use the appropriate terminology of practical criticism. Year 12 students following the Key Skills – Communication course participated with interest in the exploration of *Responses to the Holocaust* in literature, art and music as the “challenge” they were undertaking for their portfolio. They could identify, with help, the psychological characteristics illustrated in Christa Woolf’s *A Model Childhood*, perceiving the sense

of shame and guilt and contributing perceptively to discussion. However, this course during the inspection was poorly attended, with only two students taking part.

- 190 Teaching is very good, informed by good experience, knowledge and understanding. Teachers know their students well. Lessons have good academic rigour, but students are comfortable in their relationships and so respond well, working with interest in a good-humoured atmosphere. Students' work is very carefully and helpfully marked. Teachers prepare a range of very good support materials, which develop students' understanding well, but more encouragement of independent learning would make them less reliant on their teachers. This is made much more difficult by the poor resources and facilities for study in the library. There is good literacy development in the variety of tasks and activities though no contribution is made to numeracy development. Students make good use of ICT.
- 191 Leadership and management are good. The equitable sharing of teaching within the English department gives students a valuable variety of experience. Provision is well organised, and change in the nature of sixth form courses has been confidently and capably managed.

French

- 192 The overall quality of teaching is good, and it was very good in the lesson that was observed. The teacher planned an interesting and demanding range of activities, involving speaking, listening, reading and writing, and the lesson was carried out exclusively in French. The teacher had a very effective approach to correcting errors, waiting until the student had finished speaking, and then returning to the points that needed attention. This gave very effective practice in composing sentences, and helped the student improve her fluency. The student is reaching broadly average standards for the AS course. There are hardly any advanced resources for the subject in the library, and there is too little use of ICT.