

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **THE KINGSWAY SCHOOL**

Cheadle

LEA area: Stockport

Unique reference number: 106141

Headteacher: Mr I Tunnard

Reporting inspector: I D Thompson  
12271

Dates of inspection: 15 - 19 April 2002

Inspection number: 190452

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Foxland Road Cheadle Cheshire
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr I Roberts
Date of previous inspection:	29 November 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
12271	I D Thompson	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it? How high are standards? a) The school's results and achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9724	B Quest-Ritson	Lay inspector		How high are standards? b) Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
19913	R Garrett	Team inspector	English	
30699	A Kemp	Team inspector	Mathematics	
14893	O Denson	Team inspector	Science	
15163	E Deeson	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
10053	J Simms	Team inspector	English as an additional language Art and design	
15051	L Kauffman	Team inspector	Equal opportunities Design and technology	
27368	M Merchant	Team inspector	Geography	
1795	J Sanderson	Team inspector	History	
20412	D Shepherd	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
4757	D Morris	Team inspector	Music	
2141	J Oxley	Team inspector	Physical education	
20716	R Grogan	Team inspector	Religious education	

19229	S Morton	Team inspector	Drama	
31672	A Porter	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
1769	M Holohan	Team inspector	Special educational needs	

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

The Kingsway School is a larger than average, 11-16 mixed comprehensive school serving an urban area of south Stockport. The school operates on two sites situated either side of a main road with some five minutes' walking distance between them. There are 1540 students on roll, from the full range of social and economic backgrounds. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is about average. The majority of students are white. Slightly more than one in ten students are from an minority ethnic background. About 100 students come from homes where the first language is other than English but very few are at an early stage of learning English. Students' standards when they join the school are broadly average overall. The proportion of students on the school's register of special educational needs is average, as is the proportion with a Statement of Special Educational Need, most of which refer to specific or moderate learning difficulties. The school is provided with additional funds to meet the needs of three students in each year who have severe learning difficulties.

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

This is a good school providing a good standard of education. The school is well led and managed with a clear direction for how it should improve. Teaching is good so that students achieve well as they move through the school and overall standards are above average. Progress since the previous inspection has been satisfactory and the school provides good value for money.

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

- Leadership and management are good.
- Teaching and learning are good – students achieve well at the school.
- Standards are above average in English and mathematics.
- Provision for students with special educational needs is very good.
- Provision for extra-curricular activities is very good overall and outstandingly good in music.

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

- Students are not doing as well as they should in science.
- Teaching is unsatisfactory overall in modern foreign languages and in physical education in Years 7-9.
- Assessment to monitor students' performance and to guide planning.
- Planning to meet the needs of students with English as an additional language.
- Statutory requirements are not met in respect of information and communication technology (ICT) and religious education in Years 10 and 11.

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The school has made satisfactory progress since it was last inspected in November 1996. High overall standards of teaching and learning have been maintained. The school's response to the key issues identified has been satisfactory although further work is needed to ensure that there is a daily act of collective worship and that statutory requirements are met for ICT and religious education in Years 10 and 11.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	C	B	B	B

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

The majority of students achieve at least as well as might be expected overall as they move through the school and many do better. It is only in science that students are consistently not doing as well as they should.

Standards in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were above average in English and mathematics and average in science. In comparison with schools taking students from similar backgrounds, results were average overall. Results in English and science were better than in the previous year; results in mathematics were not quite as good because girls' results fell. In contrast to the national picture, there was no overall gap between boys' and girls' performance. In all three subjects, boys' results are further ahead of their national averages than those of girls. The rate of improvement over the last three years has been close to the national trend of results. Students are doing well in English and mathematics in relation to their standards when they join the school; they are not doing as well as they should in science.

In the GCSE examinations in 2001, the proportions of students gaining five or more grades A\*-C and one or more grades A\*-G were above average; the proportion gaining five or more grades A\*-G was well above average. Students' overall average points score was above average in comparison with all schools and with similar schools. In comparison with schools taking their students from similar social and economic backgrounds, results were well above average for the award of five or more grades A\*-C, and for five or more grades A\*-G. For the award of one or more grades A\*-G results were above average, representing significant achievement for many students with special educational needs. Although rising steadily, results have improved at a slower rate than the national trend over the last four years. Students' best results, compared with other subjects studied, were in information technology, design and technology and English; worst results were in art and design and science. The school sets appropriate targets based on detailed analysis of students' performance. These targets were met in 2000 and exceeded in 2001.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Students' attitudes to the school are good overall but deteriorate among some, boys in particular, in Year 9.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Standards of behaviour are good, both in lessons and as students move around the school. There are instances of disruptive behaviour, but these are few.
Personal development and relationships	Students respond well to the provision that the school makes for their personal development. Relations between students and teachers are good and this helps learning.
Attendance	Attendance is good.



## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching is generally good, as is the quality of learning. Teaching is at least satisfactory in the majority of lessons and slightly more teaching is good or better than at the time of the previous inspection. Teaching is good in English and mathematics. It is satisfactory in science. Some good teaching was seen in all subjects and some very good or excellent teaching in all but two. About one lesson in twenty was judged to be unsatisfactory. Most were occasional lessons in a few departments; teaching was only unsatisfactory overall in modern foreign languages and in physical education in Years 7-9. Literacy and numeracy skills are taught satisfactorily. ICT skills are taught well in specialist lessons and across the curriculum in Years 7-9 but are not given enough attention in Years 10 and 11.

A strong feature of teaching is the way in which teachers build upon good relationships to increase students' confidence in themselves. Teachers know their subjects well, which enables them to plan lessons that are interesting and so maintain students' concentration and motivation. A feature of many lessons is the level of support that teachers provide to make sure that students learn well. Students with special educational needs are well taught by the specialist teaching and support staff, who also play a very effective part in students' learning in lessons across the school.

For the most part, teachers plan lessons well to meet the range of students' needs but the common weakness of unsatisfactory lessons is a failure to plan well enough to match the level of challenge to the needs of all students. Most students with English as an additional language learn as well as their classmates across the subjects of the curriculum. However, a common feature of many lessons is the assumption, because they are apparently fluent, that such students are able to grasp and use specialist terms and concepts. Teachers do not pay enough attention to planning for the needs of these students to ensure that they achieve as well as they should in all lessons.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory overall. Statutory requirements are not met for religious education and ICT in Years 10 and 11. Provision for extra-curricular activities is very good
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good, with very good support.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory overall, but in some lessons not enough consideration is given to students' language needs.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good, with many opportunities for students' personal development. Students participate in many social and cultural activities. Statutory requirements for collective worship are not met.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good standards of care overall. Monitoring procedures are better for personal than academic development because assessment information is not always used well enough.

The school has good relationships with parents and works well with them to ensure that students are well supported as they move through the school. Provision for students with special educational needs is a particular strength of the school. Provision for extra-curricular activities is very good and for music it is outstanding.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher and senior staff provide clear leadership and direction for improvement. Most departments are well led and have clear plans for improvement.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are very well informed and play a very full role in shaping its future. Governors do not meet their statutory responsibilities in relation to acts of collective worship or for ICT and religious education in Years 10 and 11.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Generally good, particularly by the leadership group. Progress towards the targets of the school's development plan is reviewed regularly.
The strategic use of resources	The school receives an above average budget and makes good use of its resources so that standards are above average. Spending is planned carefully and closely linked to the school's priorities. The principles of best value are applied well.

There is a satisfactory match between the school's staff and its curriculum needs. Accommodation is well maintained and meets the needs of the curriculum satisfactorily. The school has good resources for learning.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school expects students to work hard and achieve their best.</li> <li>• Students make good progress in school and their personal development is good.</li> <li>• The teaching is good.</li> <li>• The school is approachable.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The quality and consistency of homework.</li> <li>• Behaviour in and out of lessons.</li> </ul>

Inspectors agree with parents' positive views. Overall, the amount of homework is reasonable. Behaviour is generally good, although there are a few instances of unruly behaviour and some poor behaviour among a minority of students, mainly boys, in Year 9.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

- Overall standards are above average.
- The majority of students achieve well.
- The school exceeded its GCSE targets in 2001.
- Standards of literacy and numeracy are broadly average.
- Students with special educational needs make very good progress towards their targets.
- Students with English as an additional language make satisfactory progress in most lessons but their achievement is not monitored closely enough.

1. The majority of students achieve well overall as they move through the school. The students who took their GCSE examinations last year entered the school with broadly average standards and left the school with above average standards. It is only in science that students are consistently not doing as well as they should. Overall standards are much the same as at the time of the previous inspection, although there are variations between subjects. Standards in design and technology, geography, history and mathematics have improved and high standards have been maintained in music. In English, standards fell and then recovered to a similar level. Standards in physical education and religious education are much as they were. Standards have fallen in modern foreign languages. They are also not as good as they were in art and design and science but in both subjects there are signs of improvement.
2. Standards in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were above average in English and mathematics and average in science. In comparison with schools taking students from similar backgrounds, results were average overall, above average in mathematics but below average in science. Results in English and science were better than in the previous year; results in mathematics were not quite as good because girls' results fell. In contrast to the national picture, there was no overall gap between boys' and girls' performance. In all three subjects, boys' results are further ahead of their national averages than those of girls. The rate of improvement over the last three years has been close to the national trend of results. Students are doing well in English and mathematics in relation to their standards when they join the school; they are not doing as well as they should in science.
3. The standards of work seen during the inspection confirm the results of the 2001 national tests. These standards represent good achievement in English and mathematics and satisfactory achievement in science.
4. In the work seen in other subjects, standards are above average in design and technology, geography, history and music. They are average in all other subjects except information and communication technology (ICT) and physical education, in which they are below average. Students achieve well in relation to their standards on entry to the school in all subjects except art and design, ICT, modern foreign languages, physical education and religious education, in which achievement is satisfactory.
5. In the GCSE examinations in 2001, the proportions of students gaining five or more grades A\*-C and one or more grades A\*-G were above average; the proportion gaining five or more grades A\*-G was well above average. Students' overall average points score was above average in comparison with all schools and with similar schools. In comparison with schools taking their students from similar social and economic backgrounds, results were well above average for the award of five or more grades A\*-C, and for five or more grades A\*-G. For the award of one or more grades A\*-G results were above average, representing significant achievement for many students with special educational needs. Although rising steadily, results have improved at a slower rate than the national trend over the last four years. Students' best results, compared with other subjects studied, were in information technology, design and technology and English; worst results were in

art and design and science. The school sets appropriate targets based on detailed analysis of students' performance. These targets were met in 2000 and exceeded in 2001.

6. In work seen during the inspection, standards are well above average in design and technology, above average in drama, English, geography, history, mathematics and music. Standards are average in all other subjects except ICT and religious education, in which they are below average. These standards represent satisfactory achievement in relation to students' standards at the end of Year 9 in art and design, ICT, music, physical education and science and good achievement in all other subjects except religious education, in which achievement is unsatisfactory - students are not doing as well as they should because of the low amount of time allocated to the subject.
7. Standards of literacy are broadly average. Most students are competent readers because of the effective reading practice in English lessons and the additional support given to students who enter the school with lower than average skills. A number of departments, such as design and technology, have a focus on literacy in their schemes of work but implementation of the literacy policy is inconsistent across the school. The result is that in all years there are persistent errors in spelling and punctuation.
8. Standards of numeracy are average. Data handling skills are satisfactory and developed in subjects across the curriculum. Students are able to use formulae in calculations in science and ICT. They use different forms of presenting results such as graphs and pie charts competently. In design and technology, students use weights and measures accurately; in history they understand chronology and are able to interpret simple statistical information.
9. The achievement of gifted and talented students is generally satisfactory. Occasionally they are not stretched enough but this is usually in lessons where the overall level of challenge is not matched well enough to all students' needs. Gifted and talented students achieve very well in design and technology and drama. Achievement is good in geography and music but unsatisfactory in physical education in Years 7-9 because the level of challenge is not matched consistently to their needs.
10. Students with English as an additional language make similar progress to their classmates in most lessons. However, the school has no assessment procedures to evaluate or monitor the achievement of students with English as an additional language, so management and teachers do not really know whether these students are achieving their potential. In most subjects, their progress appears to be similar to their peers. However, evidence from some subjects, notably English, indicates that work is not always planned well enough to meet their language needs. This is particularly so for the majority of students who have good oral competence with informal 'street' language, but whose written work lags well behind the level of their oral usage.
11. The school has a significant number of students with a wide range of special educational needs, including an increasing number with severe learning difficulties. The great majority make very good progress towards their identified learning and behaviour targets. Those students who arrive at the school with reading difficulties receive extra tuition and well-planned support that enables them to benefit from the full curriculum. A principal factor in their progress is the teaching skill of the staff responsible for students with special educational needs. Similarly, students are greatly assisted by the expertise of the support staff, which enables students with specific learning difficulties to experience the full range of learning opportunities and ensures that students with behavioural problems are positively involved in lessons. Students with communication difficulties achieve well as a result of skilled support, both from school staff and from visiting services. Sign language is also used well to support spoken language.

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

- Students' attitudes to the school are good overall.
- Most are interested in their studies though there are some variations between year groups.
- Standards of behaviour are good, both in lessons and as students move around the school.
- There are instances of disruptive behaviour, but these are few.
- Students respond well to the provision that the school makes for their personal

development.

- Relations between students and teachers are good and this helps learning.
- Attendance is above the national average.

12. On balance, students' attitudes to the school and to their studies are good. There are, however, differences between year groups. Attitudes are strong in Years 7 and 8. They deteriorate among some groups of students, boys in particular, in Year 9. For example, in a Year 9 science lesson about magnetism, some students were passive and reacted in a childish manner when asked to listen for sounds on the apparatus. By Year 11, with approaching GCSE examinations, students' attitudes and levels of interest have improved again. There is a correlation between good teaching and student motivation. When teachers set high standards and are enthusiastic about their subjects, students respond with greater concentration and work harder. In a Year 11 English lesson, in response to the teacher's enthusiasm and sensitive questioning, students were keen to elaborate their answers and this developed into a very good class discussion. In a Year 7 lesson for students starting to learn about the water cycle in geography, the teacher's enthusiasm and high expectations prompted them to think for themselves and captured their interest.
13. Standards of behaviour are good overall. Students behave well in lessons: they are friendly and pleasant. There are some instances of disruptive behaviour in classes, but these are few. Students also behave well as they move around the school. Both sites are large and students have considerable freedom in where they can go. On the whole, they enjoy the space sensibly. However, the underpass, stairs and some corridors become very congested between lessons and this can cause problems if students are inconsiderate and push. There are cases of bullying. Most students interviewed believe that they are reported and dealt with promptly. Levels of exclusion, both permanent and for a fixed period, are about average for a school of this size and type.
14. Students respond well to the provision that the school makes for their personal development. They feel the year councils allow them to voice their opinions and that the school listens to their views. Students enjoy the many extra-curricular activities and the many trips and visits. Musical events in particular were singled out. Students feel they benefit from the inclusive nature of the school. They consider it morally right for students with severe learning difficulties to be there and generally feel protective towards them. The level of charitable fund-raising is noteworthy. Students make a corporate effort, especially in the years where they have a sponsored walk, and give a lot of money – their target is over £15,000 - to a range of charities that they choose themselves. Students can work well independently when they are given the opportunity. This is most developed among older students who are responsible for their own learning. Good examples of such independent work were seen in English and mathematics lessons during the inspection. Students' hard work led to high standards in those lessons. Relationships are also good. Most students can collaborate well among themselves. Relationships are also good between students and teachers. Students have confidence in teachers and tutors. This helps to sustain a good working atmosphere in lessons, which aids learning.
15. Students with English as an additional language generally mix extremely well with others in their groups. Their language development is almost always good enough to enable them to integrate well and social behaviour is indistinguishable from that of their peers. The very few who have entered the country recently with lower levels of English competence are initially assessed by the local education authority and only for individuals who have other special educational needs does any difficulty exist. In some cases, the learning support department is well aware of these complex needs, but behaviour in lessons sometimes indicates that not all these individuals' needs are fully met.
16. Most students with special educational needs have positive attitudes to learning. The clear expectations of staff enable them to develop both self esteem and confidence. In a Year 7 literacy lesson, for example, it was evident that students were concentrating well and were committed both to the development of their reading and a desire to work co-operatively in discussion. Relationships with staff are positive and the atmosphere within the learning support centre is calm and industrious.

17. Students with severe learning difficulties derive great benefits from the positive approach of both staff and their fellow students. The supportive atmosphere of the department is further enhanced by the “buddy” system in which friendships are formed between students with learning difficulties and their classmates. As a result, they make demonstrable progress in their development of self esteem and confidence. Their days in school are characterised by eagerness to learn and a developing self worth.
18. Attendance is good. The rate of attendance for the academic year 2000/2001 was 91.7 per cent, above the national average of 90.9 per cent. Authorised absence in the school was 7.8 per cent compared with 8.1 per cent nationally. Unauthorised absence was 0.4 per cent, below the national average of 1.1 per cent. Attendance in all year groups was over 90 per cent.
19. Standards have been maintained since the previous inspection.

## HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

- Teaching is good overall in all years.
- Teachers and classroom assistants provide good support for students and build their confidence.
- Teachers know their subjects well and plan interesting lessons.
- Students with special educational needs are well taught by the specialist teaching and support staff.
- Most lessons are planned to meet students’ needs but a few do not provide an appropriate level of challenge for all students.

20. The quality of teaching, and of the learning that such teaching promotes, is good overall in all years. Teaching was at least satisfactory in the majority of lessons seen during the inspection and was good or better in more than two thirds, slightly more than at the time of the previous inspection. Some good teaching was seen in all subjects and some very good or excellent teaching in all but two. About one lesson in twenty was judged to be unsatisfactory. Most were occasional lessons in a few departments; teaching was only unsatisfactory overall in modern foreign languages and in physical education in Years 7-9. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory in science and religious education. It is good in all other subjects.
21. A strong feature of teaching is the way in which teachers build upon good relationships to increase students’ confidence in themselves. In mathematics, very good relationships encourage students to take a full part in lessons and develop confidence in their learning, for example by ensuring that previous learning is recalled well at the start of a lesson. In a very good food technology lesson, all students presented their research findings to the class, speaking with confidence. The teacher created an enthusiastic atmosphere in which all views were respected and the expression of them encouraged. Not only did this lesson reinforce students’ previous learning very well, it made a very good contribution to their personal development. Similarly, in an excellent Year 10 German lesson for lower attainers, students were having fun and learning almost without noticing. The way in which the teacher drove a variety of interesting activities at a cracking pace drew students into a spirit of mutual support. The visual examples chosen by the teacher were amusing but made a clear connection between words and meaning to reinforce learning so that students had the confidence to risk making mistakes as they tried hard to offer answers in the foreign language.
22. Teachers know their subjects well, which enables them to plan lessons that are interesting and so maintain students’ concentration and motivation. For example, a Year 10 geography lesson provided a variety of short, interesting tasks that were well matched to students’ needs. The way in which the teacher managed students’ behaviour, involved them in their work and worked hard to keep them at full stretch resulted in good learning.
23. A feature of many lessons is the level of support that teachers provide to make sure that students learn well. In a Year 7 art and design lesson, the teacher constantly referred to the objectives of the lesson, giving examples, to remind students of what they were expected to do, and kept up a steady stream of advice and practical guidance to promote very good learning. In the same

lesson, a learning support assistant worked very well with a student who had learning difficulties to ensure that the student made similarly very good progress to the rest of the class. It was clear that the support assistant was familiar with the lesson plan and sensitive support was given to enable progress without too much intervention.

24. For the most part, teachers plan lessons well to meet the range of students' needs but the common weakness of unsatisfactory lessons is a failure to plan well enough to match the level of challenge to the needs of all students. For example in a Year 9 French lesson, the aim of the lesson was too narrow and expectations were too low, so that higher attaining students were not stretched. In another French lesson, insufficient attention to the needs of lower attaining students meant that they struggled to cope with the work. In a Year 9 physical education lesson, students made little progress because the activities offered lacked variety and challenge. Similarly in a Year 11 lesson too many students made unsatisfactory progress because all were given the same activity, which did not match the range of attainment in the class. Most students with English as an additional language learn as well as their peers across the subjects of the curriculum. However, a common feature of many lessons is the assumption, because they are apparently fluent, that students who have English as an additional language are able to grasp and use specialist terms and concepts. Teachers in some subjects such as design and technology and modern foreign languages adjust lessons well to accommodate their needs. In other subjects, such as English and art, teachers do not pay enough attention to planning for the needs of these students to ensure that they achieve as well as they should in all lessons.
25. The teaching of literacy is satisfactory overall, with good practice in some departments. A literacy and numeracy group meets once every half term. This group is intended to represent all departments within the school. In practice, however, only members of the English, food technology, geography, history, mathematics, science, and learning support departments attend regularly. This means that other departments are missing opportunities to develop skills in the teaching of literacy. The teaching of numeracy is satisfactory. Teachers in many subjects across the school take advantage of opportunities to develop students' skills in applying number to practical situations in their work.
26. Students with special educational needs are well taught by the specialist teaching and support staff. Teachers have a thorough knowledge of students that enables them to plan lessons well to meet individual needs. In a Year 7 spelling lesson, for example, the use of word bingo and the generation of a fast pace to the lesson ensured that interest was maintained throughout. There is a clear emphasis on developing students' learning skills through analysis of text or the use of computers for research purposes, such as a student producing a sheet of research data on the work of Van Gogh as part of a project. Similarly, students with specific learning difficulties are also encouraged to develop independent learning skills. One student, for example, was able to retrace his visit to the zoo on a map. Teachers have successfully created a supportive learning environment that meets students' needs and this plays a significant part in the progress they make. Support staff play a very effective role in the teaching of students within lessons. Subject teachers are provided with good quality support and imaginative resources that enable the explanation of difficult concepts in subjects such as design and technology and history. The success of this support is enhanced when departmental planning takes full account of the needs of lower attaining students. However, planning varies between departments. In design and technology, for example, it is well developed whereas in science it is not yet planned well enough.
27. The quality of teaching is much the same as it was at the time of the previous inspection. The weakness in matching levels of challenge to students' needs that was identified in physical education is still present in some lessons.

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

- Provision for students with special educational needs is very good.
- Provision for extra-curricular activities is very good.
- Provision for students' personal development is good overall and good in the areas of moral,

- social and cultural development.
- Careers education is good.
- Statutory requirements are not met in respect of ICT and religious education in Years 10 and 11.
- Better planning is needed to meet the needs of students who have English as an additional language.
- Opportunities are missed to promote spiritual development.

28. Overall, the quality and range of learning opportunities offered throughout the school are satisfactory but some statutory requirements are not met. Subject departments do not fully meet the requirements to teach the elements of ICT identified in the National Curriculum. In Years 10 and 11, religious education is taught to all students for one hour a week for seven weeks. The recommended time allocation is one hour every week. This means that there is no opportunity to develop the topics in sufficient detail to meet the requirements of the agreed syllabus. This issue was raised in the previous inspection report and the situation is still unsatisfactory.
29. In Years 7-9, students study the subjects of the National Curriculum, religious education and personal, social and health education – including sex education and drugs awareness. The time allocation to subjects is satisfactory, except for the second modern foreign language, which does not have enough time spent on it. In Years 10 and 11 a standard curriculum is followed by most students, with a small number following an alternative curriculum directly suited to their individual needs.
30. There are plans to change the curriculum from September 2003 to offer vocational courses to students, but there are none currently in place. At present, some students take work-related courses at the local college, returning to school for some of their lessons. The school regularly reviews its provision and seeks ways to raise standards by improving it.
31. The school's policy on inclusion is to allow all students access to the whole curriculum, modifying it when necessary to provide an alternative curriculum for a few students who are not required to study some National Curriculum subjects. This provision consists of modules of work that are accredited by AQA (Assessment and Qualifications Authority). This accreditation is also used to validate work experience, which all students undertake in Year 10. Library provision is positive in its approach to equal opportunity but there is only one library on the upper school site. All students have access to appropriate examinations options, but the choice of ICT is linked to design and technology. In-service training, developing teaching and learning methods, as well as knowledge of students' favoured learning styles, have been part of the development of equality of opportunity in learning. Teachers and students understand that they all learn in different ways. Planning in the curriculum reflects this need in most subjects. The range of extra-curricular activities provides a good match to the needs of both girls and boys.
32. Overall, the provision made for students with special educational needs is very good. Kingsway is an inclusive school that provides particularly well for students with severe learning difficulties (SLD). Provision is enhanced by a the well-trained and committed support staff, who enable students with SLD to participate fully in the life of the school, and links with external support services that provide effective support, particularly in the development of students' communication skills. Extra lessons using 'Successmaker' and 'Spellwell' software give valuable additional support to the students' development of basic skills. Similarly, the teaching of study skills has also had a positive impact on students' achievements. The establishment of a student support centre is successful in providing support for students who are potentially disaffected and at risk of exclusion. This is further aided by well-directed classroom support to assist students with behavioural problems. The school is aware, however, of the need to ensure that work is provided by all departments for students in the support centre to ensure that their pace of learning is maintained.
33. Training in Makaton symbols (a system of signs and simplified images to help students to read and understand) is a further development that enhances the communication of students with SLD.
34. Some subjects' schemes of work plan well for the curricular needs of students with English as an additional language. In these subjects they make good progress and achieve well. Examples of



this lie in design and technology and modern foreign languages. Other departments do not give enough thought to these needs, particularly the requirements of students who have a good, informal, oral language competence. These students often need help with both written work and with their ability to switch to a more formal style of oral address when appropriate, for example when talking to teachers or other adults.

35. The provision for developing students' literacy is satisfactory. Both fiction and non-fiction books have been bought for departments to supplement the private reading that provides the opening for all English lessons. The geography department, for example, is promoting the reading of suitable texts as part of this initiative. There is a satisfactory framework in place to support those students whose literacy skills are weak. Between 30 and 35 students attended each of the literacy schools held in the last two summer holidays. Those who are still at a below average level on entry to the school follow the literacy progress units that are a part of the National Literacy Strategy materials. Students then retake the standardised test at the end of the year. All other students take the optional papers so that everyone has the chance to have an end-of-year assessment. Accuracy in spelling is promoted through the use of the 'Spellwell' programme. Support and extension work is a feature of this while Year 8 students work on their own individual spelling weaknesses.
36. The provision for developing students' numeracy skills through subjects other than mathematics is satisfactory. Students are given planned opportunities to apply their skills in a variety of ways in subjects across the curriculum, for example, using formulae in calculations in science, weighing and measuring in design and technology and simple statistical work in history, using a variety of graphs to illustrate data.
37. The range of opportunities for extra-curricular activities is very good. A number of sporting activities is attended by about ten per cent of students and supervised by 15 staff. In addition to this there is a thriving music department that offers a wide range of opportunities for performance. Large numbers of students take lessons from peripatetic teachers. Homework and revision clubs are established and are well attended. There is a variety of educational visits to theatres, art galleries and places of interest as well as foreign visits to France and Germany. Many students are actively involved in fund-raising activities for charity.
38. The school has good links with the local community that contribute to students' development. There is an extensive list of contacts through the Kingsway Partnership, which distributes a bulletin about its activities twice a year. Students have benefited from many joint projects, notably in the food technology area, such as the successes in the 'Masterchef' competition. The school makes a significant contribution to the community through extensive charitable fund-raising. A locally based charity is always included: the Royal Schools for the Deaf have benefited. The slow rate of business community sponsorship for the technology college bid has been a disappointment.
39. Links with partner institutions are good, particularly with primary schools. The school manages well its links with the many schools that send students to Kingsway. The successful curricular links for French and science that have been established with the local cluster of schools are part of the drive to raise standards.
40. The provision for personal, social and health education is good. In Years 7 and 8, all students follow a course for one hour per week. This covers all the requirements and is taught by the form tutors. In Years 9, 10 and 11, personal, social and health education continues to be taught and, in addition, one hour every two weeks is spent on developing study skills and careers knowledge. The school's provision for careers education for students was a key issue in the previous inspection. There have been considerable improvements. Careers education is now taught as a timetabled subject by members of the senior management team, interested teachers and careers staff. The programme includes lessons in study skills with good guidance on revision techniques before examinations. The programme is well planned and meets students' needs well. Provision is now good and promotes good learning.

41. Provision for students' spiritual development is satisfactory but there is scope for improvement. A recent survey of contributions by departments has raised awareness but the school lacks a policy for promoting this aspect of personal development across the curriculum. Since the previous inspection, the school has developed the 'thought for the day' programme, to provide a focus for quiet reflection at the start of each day. It is well planned and includes contributions from students. In practice, the theme was discussed in half the sessions observed and received no more than a cursory mention in others. The year assemblies during the inspection week made a good contribution to students' moral and social development, informing them of the charities they are supporting this year. Only the Year 9 assembly met the requirements for an act of collective worship; it included some impressive hymn singing from the students. The school's commitment to inclusion, through the resourced provision for students with severe learning difficulties, is having an influence on the spiritual values of students, helping them to appreciate the unique value of each human being. Opportunities for spiritual reflection are satisfactory in most subjects and good in drama, geography and music. Opportunities are being missed in science and ICT. Religious education develops students' spirituality well in Years 7 to 9 but the low amount of time for the subject reduces its effectiveness in Years 10 and 11.
42. Provision for students' moral development is strong. Every opportunity is taken – including posting maxims in corridors - to emphasise the school's values of striving for high standards and respecting persons and the environment. A strong behaviour policy and a system of fair rules are reinforced by suitable incentives and sanctions. In religious education, moral issues relating to the sanctity of life are explored in depth in Year 9, and Christian ethics inform discussion of racial prejudice and environmental pollution in Years 10 and 11. Similar discussions take place in geography over the destruction of the rain forests and in design and technology, where the idea of careful use of resources and recycling is emphasised. Topics for drama explore effectively issues of bullying, homelessness and the plight of refugees.
43. There is good provision for students' social development across the curriculum and outside the classroom. The social education programme includes citizenship, which develops students' understanding of their rights and responsibilities. History also makes a valuable contribution to students' understanding of the development of democratic institutions. Students have a voice in saying how the school is run, through their elected year councils. The students choose which charities to support in the annual fund-raising event, which brings out the whole community to demonstrate concern for others. Preparations for this year's sponsored walk were in progress during inspection week and the school is looking to exceed its average of £15000 for each of the previous events. Valuable support is also given to a school in Kenya, which has recognised the partnership by adopting the Kingsway name.
44. Cultural development is promoted well in the taught curriculum and in the range of extra-curricular activities. Provision outside lessons is mainly for European culture. Music makes a special contribution through opportunities for students to take part in various orchestras, bands and choirs, including the annual brass band workshop conducted by the Black Dyke Band. Drama and music take it in turns to stage the annual school production, which gives opportunity for many students to perform. In addition, there are visits to art galleries, theatres and concert halls, as well as field trips in humanities and trips abroad with the modern foreign languages department. There are good examples of multicultural work in food technology, textiles and art. Similarly in history, geography and religious education there are opportunities to study the culture and beliefs of other people. These include a 'World Religions Week', which enjoys the support of local churches but not other faiths.
45. The school makes excellent provision for the personal development of students with SLD. Their spiritual development is enhanced by sensitive teaching in religious education, which makes effective use of group work allowing the full participation of students with SLD. The strong emphasis placed on social development is reflected in the wide range of activities in which these students participate. From lively participation in school discos to attendance at adventure holidays the students derive great benefit, which results in much enhanced social skills. The success of the "buddy" scheme and the feeling of belonging that this generates are reflected in their lively conversations with fellow students and their inclusion in invitations to birthday parties.

46. The emphasis on developing students' self confidence is evident in a wide range of activities, such as a residential weekend in Anglesey or students undertaking semi-independent travel to the Lowry Centre to see 'The Wizard of Oz'. The moral aspect of students' development is supported by the very strong relationships that exist with staff in which all students feel valued and respected.
47. There has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. Most of the key issues relating to the curriculum have been dealt with but the issue relating to religious education in Years 10 and 11 remains.

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

- There are good procedures to ensure the general welfare of students and for child protection.
- Monitoring of students' personal development is good.
- Monitoring of academic progress is satisfactory but there are inconsistencies in the use of assessment in subject departments.
- These variations affect the quality of the educational support and guidance that students receive, though on balance it is satisfactory.

48. The school looks after the students in its care well. Despite the large size of the school, students are well known to members of staff. Tutors, learning co-ordinators and heads of year use their knowledge to help students. The school's good procedures for child protection follow local guidance. The head of the upper school is the designated teacher and has been trained. All members of staff are briefed on these procedures as part of their induction. There is also a useful short summary in the staff handbook. Attendance is monitored efficiently. Registers are scanned very promptly so that the attendance officer can contact parents on the first morning of absence. Good attendance is rewarded. The school is aware that the open nature of the sites could cause problems and makes unannounced truancy checks.
49. The procedures to encourage good behaviour and to enforce discipline are also effective. Students are aware of the standards expected and the consequences of infringing them. Students interviewed considered that both rewards and sanctions were fairly awarded. They consider that the school handles instances of bullying within the school effectively. The student support centre – still in its early stages – is efficiently run and beginning to show results with disaffected students. There are good procedures to ensure students' safety, both within the school and on visits outside. The underpass and road crossing present an awkward problem for the school since they are public thoroughfares. Members of staff are on duty when lessons change and CCTV cameras are in use. Nevertheless, students sometimes put themselves at risk by ignoring the pedestrian crossing signals when not directly supervised.
50. Students' personal development and progress are monitored well. The learning co-ordinators, attached to year groups, fulfil an interesting and effective role in combining the overall planning of the pastoral curriculum (the provision for students' personal and social development) with the monitoring of students' personal progress. They do this by visiting lessons to observe how well students learn and to check the effort they make, their attitude to work, their behaviour and general organisation. This monitoring gives a good overview of students' personal progress.
51. The procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress are satisfactory. Results of National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, together with testing on entry, using commercially produced tests, are now applied to identify the attainment profile of students when they start at the school. This is used to place students in appropriate teaching groups, which represents an improvement since the previous inspection. Further data are gathered at the end of Years 9 and 11, together with measurements of progress based upon prior attainment data provided by the local education authority. This information is placed upon a central database and the development of this recording facility is currently under review. From this wealth of data, predictions are made for each student, which potentially form a basis for attainment target setting. Students are generally aware of their predicted grades, but this is only rarely translated into personal targets to assist the predictions to become a reality. Each department has an assessment policy statement, developed with reference to broad guiding principles for the whole school. However, there is considerable variation between subjects on how assessment is interpreted, monitored and recorded. For example, in physical education students know what they are expected to achieve; the criteria are prominently displayed on the department notice board. Students' achievements are well documented on the computer and are graded according to National Curriculum standards. Some other departments have yet to reach this standard of sophistication. The school produces a report containing an effort grade for each subject. This is sent home each term, providing a cumulative commentary that enables parents, students and the school to monitor variations and to identify any emerging issues. This is added to the annual overall report that each student receives summarising achievement, attitude and progress. Much of this work is

overseen by learning co-ordinators who are referral points for individual students judged to be in need of additional support and advice. This provides a useful framework to improve standards.

52. The school has an effective system to review the progress of students with special educational needs. A noteworthy feature of these reviews is their co-operative nature. Parents, teachers and the students themselves analyse progress carefully and work together to identify areas for further development. As a result, the targets produced by the learning support department are of very good quality and closely match students' needs. The school is aware of the need to amend the system of target setting by subject departments to simplify the present system. Individual behaviour plans have also been developed. There is a need to enhance the detail of these plans to meet the needs of students with more severe behavioural and emotional difficulties. The regular assessment of students with specific learning difficulties enables the school to have a clear picture of the progress made by students in all subjects.
53. The well-planned provision for students with special educational needs extends to ensuring their access to external examinations through the use of scribes or other support that enables them to complete their examination work. The school is aware of the need to develop external accreditation opportunities for students with severe learning difficulties.
54. The school's assessment systems do not allow for individual or group monitoring of the achievement of students with English as an additional language, with the result that the school cannot meet the current requirements to provide evidence of these students' achievement. The learning support department uses assessment, particularly initial assessments of needs, but until the new head of department arrived this year, students with English as an additional language were regarded as no different from others with special educational needs. These threads are beginning to be untangled and part of the department's development plan is to assess and monitor these students' real achievement. The inspection team's judgement is that most students with English as an additional language make good progress similar to that of their peers. However, because the school's assessment systems provide insufficient evidence about these students' achievement, either individually or as ethnic groups, no hard evidence exists. Provision for students with English as an additional language relies too heavily on individual teachers' competence as good teachers. No training has recently been given to help teachers with planning, especially for the needs of students with higher levels of competence whose informal oral language is good, but whose language is inappropriate for written work or for speaking in more formal circumstances. This is an urgent issue for the school and needs to be considered in the light of the key issue related to assessment and the school's use of data.
55. The assessment system provides a secure basis for further development. However, inconsistencies in application and use to guide curricular change reduce its effectiveness in raising standards, identifying the performance of different groups or assessing the effectiveness of different teaching approaches.
56. The monitoring of students' personal progress is efficient. The monitoring of students' academic progress, though satisfactory, is weaker. This inevitably affects the quality and usefulness of the educational support and guidance that students receive. It is however, of a satisfactory standard overall.
57. The consistent approach by school managers to equality of opportunity ensures that all students are valued and supported. The entrance to the learning support department celebrates "We are all equally different". This statement is echoed in the ways the curriculum approaches equality issues through the personal, social and health education programme, particularly citizenship. The work of year councils promotes the concerns of students through a school wide forum.
58. The standard of care for students is similar to that described in the previous inspection report.

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

- |   |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Parents think highly of the school and what it provides for their children.</li></ul> |
|---|

- Through their support they make a good contribution to their children's learning.
- The school has effective links with parents and provides them with a good range of information.

59. Parents' views of the school are very positive. A much greater proportion than average returned the pre-inspection questionnaire. Almost all the parents who returned the questionnaire and those who attended the parents' meeting believe that the school expects their children to work hard and achieve their best. Parents consider that teaching is good in the school and that their children make good progress there. Most parents feel that the school is approachable. The inspection team agrees with parents' very positive views. A small number of parents have concerns about the quality and consistency of homework. Inspectors consider that homework set is usually appropriate and the amount is satisfactory. Some parents have concerns about standards of behaviour, particularly when students are not supervised. The inspection team consider that behaviour, both in and out of lessons, is generally good. There are some instances of unruly behaviour, but they are few.
60. The school has developed effective links with parents. A parents' forum is held each term for Year 7, Years 8 and 9, and Years 10 and 11. At these the school consults with parents on existing issues and new initiatives while parents can raise general concerns with the school. Agendas for these are published. The school is quick to contact parents when there are concerns about their children's progress or well-being, and to write home when children have done well. The school ensures that parents are well informed. The information provided for them is extensive and helpful. The prospectus is smart and well produced, accompanied by inserts which give practical information for prospective parents. There are curriculum booklets, one each for Years 7- 9, with a separate one for the GCSE Years of 10 and 11. All tell parents about programmes of study. Information about progress is provided by consultation evenings, termly effort indicators and an annual record of achievement. These combine to give parents a good view of progress, particularly since students can accompany their parents to consultation evenings. The annual records of achievement are more variable in what they tell parents. Some subject reports tell parents exactly what their children need to do in order to improve; others comment more on general attitude.
61. The learning support department has successfully established very good relationships with the students' parents. There is a mutual trust and regard that are illustrated by the 100 per cent attendance of parents at students' reviews and the way in which the views of parents are incorporated into the department's planning. Relationships are handled sensitively, for example by ensuring the presence of translators or holding meetings at students' homes. The school is also careful to provide detailed information in the form of pamphlets and other literature so that parents are fully informed as to the school's procedures.
62. Parents themselves contribute effectively to their children's education through their involvement with the school. Most planners are well used. Attendance at consultation evenings is good, (though the school also contacts those parents who do not come). Levels of unauthorised absence are below the national average. Parents give generous support to the school through the activities of the Parent Teacher Association. They attend school functions. In addition they have pledged money towards the school's bid to become a technology college.
63. The school's partnership with parents was considered effective at the time of the previous inspection. It remains so.

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

- The school is well led and managed.
- The principles of best value are applied very well.
- Monitoring of the school's performance is good.
- Financial planning is very good and the school uses its resources well to support development.
- The governing body plays a very good part in shaping the future of the school.

- Provision for students with special educational needs is very well managed.
- Management of the provision for students who have English as an additional language does not ensure that they benefit fully from the opportunities that the school provides.

64. The school is well led and managed by the headteacher and senior staff. A meticulous approach is evident in high quality documentation and analysis of results. The clear educational direction provided by the headteacher has led to high standards being maintained and a strong commitment to improvement among staff. Senior staff are a visible presence around the school, which contributes to the generally calm and purposeful atmosphere despite the potential difficulties of large movements of students between the two sites. All members of the senior management team lead by example, particularly in the classroom. For example, the headteacher and a deputy headteacher currently contribute to teaching in design and technology in order to minimise the disruption caused to students' learning by long-term absence of staff. They also play a full part in the school's mentoring system that is aimed at raising the performance of older students.
65. Monitoring of the school's performance is generally well done. Progress towards the targets of the school's development plan is reviewed regularly, as is progress in departments. Difficult issues are tackled decisively to secure improvement – a good example being the management of the science department where, although there is still much to be done, management has improved and standards are beginning to improve. The school applies the principles of best value to all its work. The results of external examinations are reviewed in depth to identify ways of improving students' performance. The school's overall performance is compared in detail with similar schools to identify areas for improvement. In addition, the school evaluates its performance by consultation, with parents through the regular meetings of the parents' forum and with students through the year councils. Development planning is thorough and firmly grounded in raising standards. Targets are based on a clear understanding of the school's strengths and where it might do better. Progress towards the targets of the development plan is monitored throughout the year and all staff have an opportunity to contribute to the annual review of progress and the identification of targets for the following year. The effectiveness of initiatives is evaluated carefully. For example, a research project is currently being carried out by a small group of staff to measure the impact of staff training in the teaching of literacy across the curriculum.
66. Financial planning is very good. A budget deficit caused by circumstances outside the school's control is being dealt with efficiently and a small surplus is forecast for this year. The spending of grant allocations has been targeted well and has helped to raise standards, for example by providing additional student support. Routine financial administration is of very high quality. The headteacher and bursar keep very tight control of all finances and detailed up-to-date information is always available. The school runs smoothly and efficiently on a daily basis, making very good use of new technology. The school receives an above average budget and makes good use of its resources so that standards are above average. Overall, the school provides good value for money.
67. The only weakness in the school's management is the failure of the governing body to fulfil some of its statutory duties. Students in Years 10 and 11 are not receiving their entitlement to be taught the full National Curriculum in ICT and insufficient time is provided to meet the requirements of the local Agreed Syllabus for religious education. The frequency of acts of collective worship does not meet requirements. However, governors have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and can discuss knowledgeable aspects of the school's work such as examination results, the curriculum and finance. The school benefits considerably from the professional expertise that governors bring to their work and they play a very good part in shaping its future. Overall, the governing body discharges its responsibilities satisfactorily.
68. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching take place through departments and as part of the process of performance management. Although these are satisfactorily carried out overall, the head of art has not yet been included in observations after a year in the school, and it is not clear that evaluation of the quality of teaching is sufficiently rigorous or that management does enough to ensure that teaching expertise is shared widely across the school. The process for teachers'

professional development is satisfactorily managed. Staff development is linked to the school's needs as identified in the school development plan. Some specific evaluation of training takes place. All staff have an individual training plan. Not all staff have yet completed training in the use of ICT to support learning. Performance management has been introduced and accepted as a natural continuation of the appraisal process previously in operation. The elements of the strategy are satisfactory.

69. The provision for students with special educational needs is very well managed. The co-ordinator has a clear and effective vision of how the provision should be further developed. The establishment of a highly effective group of support staff is a strength of the provision. Their skills and regard for the students do much to enhance their learning and have a significant impact on the positive development of students with specific learning difficulties.
70. Before the recent appointment of the present special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO), it is unclear who had responsibility for the management of students with English as an additional language in the school. Little training has recently been undertaken for staff, who often request ideas about how to meet the needs of their students. Current responsibility lies with the SENCO, who also has a large special educational needs department to run and carries responsibility for the needs of gifted and talented students in the school. She has wide knowledge and understanding of students with English as an additional language, is aware of present shortcomings and has plans to strengthen the school's provision. The intertwined needs of students with both special educational needs and students with English as an additional language need to be unscrambled so that teaching staff understand clearly these differences and know how to plan effectively for them. Because most students with English as an additional language have levels of language competence that are higher than those of students with special educational needs, thought needs to be given to the provision of extra help for these students with writing for academic purposes such as assignments and examinations.
71. Management of equality of opportunity is good through a well-crafted policy statement that was the result of collaboration between the school and its governors. The policy is reviewed bi-annually and takes note of amendments to legislation. Most departments have a policy but whole-school evaluation at department level is unclear. Staff are made aware of the policy and its implications during their induction. Resources are an important part of the equality of opportunity policy and students benefit from this precise approach.
72. The match of teaching and support staff to the demands of the curriculum is satisfactory overall. Staffing is unsatisfactory in religious education because the lack of specialist teaching in Years 10 and 11 means that students do not receive their statutory entitlement to religious education. ICT also requires an extra full-time specialist teacher to meet curricular needs. There is a good induction programme for new staff, including newly qualified teachers, and mentoring arrangements are in place. The school follows the local education authority's procedures for newly qualified teachers.
73. The standard of accommodation is satisfactory. The buildings are well maintained. The headteacher and governors make finances available each year in order to maintain the improvements to the buildings. Considerable effort is put into successfully creating a pleasant learning environment and students respond by treating the buildings well. New developments, which promote learning, include the design and technology area and sporting facilities. The split site causes a reduction in lesson time but otherwise the accommodation does not impede students' learning. There are some good facilities for physical education, design and technology and English that benefit students' progress. Travelling through the underpass encourages boisterous behaviour on occasions but generally students manage the transfer reasonably well. Because of the two sites, the lunchtime arrangements are improved and very well managed. Good break time facilities ensure that overcrowding is kept to a minimum.
74. The school's provision of resources to support learning is good. The ICT resources are of very good quality and this is having a positive impact upon teaching and learning in some departments such as design and technology and geography. However, because the use of computers across the curriculum lacks co-ordination they are not used as consistently effectively as they should be



to support learning and to develop students' skills. Resources for learning are good in history, geography and design and technology, ICT and English. There is a well-stocked and very well used library and learning resource centre, which provides a good range of illustrative texts on a wide range of topics. To further encourage an interest in reading, especially among boys, the fiction section has been reclassified by genre. Categories such as *"Thrills, Spills and Danger"*, *"Burning Issues"* and *"Have a Laugh"*, for example, are intended to generate greater appeal. However, as yet, no monitoring of boys' and girls' rates of borrowing has been carried out to assess the success of the re-organisation. To promote access to non-fiction texts the booklet on research skills for Years 7 and 8 has recently been updated and departments such as art and geography place particular emphasis upon the importance of these skills. Most departments provide individual textbooks for students, and where necessary these have been updated to meet changing examination requirements and provide effective support for students' learning. Visually impaired students are effectively supported by modified learning resources and the provision of laptop computers for some students effectively assists the production of written work.

75. The strengths of management have been maintained since the previous inspection. With the exception of the issues relating to acts of collective worship and religious education in Years 10 and 11, and in part the issue relating to ICT, the key issues from the previous report have generally been tackled successfully.

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

76. To raise further the standards of work and the quality of education provided, the school should:
- (1) Meet statutory requirements in relation to ICT\* and religious education in Years 10 and 11;  
(See paragraphs: 6, 28, 67, 141, 142, 144, 166, 169)
  - (2) Improve the quality of teaching in modern foreign languages and physical education;  
(See paragraphs: 24, 27, 148, 163, 164, 165)
  - (3) Raise achievement in science\*by:  
improving the quality of teaching through the sharing of good practice;  
improving the content of the curriculum;  
(See paragraphs: 2, 97, 98, 99, 100)
  - (4) Improve the use of assessment\* to:  
inform planning of lessons to meet students' needs;  
monitor students' performance;  
support guidance;  
identify the needs of students who have English as an additional language so that teachers are aware of them and assisted in planning to meet them.  
(See paragraphs: 10, 15, 24, 34, 51, 54, 55, 70, 80, 84, 92, 104, 110, 128, 171)

*\*These items are part of the school's development planning.*

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	188
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	57

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	3	34	77	65	9	0	0
Percentage	2	18	41	35	5	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1538
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	170

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	34
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	335

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	106

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	30
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	32

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.8
National comparative data	8.1

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.4
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)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	158	150	308

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	96	120	117
	Girls	116	113	101
	Total	212	233	218
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	69 (59)	76 (73)	71 (57)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	33 (19)	50 (49)	28 (29)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	83	120	95
	Girls	98	112	79
	Total	181	232	174
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	59 (58)	76 (71)	56 (63)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	22 (24)	47 (50)	18 (35)
	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	142	156	298

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	69	133	139
	Girls	104	151	154
	Total	173	284	293
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	58 (56)	95 (89)	98 (95)
	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	41.1
	National	39.0

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

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

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	6
Indian	10
Pakistani	114
Bangladeshi	10
Chinese	6
White	1344
Any other minority ethnic group	45

### ***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	4	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	38	1
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

### ***Teachers and classes***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	94.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.3

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

Total number of education support staff	29
Total aggregate hours worked per week	699

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

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	70.4
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	25.1
Key Stage 4	20.7

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2000-01
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	£
Total income	4,010,865
Total expenditure	3,944,531
Expenditure per pupil	2,569
Balance brought forward from previous year	-84,796
Balance carried forward to next year	-18,462

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

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	19
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	19

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	2
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	1

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*



## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1538
Number of questionnaires returned	753

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	36	53	9	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	52	45	3	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	31	50	10	2	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	31	52	13	2	1
The teaching is good.	35	58	3	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	43	46	8	3	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	54	39	4	1	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	65	32	1	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	36	49	9	3	3
The school is well led and managed.	44	46	3	1	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	41	51	3	1	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	38	46	6	1	9



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

### ENGLISH

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

#### Strengths

- Teaching is good overall, particularly in relation to exam preparation, and most students achieve well as a result.
- Students' attitudes and behaviour are good because of the good relationships between teachers and students. Speaking and listening are strengths of their attainment.
- The department is well led and managed, and its capacity for improvement is good.

#### Areas for improvement

- Students who have English as an additional language are not identified in assessment information and their achievement is not monitored closely enough.
- Not all teachers draw attention to errors in students' work or explain to students how to write clearly, concisely and analytically.
- Teaching is not consistent in quality despite regular monitoring.

77. In 2001, students' performance in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 was above average and average when compared with results of similar schools. Performance in English and mathematics was similar, and better than in science. Girls' performance was better than boys', but both girls and boys performed better than they did nationally. Students' average points score was the highest since 1996, reversing the downward trend of the previous four years and bringing performance back in line with that recorded at the previous inspection in November 1996. Given that students' attainment on entry to the school has been broadly average, the figures represent good achievement, particularly for students obtaining level 6 or higher.
78. In 2001, GCSE results in English and English literature were significantly above average for A\*-C grades and above average for A\*-G grades – particularly noteworthy in the light of the high proportion of students entered for these examinations. Girls did much better than boys, and the gap between them was greater than the national difference. Students performed relatively better in English than in all other subjects except design and technology and information technology. This was not the case in English literature, where girls in particular did less well than in most of their other subjects. Nevertheless, given students' attainment in tests in 1999, these results represent at least good achievement and the department can demonstrate the highest 'added value' among Stockport schools in 2001. Such standards are at least in line with those recorded at the previous inspection.
79. In work seen during the inspection, standards are above average by the end of Years 9 and 11. Speaking and listening skills for most students are well developed and a strength of their performance. In a Year 11 class, for example, students confidently presented their comments on poems, showing an ability to command their audience's attention by good eye contact while speaking fluently and knowledgeably from notes. They answered questions with equal confidence and thoughtfulness. Occasionally these skills are not so well developed. For example, students in a Year 9 class could not give more extended replies because questions required only one-word answers. In a Year 7 class, students were not all involved in responding to the teacher. Students' reading competence can be relied on because of the effective reading practice at the start of all lessons. For example, students in a Year 7 class read aloud confidently and fluently from their own written work on the merits or otherwise of watching television. Students in a Year 10 class volunteered to read stanzas from Ted Hughes' poem *'Work and Play'* and did so accurately and with reasonable fluency. Students with special educational needs have appropriate reading targets and are well supported in achieving them. Extended writing is well developed and students can write in a variety of styles as a result of the interesting range of activities and texts provided. In Years 10 and 11 much written work is knowledgeable, thorough, detailed and well organised. Students' writing shows involvement and enjoyment. Nevertheless, throughout the age range there

are persistent errors in spelling and sentence punctuation, even among higher attainers. These students are also uncertain about how to express themselves in appropriate formal and critical language when writing analytically.

80. These above average standards of attainment represent good achievement by Year 9 students given their broadly average standards on entry to the school and by Year 11 students given their attainment in tests two years ago. This good achievement is consistent with that reported at the previous inspection. However, the achievement of some students is not as good as it should be because the department is not making sufficient use of assessment information to identify and monitor the progress of students with English as an additional language. This should ensure, for example, that the apparent competence in spoken English of students who have English as an additional language extends to a grasp of the standard of formal written expression required to achieve the highest GCSE grades. Similarly, the weaknesses in writing standards referred to above also limit achievement because some teachers do not sufficiently draw attention to them in their lessons and their marking, nor sufficiently show by their own precision of expression, or by appropriate models, how students can express themselves clearly, concisely and accurately.
81. The contribution of other subjects to improving standards of literacy is satisfactory overall, with some good practice in particular departments, most noticeably those that are regularly represented at the meetings of the literacy and numeracy group. Other departments are missing opportunities to develop teachers' skills in the teaching of literacy and thus potentially affecting the standards which students reach. All classrooms have been provided with dictionaries and thesauruses to promote the development of vocabulary and accuracy of use. It is school policy that displays of key words should be in every room. Where these displays are used effectively, such as in history and drama, the emphasis is on understanding and usage. They can then also enrich the students' work when using writing guidelines. Confidence in the use of specialist terms was evident in a Year 7 design and technology lesson when students were working on strengthening a structure. In other departments, such as ICT, the word lists are less effective as they are rarely employed as part of the lesson, although teachers do try to use specialist terms. The geography department is promoting the reading of appropriate texts. In history and design and technology the literacy strands have been embedded within the schemes of work and in design and technology specific types of writing have been identified as important areas for focus. Further monitoring needs to take place, however, to ensure that all staff meet the demands of the literacy strategy. Almost inevitably, the result of inconsistent provision means inconsistent standards in students' work. Although standards are above average overall, in writing there is evidence of insufficient attention being given to matters of spelling, grammar and punctuation. The explicit teaching of literacy skills and the incorporation of these into the teaching in all subject areas remain areas for continuing development. Further staff training and careful monitoring is needed to disseminate the good practice that has been established in several departments.
82. Students' attitudes and behaviour are good overall in lessons, and usually correspond closely to the quality of teaching they receive. Students respond particularly well when teachers make them responsible for their own learning. In a Year 11 class, for example, students prepared for and presented very good talks to the class about poems they had studied. Their student 'audience' showed excellent attitudes by their attentiveness to the speakers and the quality of their subsequent questions. A Year 9 class working on a group investigation of 'discovered documents' organised themselves well and co-operated fully in the sorting and interpretation of interesting material. Year 10 students worked very well in pairs on the *'Hearts and Partners'* material from their GCSE anthology. They listened to each other other's views with respect, but also had the confidence to challenge each other, and did so with sensitivity. Inattention and distracting behaviour occurred only once in one Year 11 class with a history of difficulties. No instances of bad behaviour occurred throughout the inspection week, reflecting teachers' good management and the good relationships they develop with their students.
83. The quality of teaching is good overall, and students' learning is similarly good. Teaching quality, however, ranges from very good to unsatisfactory (in one lesson only) and teaching is more consistently good or better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. There are implications for how teachers are deployed, how effectively teaching quality is monitored and how good practice is shared across the department. The very good teaching is characterised by high expectations,

very good models for students to follow, questioning that obliges all students to be involved and demanding activities. The teacher in one Year 11 lesson displayed all these qualities, with the result that students revising 'A Kestrel for a Knave' were busy and involved throughout the lesson. They made very good progress both in reinforcing their knowledge of the text and in selecting the points they needed to write an essay. Other teaching, though at least satisfactory or better, is flawed at times by faulty choice of activity or lack of pace in the later stages of lessons and when activities run on too long. As a result, learning is slower than it should be. This was the case in an otherwise good Year 8 lesson where because of the length of time spent on the same activity students found it difficult to maintain concentration on improvements to their narrative writing through to the end. That part of the lesson was less productive as a result. Sometimes teachers' explanations lack precision when defining words or terms so that students do not pick up the necessity for care and precision in their own use of language. Sometimes teachers do not ensure that all students have an opportunity to participate at some point in a lesson. One Year 7 lesson contained several of these teaching flaws and as a result was unsatisfactory: students did not learn as much as they should about newspaper language and style. On the other hand, teachers' helpful guidance and preparation of students for examinations are strong features of the department's work and have much to do with recent and predicted examination success.

84. There has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. Standards of attainment match the above average levels recorded at that time, and achievement continues to be good. Students continue to have positive attitudes towards their English work and clearly understand where they are. Though a higher proportion of teaching is now good or better, the teaching inconsistencies referred to above mean that improvement has been satisfactory rather than good in this respect. The head of department provides good leadership by setting high standards and by being a model of very good teaching. Her department is efficiently organised and changes in the English curriculum have been managed well. There remain areas for improvement, however, which have been mentioned at various points throughout this report and summarised in bullet points at the beginning. If these things are put right, the department's capacity for further improvement is good.

## MATHEMATICS

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

### Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good throughout the school.
- The department is receptive to change, particularly relating to teaching methods.
- Standards are above average.

### Areas for improvement

- Analysis of all assessment data to inform curricular planning is insufficiently developed.
- The use of ICT to support learning requires further development.

85. Students achieve well in all years. Their attainment on entry to the school is broadly average overall. In 2001, the overall results of National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 were above average and above average when compared to similar schools. The performance of students in mathematics is broadly the same as in English but better than in science. However, since the previous inspection, overall performance has been better than in English and science.
86. In 2001, the proportion of students gaining GCSE grades A\*-C was significantly above average and the proportion gaining grades A\*-G was above average. Results at the highest, A\*/A grades were also above the national average. Results have consistently been good and have improved during the last three years.
87. Standards in lessons and in work seen confirm the results of national tests and of GCSE examinations. Many students, including lower attainers, are able to recall, apply and explain previously taught skills. Students are able to recognise and apply effective methods of calculating percentages using a single routine. Higher attaining Year 11 students understand the underlying

principles and effectively solve problems that include irrational numbers, complex algebraic factorisation and the purpose of standard form, including the reasoning of negative indices. Lower attaining students make good progress in confidently reasoning and then calculating the area of compound shapes.

88. The contribution to developing students' numeracy skills through subjects other than mathematics is satisfactory. The whole-school numeracy policy is currently under review. Some preliminary work has been completed but a fuller consultation exercise with staff training is planned in the near future. In science, graphs are used well and data are illustrated using pie charts and scatter diagrams using lines of best fit. Students use formulae in calculating electrical energy and moments of force. More complex calculations are found in Years 10 and 11 involving chemical dilutions and volumes. Standards of presentation and accuracy are good. In design and technology a numeracy audit was carried out in preparation for the National Numeracy initiative supported by the local education authority. Areas of focus are measurement, estimation, ratio, proportion, percentages, use of scale, handling data and a common vocabulary. Examples of successful implementation are the use of tally charts and histograms and accuracy in measuring and weighing. In one lesson examples were seen of the use of templates of shapes to introduce the idea of batch production. In ICT, formulae are used in teaching spreadsheets and some students are able to explain what they are doing and how they can mentally check the answers. Students use simple statistical interpretation in history, using a variety of graphs to illustrate data. The understanding of chronology is strong in Years 7-9. Middle attaining Year 10 students were seen successfully using scales to work out mileage by roads. In the learning support department, students with severe learning difficulties were seen competently dealing with simple calculations involving spending money.
89. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. The best teaching is characterised by well-planned lessons with clear, shared objectives and by challenging question and answer methods. This approach leads to participative learning where students' opinions are valued and built upon to secure a collaborative conclusion. As a result of these very deliberate methods, students' self-esteem is enhanced. This was particularly marked in enabling higher attaining Year 11 students to work with maturity and confidence. They were secure in the validity of their own ideas, which actively supports independent learning - a useful preparation for post 16 studies. The participative style of teaching was similarly effective elsewhere. In a Year 7 lesson, students were solving simple algebraic equations. Effective use was made of an overhead projector, which clearly illustrated an incremental method of solution. The teacher gave opportunities for full class deliberation on strategies for tackling the problems. Teaching was directly aimed at encouraging students to contribute explanations for their reasoning and led to their concentrating throughout the lesson. Mathematics was taught as a thinking exercise as opposed to a set of routines or techniques applied to supply an accurate conclusion. Throughout the department, students are actively encouraged to discuss their mathematical ideas. This enables mutual learning to take place; misconceptions are dealt with sensitively and used as a part of the learning process. Lessons sometimes have too much discussion and not enough written work to provide students with an alternative and immediate method of testing their understanding and for the teacher to monitor the effectiveness of teaching and learning. Very good preparation is made for National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 and for GCSE examinations. Revision material is readily available in commercially produced workbooks together with typical test questions from other sources. Web sites for revision are identified for students to give further assistance for independent study.
90. Learning by students with special educational needs is good. They are well served by the teaching assistants, who give patient and appropriate support in many lessons, often with supplementary work to the main thrust of the lesson. In a Year 9 lesson, the teacher carefully revised the work that students had previously undertaken. The students were encouraged to share the development of the lesson and offer their views, often working from the board in writing and explaining ideas. Progress was made and the students enjoyed estimating the area of the palm of their hand by drawing on squared paper then proceeding to calculate the final answer by counting squares. Although the needs of the students were acute, many willingly participated and the classroom atmosphere was purposeful. In the rare instance when behaviour was inappropriate it was dealt with in a non-confrontational manner. Attitudes generally were very positive, which fostered enjoyable learning.

91. The introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy is clearly in evidence in many lessons. Many feature a short beginning of mental starter activities and use of wipe boards is seen in all years. Lesson endings invariably focus upon a review of what has been learned, allowing teachers to assess the effectiveness of their teaching and students to share in this reflection. The department organised a numeracy summer school for the first time last year, in collaboration with partner primary schools. This is to be repeated this year together with improvements gathered from the initial experience.
92. The head of department provides good leadership. This has particularly ensured the continuation and development of an interactive approach to teaching and learning, which has been adopted by most teachers. This open-mindedness to accept fresh ideas reflects a firmly held belief that the subject is more than a set of routines and techniques. Undoubtedly this has led to students thinking for themselves and to understanding the subject more creatively. The full record of assessment data is insufficiently used to support curricular planning; in particular, the use of data to identify achievement by different groups of students. An exception to this is where Year 11 students are predicted to achieve a grade D at GCSE. In this instance, the department has embarked upon an early entry provision, which is designed to tackle this issue. This provides a good example for further development of the analysis of assessment data. The use of a laptop computer, as a teaching aid for display purposes, is being used in some lessons. Further development and support are required if this initiative is to be implemented more widely and successfully. All students in Years 7-9 have access to computers during their mathematics lessons at some time during the year. However, not enough use is made of computers to fully support the mathematics curriculum. Little work using ICT was seen during the inspection either in displays or in the classroom.
93. Improvement has been good since the previous inspection because standards have improved. Students continue to display positive attitudes towards their work and participate very well in lessons.

## SCIENCE

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

### Strengths

- Strong leadership and the commitment of teachers to improvement.
- Relationships between teachers and students enable open discussion of performance.
- After school and holiday classes for Year 9 and Year 11 help students to improve test and examination performance.

### Areas for improvement

- Matching work consistently to students' individual needs.
- Use of assessment data to identify underachievement.
- Teachers' comments on marked work do not give students enough information about what to do to improve.

94. In the 2001 National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9, results were average in relation to national standards but were below average when compared to similar schools. Results in English and mathematics were better than those in science. Boys' results were better than girls' and the performance of boys has been better than girls over the last three years. Results in the last five years have followed the national trend but at a lower level following the marked drop in performance in 1999.
95. The 2001 GCSE examination results were below the national average for double award science and for the single sciences. The results in double award science for A\*-G grades were slightly above average but the proportion of students gaining A\*-C grades was well below average. Students' performance in double award science was significantly below their performance in other subjects. Boys' performance in double award and separate sciences was better than girls'.

96. In work seen during the inspection standards are just about at the national average by the end of Year 9 and in line with the national average at the end of Year 11. These improved standards are partly the result of the determination of the new head of department to improve standards in science and partly due to the combined efforts of the teachers to provide after school and holiday classes for Year 9 and Year 11 students. Nevertheless, a small number of students in Year 11 have been put off science by the changes in teaching staff and inconsistencies in the requirements for course work during Year 10.
97. There are some differences in standards across classes and for different groups of students. In Years 7-9, students find it difficult to give precise and detailed answers although their written descriptions are clearer than their oral ones. Some average attaining students are not reaching high enough standards because they are passive in lessons and lack the confidence and practice to explain what they are doing logically and coherently - often because lessons are too directed by the teacher and the students simply follow a set of instructions. Lower attaining students do not consistently reach high enough standards because lessons do not take sufficient account of their needs, with the result that they find it difficult to form abstract concepts and they lack the vocabulary to explain what they are doing. For example, in a Year 9 lesson on electro-magnetism, despite a very clear demonstration students did not really understand why the coil became a magnet and when asked to predict what would happen when the electricity was turned off they said they did not know or they made a wild guess.
98. Students in Years 10 and 11 overall produce good standards of written work and, by the end of Year 10, higher attaining students produce good course work. Average and lower attaining students do not get enough practice to develop independent study skills such as note taking and researching information. Their practical skills are unrefined and in a lesson looking at leaf cells Year 10 students did not use their microscopes correctly unless prompted by the teacher. Their observations are vague and they cannot draw conclusions without a lot of guidance.
99. Students' overall achievement by the end of Years 9 and 11 is satisfactory. They enter the school with attainment that is below average and by the end of Year 9 their results are average. By the end of Year 11 their results were below average last year but this followed a particularly turbulent time in the department. Higher attaining students do well in science, particularly in the double award science examinations. Teachers expect a great deal of work from these students and lessons are more demanding. The average and lower attaining students do less well because teachers set a slower pace in lessons and their expectations of students are not consistently challenging enough. For some lower attaining students the activities are not always the most appropriate to reinforce learning. For example, in a Year 10 lesson the purpose of the lesson was to plan an investigation to test a hypothesis in a physical science module. The students did not have enough knowledge of the underlying physics to really understand the hypothesis they were to test. The in-class support for lower attaining students is effective in supporting their behaviour and concentration.
100. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall in all years. In addition to the other teachers there are five new teachers in the department this year and they all have good knowledge and understanding of the subject. Teachers plan their lessons and use resources well to support learning, including, for example, a demonstration of sound waves moving the air using a speaker at low frequency and a candle flame. In one lesson home made resources were used to demonstrate a volcano and rock formation in such a way that students were able to understand an abstract concept. Teachers ensure that the presentation of students' written work is good and that students spell key words correctly and take down definitions accurately. The quality of worksheets is good. Nevertheless, in some lessons teachers rely too much on worksheets and text-books, so that students lack skills in using practical equipment and are not confident to solve problems for themselves. Teachers know their students well and have good relationships with them, to the extent that they can discuss their strengths and weaknesses easily and freely. However teachers' comments on marked work do not give students enough information about what to do to improve. When teaching is good, the pace of work is increased and students interact with the teacher and with each other. They ask searching questions and start to think about the subject, looking for and providing explanations, such as the relationship between

volatility and ignition point. In a Year 11 revision lesson, the teacher set a number of problems about the fractionation of crude oil and was keenly aware of the students' difficulties. He promptly re-capitulated but ensured that the students worked out the answers for themselves. They derived a great deal of satisfaction from this exercise.

101. Students' attitudes are satisfactory or better in most lessons. They are unsatisfactory in about one third, with a slightly larger proportion in Year 9 than in any other group. Students generally arrive to lessons promptly, despite the distance they sometimes have to move between lessons. They usually have the correct equipment and books so that lessons begin promptly. Attendance is good and there are checks to ensure that students complete any missed work. Some lower attaining students in Year 11 are passive and lack interest whatever the topic or the activity. The behaviour of some Year 9 boys causes disruption to all students and is having an impact on attainment in some classes.
102. The head of department has placed strong emphasis on the raising of standards in science and is aware that students' attitudes will be improved by raising teachers' expectations of attainment and improving students' confidence as scientists. Strong emphasis is placed on the teaching of appropriate scientific language and on numeracy skills. The use of computers in science is being developed and as laboratories are refurbished they are being equipped with computers. While they are not yet used routinely in science lessons, there is evidence of their application in schemes of work. During the inspection, a Year 10 class were using a program to get data for the effect of light on rates of photosynthesis. Students make use of their personal computers for homework and teachers encourage use of the internet for research.
103. The leadership and management of the subject are now wholly satisfactory. The head of department leads a capable team of teachers and technicians committed to improving standards in science and improving students' attitudes to the subject. He has identified key areas for development and these have formed the basis of a 12 month plan. Already there are signs of progress towards the targets he has set. There is an after school science club, attended by about 30-40 students. Holiday classes were well attended by Year 9 students and Year 11 students are attending after school classes for examination preparation. In addition 20 students recently went on a weekend trip to the Glasgow Science Park and another trip to the Eden Project is already well subscribed for the summer term.
104. Teaching is being improved and developed through a programme of training with support from the local education authority. Performance management has been an important part of the process of identifying strengths and weaknesses. Meetings are held regularly to discuss progress and to share ideas and teachers are monitoring one another. There is some attractive display work in many of the laboratories, which improves the environment for the students. There is a strong emphasis on measuring attainment and the monitoring of students' progress but assessment data are not yet used well enough to identify underachievement.
105. The department has made unsatisfactory progress since the previous inspection. Standards in National Curriculum tests and GCSE examinations have fallen and are likely to remain low in comparison to other subjects this year. However, the department has the will and the capacity to improve through the strong leadership of the head of department and the commitment of the staff.

## ART AND DESIGN

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

### Strengths

- Good teaching and learning are leading to higher standards feeding up through the school.
- The newly appointed head of department is having very positive effects on standards.
- Newly introduced schemes of work and assessment systems now ensure that students have a good quality, common experience across the department.
- Greatly improved use of sketchbooks, which now show good preparation and visual explorations.

Areas for improvement

- Attainment in GCSE examinations.
- The quality of teaching needs to be improved so that it consistently matches the quality of the best.
- All students need to understand examination assessment criteria well, so that they know how to make their work match higher expectations.
- The work of potentially very high attaining GCSE students in all classes needs to reflect a greater degree of individuality, including aspects of preparation, planning and research.

106. GCSE A\*-C results in 2001 were below average. They fell from a somewhat higher position in 2000, but recent years' results have all showed students' attainment to be below average. This shows a significant decline in standards since the previous inspection, when standards were above average. In recent years, students have not done as well overall in art as they have in their other examination subjects. Boys in particular have not achieved as well as they could. The highest attaining students have been mostly girls whose standards are higher than boys by more than the usual margin.
107. Students' skills and understanding of art are about average when they enter Year 7, covering the whole range of attainment. Students achieve satisfactorily in Years 7-9 and by the end of Year 9 standards are still broadly average. Because of recent significant changes in the department, younger students' work is of higher quality. A new head of department has worked hard to ensure that all students have a very similar experience of art through common schemes of work that focus on development of core skills such as painting and drawing. The implementation of these plans is becoming very effective in raising standards. Standards of work seen in some Year 7 and 8 classes are above average. In a Year 8 class starting a new project about shoes, students' pencil drawings were good. A Year 7 group drawing small natural objects, such as seedpods, also produced drawings for use in their sketchbooks that showed above average levels of skill. The department's new systems have also placed very good emphasis on all students using classwork sketchbooks imaginatively. Students are, therefore, now starting to understand how to create effective, creative visual explorations from their early years in the school. Some students in Year 9 have not had this rigorous expectation in their past studies, so their experiments and explorations are often no better than those of students in Years 7 and 8. In one Year 9 class seen, standards were below average and students, particularly boys, were not achieving their potential. This was because of poor behaviour and attitudes which led to a wilful resistance to learning.
108. The subject is popular for students as a GCSE option, with a greater than average proportion taking art in Years 10 and 11. Standards at the end of the current Year 11 are now broadly average. The variation in standards between teaching groups, apparent in previous years, still exists. Some Year 11 classes seen showed below average attainment overall, others the full range. Many students' achievement has improved this year. Current Year 10 students' work shows much higher potential. This recent improvement is the result of better departmental management, but the next crucial target is to ensure consistency of attainment between groups. Monitoring of teaching is in train and this, together with other initiatives, is beginning to be effective in resolving such differences. The department sets GCSE targets for students that are sometimes too low. Overall achievement has been low. New assessment systems, while a great improvement, do not yet measure progress effectively. Some work in Year 11, especially girls', shows a very high level of imagination, creativity and commitment. Some multi-media work using textiles, printing and a good variety of three-dimensional media is very successful. Other Year 11 work, particularly boys', shows the adverse effects of their history of not using sketchbooks rigorously, of weaker literacy and written work, with the result that their work from Year 10 is not as good as it should be.
109. With the exception of one Year 9 class seen, students generally behave well in lessons and enjoy their art work. Older students often do very significant amounts of additional work outside class to enhance and improve their projects. The need for this is increased by the single periods allocated for GCSE groups, which do not give sufficient time in lessons to achieve the depth in work which students generally need, especially if they are to attain higher grades.



110. The quality of teaching is good overall. In lessons seen, teaching ranged from very good to satisfactory. Teachers now plan lessons successfully around a framework that ensures that all students experience a common curriculum. Key skills, literacy in particular, are well integrated into planning and teachers often refer to the vocabulary displayed around their rooms. Lessons seen in Year 9, at the start of a new portraiture project, contributed very effectively to the development of students' understanding of spatial concepts through learning about the proportions of the face. The department is now including the use of ICT effectively in work such as the gargoyles project in Year 10. Here students' own digital photographs are being distorted grotesquely through an ICT program, to provide a stimulus for creative interpretation. Teachers' expectations still differ somewhat, but new management is resolving these differences and expectations are often very high. In the lesson where attitudes and behaviour prevented good learning, the teacher needed more classroom support. Although this is sometimes provided, the lesson showed that not all students' individual needs are always met. Students with English as an additional language, for example, are not always considered well enough and the department lacks assessment of whether they are achieving their potential or not. Where general behaviour is poor, students with special educational needs can receive too little attention from the teacher, who is too busy controlling the class. In general, though, teachers meet the needs of most students well, often through highly effective individual support of their learning. Marking is good, giving individuals useful advice and help about how to improve. Greater focus on giving GCSE students detailed information about examination assessment objectives is developing, but is not yet secure in all classes. In some cases, potentially very high attaining students are not being stretched sufficiently. Their work does not reflect their individuality at all stages of their preparation and development work because they are not given enough independence. Mostly, though, the tight control teachers have on students' work enables many lower and middle attaining students to achieve standards higher than they otherwise might.
111. Recent improvements in the department are clearly having very positive effects on students' attainment and achievement. At the time of the previous report, standards were above average; attainment fell, but is now beginning to recover. Students' use of ICT was highlighted as needing improvement and this has been accomplished successfully. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. All evidence indicates that standards and achievement will be higher in the near future because of the effective work of the new head of department. Having art rooms located on the two different sites makes management of the department more difficult and any differences between students' attainment on the two sites need to be evaluated and resolved.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- Results in food and textiles technology are well above average.
- Leadership is innovative in efforts to raise standards.
- Teachers use a good range of activities to promote learning.
- ICT, literacy and numeracy strategies are used well to improve standards.

### Areas for improvement

- Recruitment and retention of staff in resistant materials.
- Use of the National Curriculum levels to help students measure their progress.

112. Students enter the school with average attainment overall. In work seen during the inspection, standards are above average overall by the end of Year 9. These standards represent good achievement. However the girls' standards are higher than the boys' because girls generally give greater attention to the presentation, technical drawing skills and accuracy of their designing.
113. GCSE results in 2001 were above average for the proportions of students gaining both A\*-C and A\*-G grades. This was an accumulated figure from all five elements of design and technology. The department's analysis showed food technology and textiles to be the strongest elements and well above national figures while resistant materials, graphics and electronics were in line with national

averages. The department's analysis of examination results indicates a stronger performance by girls for the reasons mentioned above as well as their closer attention to meeting deadlines and responding to assessment comments from teachers.

114. In work seen during the inspection, students in Year 7 build effectively on their prior knowledge. For example, in food technology they examine foods that make a healthy diet, using their everyday experience. Teachers' planning strengthens students' skills, knowledge and understanding and results in high quality products. Some basic skills, such as planning and researching, are not well enough developed. Well-planned modules give students access to the range of materials recommended by the National Curriculum. Students can cut, shape and join or combine materials and ingredients to make a good product, as well as evaluating their personal development in each module. They understand their progress because the newly introduced target setting sheets guide their development. Although National Curriculum levels are displayed well in the classrooms, students do not yet use them as part of their personal strategy for improvement. Literacy, numeracy and ICT skills are well developed.
115. Achievement is good overall in Years 7-9. and the achievement of gifted and talented students is very good. They are identified during Year 7. Tests and monitoring identify students who show specific talents in designing and making. They are put into an 'express' group. Their work is extended to ensure they reach their potential. Students in these groups can still be moved if they cannot maintain the level of work expected.
116. In Years 10 and 11, achievement is good overall and very good in the case of the girls. Standards are well above average overall. All five elements of design and technology are offered at GCSE. The overriding aim in the department is good quality and teachers use the examination board's marking criteria to ensure that students meet the requirements. Students use the skills and knowledge from Years 7-9 to build up their expertise. Techniques of handling materials and equipment are developed and students produce some outstanding results, such as children's play equipment in resistant materials. Girls, in particular, produce inspired designs and products - for example, a leisure outfit - from their research and analysis of products already manufactured. In textiles, students use mood boards to develop texture and colour and a range of embellishment to fabrics, including those influenced by different cultures, for example Islamic and Indian traditional embroidery. Students use ICT effectively in designing and making. CAD-CAM equipment is used in graphics to aid the production of professional lettering, which adds a flourish to their final point of sale product. Students modify and improve their work as a result of regular assessment. Boys in Year 10 electronics, for example, had their programme of work modified to revise the skill of two-point perspective to improve their design work following the teacher identifying this as something with which they were having difficulty.
117. Students with special educational needs in all years meet their targets because the department's planning and modification of units of work meets their individual needs. There is good use of individual education plans and, when available, classroom support assistants are integrated into planning and teaching. In a Year 11 revision lesson in food technology, the support assistant was very clear about the plans for specific students.
118. The department provides additional support for students from ethnic minority backgrounds if they have difficulties with literacy or comprehension and achievement is good overall. For example in Year 10, two Asian students make good progress in lessons. They assist each other through their home language and are very effectively integrated into the class, because the teacher uses their contributions to enrich whole-class learning; for example, Chinese lettering characters were highlighted as an art form to enrich designing.
119. Attitudes and behaviour are generally good across the department. Teachers' consistency and high expectations help to establish good behaviour and high standards. A very small minority of boys in Year 10 challenge the system and interfere with the progress of their classmates. Personal development is very good. Students are encouraged to identify their strengths and weaknesses through evaluation and plan to improve where necessary.

120. Teaching and learning are good overall. There is a high proportion of very good teaching and some is excellent. Planning is good and capitalises on the very good links with the learning support department, as well as the good liaison with the literacy co-ordinator and ICT team. Booklets developed by the department encompass all the links and ensure consistency of approach. Teachers make their expectations clear at the start of every lesson; plenary sessions consolidate learning and set the targets for the next session or the homework. When teaching is very good, students and teacher are true partners in learning. Lessons are split into manageable parts with short-term targets to allow all students to achieve their full potential. A range of inspiring and challenging techniques is used to review and consolidate learning. For example, in a Year 11 textiles lesson students reported on their designing homework at the start of the session to the whole class to allow a collaborative discussion and raise points for improvement. Following a short effective demonstration on two-dimensional and three-dimensional pockets, students consolidated the new information using a group exercise. Very good teaching equipment raised issues discussed in previous sessions and kept them in students' minds. The result was a professional, almost commercial, manufacturing approach to designing, which students enjoyed. They were all proud of their designs and the learning opportunities were many and varied. Similarly high quality large-scale children's play furniture, graphics projects and electronics were the result of research and inspiration from displays around the department. When difficulties arise in lessons, they are often a result of circumstances beyond the control of the teachers. For example, long-term teacher absence has had a great impact on teaching in resistant materials. This has been improved, but not solved, by negotiation with the senior management team, who are not design and technology specialists but very keen technologists. They have ensured that students have regular lessons during the difficult period leading up to GCSE.
121. Management is very good overall. The new management structure is enabling the design and technology management team to share responsibility and encourages young staff to develop their management expertise. All roles in the department are clearly defined and monitored by a rigorous process. The team leaders are inspiring and elicit total commitment from the team, including the efficient technicians who support the smooth running of the department. Sharing ideas is generally effective but would benefit from closer liaison between the different aspects of design and technology. Accommodation is very good following an injection of funds and dedication from parents and the school team to refurbish the department, providing students with a stimulating learning environment. Resources are well maintained and effective. ICT resources, however, do not meet the department's needs and are holding back development.
122. All areas for improvement in the previous report have been tackled effectively and the department has made very good progress since the previous inspection.

## GEOGRAPHY

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

### Strengths

- Standards are above average and are improving because of good teaching and very good subject leadership.
- Good systems for assessing students' progress are in place.
- Fieldwork contributes well to students' understanding of the subject.
- Lessons make good provision for the development of literacy skills.
- ICT is used well to develop students' understanding of the subject.

### Areas for improvement

- Teaching does not always allow students to learn for themselves and work independently.
- Not enough use is made of test results to identify students who are in danger of not achieving as well as they should.
- National Curriculum teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 underestimate students' attainment.

123. At the end of Year 9, standards of work for most students are above average and are higher than National Curriculum teacher assessments in 2001 indicate. At the end of Year 11, results in

GCSE examinations have improved since the previous inspection and are now above the national average. In the summer of 2001, the pass rate at grades A\*-C almost reached well above the national average overall and students achieved well. Girls' results were well above the national average, and their results improved dramatically from the previous year. This reversed the gap between boys' and girls' attainment and girls now do better than the boys. The proportion of students who did not achieve a pass grade by the end of the course was much lower than the national average. However, the percentage of those reaching the highest grades of A\* and A was lower than expected. Most students' achievements, including those with special education needs, are good in Years 10 and 11.

124. The work seen during the inspection confirms that most students reach above average levels of attainment by the end of Year 9. When they enter the school, most students' geographical experience is weakly developed. During the first three years in this school they quickly build up their knowledge and skills. Samples of students' work show that they achieve well because teachers provide well-adapted resources for them to use. This enables them, for example, to produce good accounts of the changing land uses in towns and to consider the problems of bias and stereotyping in geographical descriptions. Students with special educational needs are well known by their teachers. These students achieve well because they are given good individual help and encouragement, occasionally with extra support in lessons. Higher attaining students develop, then apply, their practical skills very successfully. For example, students in Year 9 produce accurate scattergraphs to show the connection between measures of development in more and less developed countries. They can then make comparisons between these countries and offer some sensitive explanations of their findings. Throughout Years 7-9, there is a strong tradition of translating the department's literacy policy into specific activities in lessons. As a result, students develop their ability to record their work in a variety of different styles, for example in newspaper format, extended prose and diagrammatic form. Year 8 students demonstrate sophisticated skills of searching for and evaluating information in the library. Opportunities for students to develop their speaking skills are less apparent, although some very effective group and pair work was seen during the inspection. In this way, students in Year 9 extend their understanding of major environmental threats by sharing their ideas on the threat to tropical forests caused by large mining projects.
125. One reason for standards of work and students' achievement in Years 7-9 being good overall is that most students, both girls and boys, display good attitudes to learning in lessons. Effective teaching ensures a good atmosphere for learning so that students become well motivated and hard working. A high level of challenge by teachers encourages most students to give of their best. However, some students are too ready to sit and listen to the teacher rather than getting involved in the lesson.
126. Students with a wide range of prior attainment choose to study geography in Years 10 and 11 for the GCSE examination. The work seen shows that the high standards achieved in last year's examination are likely to be repeated. Higher attaining students in Year 10 show that they understand the impact of human activity on fragile environments. Through a well-planned and increasingly complex series of tasks, they are able to extend their ideas from an appreciation of immediate landscapes to wider concerns, such as the inequality of world trade. They show much confidence in drawing graphs and interpreting maps. In Year 10, higher attaining students use ICT successfully in the completion of their course work and can write extended essays that show a very good grasp of geographical vocabulary. Less capable students have a poor grasp of the location of countries in the world and they lack confidence when using and explaining the significance of statistics about unfamiliar places.
127. Teaching and learning are good overall. All of the lessons observed were at least satisfactory: three out of four were good and one in three was very good. In the less than good lessons in Years 8 and 9, students were obliged to listen passively to the teacher for too long and there was a lack of challenging tasks for more capable students. Some very good practice was observed. In a very good Year 8 lesson that built on previous learning about measures of development, students responded very well to the pace of the lesson, the very good resources that they enjoyed using and the teacher's high expectations. Tasks were carefully planned for all levels of attainment. Students rapidly began to see how world trade patterns have evolved, and those who

tackled the extension exercises could explain how inequalities in the system become established. Learning is accelerated in nearly all lessons by the teachers' very good subject knowledge. This is invariably used well to motivate and enthuse students through lively and stimulating explanations and challenging and probing question and answer. In this way students are prompted to think about the topic they are studying and so their understanding is deepened. Tasks are planned very carefully in lessons to ensure that the work is well matched to the needs of all individuals in the group. This leads to students with special education needs and those designated as gifted and talented making equally good progress. In a minority of lessons, however, especially in Years 7 and 8 where the classes are organised in groups of varied prior attainment, not enough work is geared specifically to the needs of higher attaining students, which holds back their progress. Also, lessons can at times be too directed by the teacher, which results in too few opportunities for students to take responsibility for own learning and to learn by their mistakes.

128. The department uses good systems for assessing students' progress. Work is marked regularly, with many helpful comments and the inclusion of targets for improvement based on national standards. Good use is made of the results of external tests to predict GCSE grades for students, but the strategies that the department has for intervening when underachievement has been identified are, as yet, not effective enough. There are good opportunities for using ICT in lessons. Year 11 students make good use of 'Power Point' to prepare sophisticated presentations to the class on the topic of atmospheric pressure as part of their GCSE revision. Good accommodation with spectacular displays of students' work enhances the quality of teaching and learning in most lessons.
129. The leadership and management of the department are very good. The head of department and the team of enthusiastic geographers, many of whom have substantial responsibilities elsewhere in the school, have worked hard to increase the popularity of the subject. The quality of teaching and learning is very well monitored by the head of department through a variety of formal and informal means and he creates good opportunities for colleagues to share good practice through collaborative field work and departmental meetings. Very detailed long-term plans are in place that are regularly reviewed as results of external tests and examinations are analysed. A harmonious atmosphere exists within the department, where new teachers are welcomed and resources, help and expertise are shared.
130. The department has improved on the standards seen at the previous inspection and the popularity of the subject in the school has increased. Improvement since the last inspection has, therefore, been good.

## HISTORY

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

### Strengths

- History is a popular choice for students of all levels of attainment and they consistently achieve above average GCSE results.
- Teachers' own good knowledge and enthusiasm enable them to use varied activities and methods.

### Areas for improvement

- Though ICT activities are now included in all schemes of work, further development is necessary.

131. In work seen during the inspection, standards are above average throughout the school and students achieve well in relation to their earlier learning. The proportions of students gaining grades A\*-C and A\*-G are consistently above average, dipping to average only once in the past five years. The proportions of the higher A\* and A grades were about average in 2001 but were in line with students' previous standards. Although girls obtain a greater proportion of higher grades, the difference reflects that found nationally. In 2001, boys did better in history than in most other

subjects. Almost all students enter the GCSE examination and all obtained an A\*-G grade in 2001.

132. At the end of Year 9, students have some depth of knowledge and can apply it. For example, when describing the construction of the Liverpool to Manchester railway, they explain the impact the railway will have on villages and towns. Their understanding of chronology is good. Discussing the Treaty of Versailles, students appreciate that the Allies had different opinions about Germany's guilt and punishment. Extended writing is often very good. Higher attaining students, in particular, are enthusiastic and show a considerable capacity for research. Students use their wide vocabulary and knowledge of technical terms. Some are able to adapt their language to suggest the period and place, for example when writing as a nineteenth century sea captain. Students are beginning to use ICT to research or word process their writing. Standards of presentation are good.
133. By the end of Year 11, students' depth of knowledge and accuracy of recall help them do well in examinations. They can use source materials well. Higher attaining students will use them to develop an overview linked to their own knowledge of the topic. Coursework, based on the history of Styal Mill, which students visit, enables them to show a wide range of historical skills. Lower attaining students are able to write more effectively because they have seen the site and processes. Students maintain the good progress of Years 7–9.
134. In almost all lessons, students work hard, concentrate well and collaborate effectively. Year 7 students have produced display work on the Battle of Hastings that required much care and effort. The work then provided a secure basis of knowledge for a class discussion on what methods William might use to subdue the English. There are occasional difficulties in lessons when a small group of poorly motivated students hampers the progress of others. Such classes need more support. Otherwise, behaviour is good.
135. The overall quality of teaching is good. Teachers know their subject well and convey their enthusiasm effectively because they vary methods and activities to suit the students' needs. For example, when beginning coursework on Styal Mill, the higher attaining group began the unit by revising the main aspects of the Industrial Revolution, linking these to their visit, and then working towards generalisations. Throughout the school, teachers are continually checking that students understand and use specialist terms. They make sure that students have help in structuring their written work. In one Year 9 lesson with lower attaining students, the teacher based the lesson on the concepts of democracy and dictatorship, linking them not only to the aftermath of World War I, but to their relevance in everyday life. This lesson made a good contribution to the development of students' citizenship. On occasions when teaching is less effective, the pace of the lesson slackens and interest is diminished. Homework is set regularly and closely linked to the lesson objectives. The procedures for monitoring students' progress, particularly in Years 10 and 11, are consistently used and have helped students raise their grades from D to C. Teachers liaise well with classroom assistants and support teachers.
136. Leadership and management are good. The head of department, appointed since the previous inspection, has considered how standards should be raised and has systematically begun to implement changes. The revision of the schemes of work is almost complete and now includes clear attention to literacy, ICT and the matching of work to students' individual needs. The head of department's leadership and the hard work of the department have generally ensured that the good features of the previous inspection have been maintained and that standards at the end of Year 9 are now above average. The department has made good improvement since the previous inspection.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- Teaching is good and leads to good learning.

- GCSE results are well above average.
- The quantity and quality of resources for learning.
- The breadth and depth of schemes and projects to extend students' learning

Areas for improvement

- Meeting National Curriculum requirements for Year 10 and 11 students not following the GCSE course.
- Provision of time to monitor and co-ordinate ICT across the curriculum.
- Speed of access to Internet.

137. Over recent years, teachers have assessed students' standards at the end of Year 9 as well below average. Although these assessments show only about one fifth of students reaching the standard expected for their age, the proportion now appears to be rising as the school's new ICT curriculum for Years 7-9 settles down, although standards are below average. Work seen during the inspection confirms this apparent improvement. Although still below average overall, many more students' skills, knowledge and understanding are up to national standards. For example, almost all are entirely at home with the basic general use of computers and word-processing, the school network and the Internet. By the end of Year 9, most can lay out pages of mixed text, graphics and special effects in 'Publisher' fairly effectively but often slowly. They can insert at least simple formulae into spreadsheet tables and then obtain useful graphs, describe one or two uses of sensors for measuring better than manually and state one or two aspects of matching the design of a document to its purpose and its planned audience. Most are able to suggest how and why ICT is important in such areas of everyday life as shopping, travel booking, and banking. There is no significant difference between boys' and girls' standards. However, some students with special educational needs have difficulties in finishing their tasks and in retaining what they have learned in lessons because they only have lessons every other week, and they may have less opportunity than other students to practise and extend their work.
138. All students in Years 10 and 11 have one lesson every other week. This year the school has started to work towards a Key Skills qualification; as yet there are, therefore, no ICT results to make comparisons with national standards. Work seen during the inspection in Years 10 and 11 indicates that standards are below average and not as high as in the current Year 9. Nevertheless, in relation to students' earlier learning this represents satisfactory achievement.
139. In recent years, there have been four GCSE groups in Years 10 and 11, and here the picture is very different. Each summer around 90 per cent of those entered have achieved GCSE Grades A\*-C, well above the national average. In the work seen, students' skills, knowledge and understanding are generally above or well above average. For example, their coursework files are often excellent, even near perfect – and have been produced with a clear understanding of the theory of how to solve real life problems using ICT and with a very clear grasp of designing screens, systems, and background notes for particular well-defined purposes and audiences. Moreover, most GCSE students have an unusually wide and deep knowledge of the uses of ICT in the world of work, and many can talk fluently about such uses as well as about their own ICT-based activities. Boys' and girls' standards are similar and students with special educational needs make at least satisfactory progress.
140. The overall quality of teaching is good. The bulk of the department's work is carried out by two teachers. They are very competent and work hard to develop the teaching of ICT to all the students in the school and to assess students' learning. In these tasks they are effectively helped by several other teachers, though such contributions vary from year to year, even from term to term, creating some difficulties of continuity. In the lessons seen, the quality of teaching was always at least satisfactory and in most lessons it was good or very good. All the teachers open and close every lesson with a few minutes of fast paced and probing whole-class consideration of the work in hand. Good pace is maintained in the central part of the lesson, when the students are working on developing their skills at their own machines. The majority of teachers keep a close eye on the class when the students are working on their own and provide rapid and effective response to difficulties, as well as helping individuals to understand better. A good variety of activities and resources is used to maintain students' interest and concentration. As a result, in all classes in all years, the students have a positive attitude to their work and concentrate well.

141. As a result of this good teaching, the students in the GCSE groups think hard and learn at a great rate – rising in two years from well below national standards to well above. This is not the case with the other groups, however, as they have only one lesson every two weeks: without other opportunities, that is not enough to ensure the students retain their learning, let alone develop their knowledge and skills sufficiently.
142. For students in Years 7-9, the head of department and the subject co-ordinator have invested a great deal of time and effort to produce high quality schemes of work and resources to support learning. The department is also beginning to set homework tasks that encourage students to practise and extend their skills and ideas between the infrequent lessons. For these reasons, and also because some other subject departments now use ICT to a significant extent in their lessons in Years 7-9, the school meets National Curriculum requirements for these students. This is not yet the case for the non-GCSE work in Years 10 and 11. The schemes of work, resources and homework tasks are not as well developed so far, and there is, overall, less use of ICT in other subjects, with the results that National Curriculum requirements are not met.
143. The management and administration of ICT as a separate subject are good, as is the leadership of the team by the head of department. This is clear from the quality of the resources, the network of computers and the plans for their use (though many problems result from the school's low speed access to the Internet). Very good paper and electronic materials for learning and revision have been produced, although these are not yet fully matched to students' individual needs, for example by the inclusion of tasks of different levels of difficulty. These management strengths are particularly creditable as the head of department has a number of additional demands on his time. These additional commitments do not much get in the way of developing and monitoring the ICT department. However, they preclude the co-ordination of the use of computers as tools for effective teaching and learning throughout the school as a whole; they also preclude helping teachers of the other subjects gain appropriate experience, expertise and confidence. Although there are patches of good practice, for example in design and technology and geography, there are few departments in which computers are fully integrated as tools for learning, or to contribute towards all students' development as confident users of ICT.
144. Overall, there has been good progress since the previous inspection. In particular, National Curriculum standards are now met in the lower years and in the GCSE course. Assessment of students' standards, and the standards themselves, have improved in both these cases and there are more rooms full of computers. However, National Curriculum requirements are not met for students in Years 10 and 11 who do not follow the GCSE course.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

The overall provision for modern foreign languages is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- Attitudes are very positive.
- Teachers manage students well.
- GCSE results are above average.

### Areas for improvement

- The quality of some teaching.
- Standards are affected by lack of time for students studying two languages.
- Consistent use of National Curriculum levels.
- The schemes of work do not offer enough guidance for teachers.

## French and German

145. Overall, standards are average throughout the school. All students study two languages in Year 9. For the higher attaining students, standards in the second language, which is taught for only



one hour per week, are below average at the end of Year 9 because of this time restriction. Similarly, the first language is also adversely affected by the reduced amount of time spent on it in Year 9. Although teachers estimated that standards were well above the national average at the end of Year 9 in 2001, this was not confirmed in work seen during the inspection. Lower attaining students attain higher standards than might be expected, particularly in speaking and listening. In GCSE examinations, the proportions of students who gained an A\*-C grade in French and German have declined over the last three years. The gap between school and national averages has therefore narrowed, although in 2001 the pass rate was still above the national average. In 2001, teachers identified speaking as the weakest skill and have taken steps to adjust the level at which students are entered for the examination for 2002 to give them the best possible chance of gaining a higher grade pass. A contribution to the above average standards is the focus in Years 10 and 11 on the examination syllabus. All students entered for GCSE gained a grade A\*-G and all lower attaining students who were entered for the Certificate of Achievement also passed. Girls obtained better results than boys, in line with the national picture.

146. In work seen during the inspection, the overall attainment of students towards the end of Year 9 is broadly average. Students rarely routinely use the past or future tenses, although there are some notable exceptions, particularly with lower attaining students in a Year 8 French class. Students are able to listen and respond satisfactorily to the spoken language in both French and German and answer exchanges with the teacher and in role-play situations that are prepared and practised in pairs. Overall, girls achieve better than boys, although there are higher attaining boys who achieve well. In Years 10 and 11, the students are clear about their target grades and what they need to do to reach them. While students' GCSE folders are well ordered according to topics, it is not possible to see how students could identify the progress they are making over time or from individual pieces of work because the marking does not refer to GCSE grades. Throughout the school, marking is mainly up to date, but lacking in clear guidance on how individual students can improve their work.
147. The behaviour of students in lessons is good and their attitudes to languages are very good. Students and teachers work well together. Students are well motivated, eager to learn and participate with enthusiasm. In lessons, they responded particularly well to a teacher's lively but firm approach and to the first-hand experience contributions made by the German foreign language assistant. Students participate in exchanges and study visits. These visits and the work of the foreign language assistant make a significant contribution to students' cultural development.
148. Although teaching is unsatisfactory overall, half the lessons seen were good or better, with some being excellent. This high quality teaching is characterised by good subject knowledge, high expectations, consistent use of French and German in class, and a range of well-structured activities conducted at a good pace. This leads to students making clear progress in lessons. Examples of this were seen in a Year 9 German second language lesson, where new vocabulary was introduced and then linked to earlier learning so that students could consolidate it well in the four aspects of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Students also respond well and make good progress when teachers demonstrate their good knowledge of their individual needs. An example in one Year 8 lesson with lower attaining students was the way in which the teacher managed a class of lively students with a wide range of learning and behavioural needs on an individual basis. Another effective strategy was when the teacher made the learning intentions of the lesson clear by telling students what they would learn, rather than describing the activities. These learning intentions were discussed with the students and progress checked during the lesson. In a Year 11 class, the teacher understood well that the boys in the group needed a particularly structured and focused approach. This, coupled with the teacher's good relationship with individuals, enabled all the students to achieve well, to participate in a range of activities and to show progress. In the lessons where teaching was judged to be unsatisfactory, the lesson was poorly planned, not taking enough account of students' individual needs; students were not clear what was expected of them and expectations were not high enough. Teachers relied too much on English, rather than French or German, slowing the development of students' fluency and students were not given enough opportunity to participate actively in the lesson. This meant that not enough learning took place. The schemes of work which are currently in place do not offer enough guidance or detail to teachers and need to be revised.

149. Resources for learning are satisfactory overall, but the textbooks for French in Years 7-9 are outdated. The language classrooms are very stimulating, with displays of students' hand-written and word-processed work, curriculum support materials and items from France and Germany. On those occasions when teachers have to use other rooms, the environment is less stimulating and a lack of ready access to materials makes the use of resources less efficient. Teachers are flexible, all teaching both French and German, and share good practice when they can. This is not always easy, as teachers are based on both sites. The head of department ensures that equal attention is given to both languages. However, the department's development plan shows that strategies for improvement are too generalised and are not specific to each language. The use of ICT is good, with evidence of its use in students' folders and on classroom walls.
150. Progress since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. There have been staffing difficulties due to illness, maternity leaves and other changes, which have contributed to the decline in standards at GCSE over the last three years. The time allocated to the dual foreign language learners and the fact that currently all students take two languages in Year 9 still have an adverse effect on achievement. This will not be the case from September 2002. The new approaches to assessment have not yet been established, although most students know the levels at which they are working. All students now study a language in Years 10 and 11. Teachers' management of students is now generally good.

## MUSIC

Overall the provision for music is **very good**.

### Strengths

- Very good GCSE results over the past four years.
- Excellent extra curricular activities.

### Areas for improvement

- Ensuring that all students know and understand how they are doing and what they need to do to improve.
- Improving the level of general knowledge required for the GCSE listening paper.

151. Standards in Years 7–9 and 10 and 11 are above average. Achievement in relation to students' prior attainment is good in Years 7–9 and as expected in Years 10 and 11. Overall it is good. GCSE results in 2001 for grades A\*-C and A\*-G, were well above average, a trend that has been evident over the past four years. The number of candidates has risen each year, from ten in 1998 to 19 in 2001.
152. In work seen during the inspection at the end of Year 9, standards are above average. This is good achievement, given the average standards on entry to the school. Students develop good keyboard and vocal performing skills and use them well, for example in performing their compositions in ternary form (pieces in three sections) and advertising jingles. Such pieces show good creativity and musical invention. Students have a growing knowledge and understanding of the elements of music and the vocabulary to describe it, and there is evidence of word processors being used to present work.
153. A substantial proportion of students (about 10 per cent) have instrumental lessons on a wide range of orchestral instruments, and have the opportunity for keyboard, guitar and voice lessons. For such students, who include many who are gifted and talented, the gains in musical attainment are very considerable. Many sit the Associated Board examinations and for these the school can claim a 100 per cent pass rate, a very good record indeed.
154. Further opportunities to enhance musical attainment occur in the large number of choirs, bands and orchestras on offer, to which over 200 students belong. The standards achieved by the best of these is remarkable, the senior choir for example achieving a lovely quality of tone in a moving performance of Bob Chilwell's delightful *'Sing you now'*, or the senior brass band's driving and exciting rendering of Ray Farr's arrangement of Bach's *Toccatà in D minor*. Very careful attention is paid to tuning and the details of the music so that standards of performance are very high indeed.
155. In work seen during the inspection at the end of Year 11, standards are above average in composing and performing, but average in general knowledge of music and listening to it. Individuals perform to advanced levels on a wide range of instruments. Compositions have flair and good creativity and provide abundant evidence of the effective use of such compositional devices as contrast between high and low pitches, thin and thick textures, loud and soft, fast and slow or the tone qualities of different instruments. Most show good understanding of elementary harmony, sequencing and simple part writing. Many of these features are skilfully used - for example, in a very good piece for jazz trio. Creative use of 'Sibelius' software has been made in developing ideas for much of this work. Given such good practical levels of attainment it is surprising to find minds apparently going blank about the kind of general knowledge required to respond to the GCSE listening paper.
156. Teaching is a strength of the department, being consistently good in all years. Lessons are well prepared and structured. For example, a Year 10 lesson analysing the structure of a popular song produced intense concentration for the whole hour because the steps of the lesson had been carefully planned around an excellent worksheet, leading to very good learning. Teachers have very good knowledge and understanding of the subject and musical performing skills that inspire

respect from the students, and are particularly important for teachers' credibility when teaching students who are gifted and talented. Expectations are appropriate, students are well managed and teachers maintain high levels of enthusiasm. Assessment is conscientiously done but some students confuse the effort and attainment mark and need more guidance. Students with special educational needs make good progress and teachers try hard to make sure that they and students with English as an additional language are included and given appropriate help. Because of good teaching, learning overall is good at all stages.

157. Attitudes to music are very positive and the subject has a very high profile within the school thanks to the many and varied musical groups and performances that take place. The sheer hard work of the very committed staff and the strong support of the school management are greatly appreciated by the whole school community. The department is managed with quiet but very good efficiency.
158. Since the previous report, which was very good, high standards have been maintained in examinations and performance, and in teaching. More students took and were successful in the GCSE examinations in 2001 than ever before, and real progress has been made in the use of musical ICT. Improvement since the previous inspection is therefore good.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The overall provision for physical education is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- Opportunities are provided for students to study both GCSE dance and physical education.
- Extra-curricular provision is very good.
- Assessment procedures are good.

### Areas for improvement

- To improve teaching by developing more pace, more challenge and more matching of tasks to students' needs.
- To update knowledge of how ICT can aid students' progress in the subject.

159. Standards are below average by the end of Year 9 and average by the end of Year 11. The results of teachers' assessments and the GCSE results for 2001 match the work seen during the inspection. The present Year 11 are attaining higher than average standards in GCSE physical education. Students' achievements in relation to their previous learning are satisfactory overall but achievement is higher in the GCSE physical education and dance groups.
160. In work seen during the inspection, by the end of Year 9 weak basic skills in rounders and high jump result in below average performance. Students show a better understanding of technique in long jump and sprinting. Some difficulties are experienced in striking a ball from a partner 'feed' in indoor tennis. Most students are able to evaluate their work, know their level and the below average standards are gradually improving.
161. By the end of Year 11, overall standards are average. The standards in GCSE physical education are above average in written and discussion work. The practical assessment has taken place and higher than average results are correctly predicted. A small mixed ability group of students performed trampoline routines with good control and variety. A group of girls following a volleyball option have weak basic skills, partly because their experience of the game is limited. Year 10 students in tennis lessons perform all the strokes at a high standard when their concentration is maintained. The GCSE Year 10 dance students work hard to progress to the average standard in set phrases of movement. Achievement is satisfactory overall but better for the more able students in the GCSE physical education groups. There is no difference in standards between boys and girls. Students are able to progress further in the opportunities provided by the extra-curricular sports programme. The more talented students represent the school in inter-school matches.

162. Students' attitudes to learning are satisfactory overall. Most students are enthusiastic, change quickly for lessons and are keen to answer questions. Behaviour is satisfactory and, except among a minority of students, concentration is sustained. Relationships are good and students co-operate effectively with one another. The collaborative working is helping students to progress in their skills practices. When the opportunity is provided, most students take responsibility for their own learning by working and planning in pairs and small groups. In a few lessons, students disrupt the flow of activity because their interest has not been maintained.
163. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. It is better in Years 10 and 11, mainly because of the very good teaching in the GCSE groups, than in Years 7-9, where it is unsatisfactory. There is some inconsistency in the teaching because the standard varies from unsatisfactory to very good. The unsatisfactory elements include lack of pace, challenge and inappropriate activities. Some tasks, for example in girls' volleyball lessons, are not matched to the students' ability level and lower attainers make less progress than other groups. Lengthy teacher explanations curtailed indoor tennis activity on one occasion and queuing for a turn to high jump on another. Progress in these lessons is adversely affected because of disruptions or lack of interest by students. In the majority of lessons there is good planning, effective class management and a variety of activities. The GCSE groups in dance and physical education make very good progress because of the effective use of resources. The use of ICT is encouraged but not fully developed in GCSE work. Trampoline sequences are matched to the ability of students in Year 11. These lessons are having a positive impact on students' progress and confidence. All lessons include a warm up and a feedback time to consolidate the set objectives. Where appropriate, homework is set and marked. The progress of students of minority ethnic backgrounds is maintained by an inclusive policy in all lessons. On a few occasions, the progress of lower attainers was affected by tasks not being matched to their ability.
164. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and is broad and balanced. Dance, as well as physical education, is offered as an examination subject. Schemes of work are almost complete and are in line with the requirements of Curriculum 2000. Literacy links are being established by using key words, but ICT links are not well developed. Assessment procedures are rigorously applied and students are aware of their levels of ability. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. Documentation is well presented and financial management is very good. Monitoring of teaching is taking place but some unsatisfactory areas have not been tackled effectively enough. The department is having some difficulties in maintaining the planned programme because of staff being absent through illness and leaving because of promotion. The supply teachers' positive response during the inspection week contributed to students' learning. There are approximately 15 teachers who contribute to the very good extra-curricular sporting activities and about 10 per cent of students regularly take part. The split site accommodation includes generous indoor facilities and good outdoor spaces. The newly laid surface on the tennis area is particularly beneficial to students' progress.
165. The department has made satisfactory progress since the previous inspection. The GCSE dance and physical education courses promote good standards. Assessment procedures are good. Extra-curricular sport continues to be very good. Emphasis on areas for improvement should be on the unsatisfactory elements in a minority of the teaching observed.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- Good opportunities for independent learning through project work.
- The well-planned introduction of a new course at GCSE has seen a significant increase in the number of students choosing the subject as one of their options.

### Areas for improvement

- Allocation of sufficient time to meet the requirements of the local Agreed Syllabus.
- Improvement of assessment to allow more precise monitoring of progress.

- Provision of extension work for higher attaining students.

166. Overall, standards are below average, because insufficient time is provided for the subject in Years 10 and 11, where only a few modules are taught within the personal and social education programme. The situation is different in Years 7-9, where the allocation of time is sufficient and specialist teaching enables students to achieve the required standards in the local Agreed Syllabus. Between six and fourteen students have taken the subject at GCSE in each of the past three years and the results have declined as entries have increased, from being above average in 2000 to below in 2001. Students have performed worse on the Gospel paper, which has led to a change of syllabus to one that is mainly issues-based.
167. In work seen during the inspection, attainment at the end of Year 9 is average overall. Students gain satisfactory knowledge of basic beliefs and practices in six major world religions through systematic study of each faith. In their projects on aspects of Islam, Year 9 students make good use of imaginary interviews with the Prophet, pilgrim diaries and magazine-style articles to explain the importance of faith in the lives of believers. In general, girls' standards of written work are higher, and a significant number of boys are underachieving in some classes; for example, they do not explain well enough their judgements on case studies concerning abortion. In a highly effective lesson on this issue, students in one class showed good understanding of the issues in their role-play of patient and doctor consultations, showing insight that might be expected of older students. Work is adapted to meet the needs of students with learning difficulties, enabling them to make satisfactory progress. Tasks generally give scope for higher attaining students to use their skills but they are not being stretched in some lessons where activities are geared to the needs of average attaining students.
168. By the end of Year 11, standards are broadly average for the small number of students preparing for GCSE. They have achieved satisfactory coverage of the course in sufficient detail in their files and are engaged in a structured programme of revision. For some students, their knowledge of the prescribed Biblical passages is still not secure, which has been a persistent weakness, particularly in the study of St. Mark's Gospel. It becomes evident when they attempt practice questions without the help of notes or text. Higher attaining students are able to present a balanced discussion of moral issues but others are not examining both sides of the argument in enough detail.
169. Standards in the general course are below average by the end of Year 11 because of the limited number of lessons in Years 10 and 11. Students make satisfactory progress in those lessons but the lack of continuity of teaching and the minimal time for the subject make it impossible for them to reach the standards required by the local Agreed Syllabus. Written work is fairly superficial, serving as a useful record of topics covered, rather than a serious development of the issues.
170. Attitudes towards the subject are generally good in Years 7-9 and among students following the GCSE course, and at least satisfactory towards the improved religious education modules in personal and social education. The 'Bible Bookshop' modelling project in Year 7 generates a lot of interest, as do the debates on religious and moral issues in other years. The result is that more students are choosing to study the subject in Year 10, the numbers doubling last year. Behaviour is generally good, except among some boys in certain Year 9 classes, who are lacking in motivation. In other Year 9 classes, students work well together in pairs and groups, displaying mature attitudes towards the discussion of sensitive issues and respecting each other's views. The school's strong commitment to inclusion is reflected in the support students give to those of their peers who have learning difficulties.
171. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and much of it is good, particularly when lesson objectives are stated at the outset and reviewed as the lesson progresses to consolidate learning. Good teaching in Years 7-9 makes effective use of presentations and role-plays to engage students more actively in learning about religious phenomena. For example, in a stimulating and entertaining Year 8 lesson, students presented TV interviews on different explanations for a modern healing miracle. Evaluation is used effectively in such lessons to help groups set targets for improving future presentations. Specific agendas for group discussion, supported by video

documentary, proved effective in enabling another Year 9 class to understand the moral dilemma of deciding whether to turn off a life support machine. Some lessons lack sufficient pace because the teacher spends too much time on whole-class teaching, providing insufficient variety of activity to promote learning or extend higher attaining students. Students are encouraged to use ICT for research and presentation of assignments but it is not yet being used enough in lessons to support learning. Teachers mark work conscientiously but the criteria for assessment are too general to give clear diagnosis of what students need to do to improve.

172. Teaching of the GCSE course is thorough but the academic approach to the study of Bible texts in one Year 10 lesson did not match the needs of lower attaining students. When students were given the opportunity in another lesson to discuss and match verses to the views of different Christian groups towards homosexuality, their learning was more effective. Well-planned lessons for the modules in personal and social education provide the basic structure for satisfactory teaching. It is good when teachers are able to expand on them from their own expertise but less successful when teachers rely too heavily on the resources provided.
173. There are weaknesses in the leadership of the subject, and the management of the team, which limit the department's capacity to develop the subject in Years 10 and 11. Individual teachers have taken the initiative to develop courses but the school has not given priority to providing the necessary staffing and putting in place a management structure that will provide students' entitlement to a proper course in Years 10 and 11. Despite recent improvements in the planning and teaching of the Year 10 and 11 modules, religious education remains an aspect of personal and social education, rather than a subject in its own right. There has been some improvement in teaching since the previous inspection, plus the development of the GCSE course, for which the numbers choosing it in Year 10 have steadily increased over the past three years. Overall improvement has been just satisfactory.

## DRAMA

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

### Strengths

- Students achieve well because of good teaching.
- Extra-curricular provision is very good.
- Leadership provides clear direction for the subject to help raise standards.

### Areas for improvement

- Links with the English department to raise standards of speaking and listening (this is part of the school's development plan).
- Inadequate heating in the studio affects students' work.

174. Drama is taught as a discrete subject between Years 7-9 and is then offered as an option in Years 10 and 11.
175. In work seen during the inspection, standards are broadly average by the end of Year 9 and above average at the end of Year 11. Overall achievement is good throughout the school and there is no significant difference in the rate of progress of different groups of students. In some lessons, progress is very good. For example, in a Year 9 lesson working on 'freeze-frames' in improvisations, the students were able to demonstrate a sensitive understanding of character. They then used this to shape their tableaux to reveal scenes from the character's life. When students were less clear about the methods of taking on and sustaining roles, they were less confident in entering into the group improvisation. A Year 7 class were not able to create a real sense of drama in a scene in a manor house. In a Year 10 lesson, students demonstrated high levels of skills in using controlled movement with music and so made good gains in their learning. Similarly, in a Year 11 class, students were rehearsing their 'polished' improvisations prior to the examiner's visit. Each of these classes showed that they had understood the purpose of the lessons, could understand the techniques required and could use them to create moving and powerful pieces of their own. For Years 10 and 11 this reflected above average attainment, with

most students, especially those with special educational needs, achieving well in relation to their prior attainment.

176. Students' attitudes to the subjects are very good. This reflects, for the most part, the warm relationship that exists between teachers and students and also in the students' belief that drama is an area in which they can succeed. Students work collaboratively with ease. They are keen to support each other by offering suggestions and advice. The Year 11 students, rehearsing their scenes, were able to work with little input from the teacher. They listened to each other, had the confidence to put forward ideas but were not offended if their ideas were not taken up. They also support each other when acting as an audience. Year 10 students concentrated hard and were respectful to the performers. As a result, an intense atmosphere was created showing that they realise that they all have responsibility in the creation of the dramatic mood. Students also speak appreciatively of the range of extra-curricular activities that are on offer. They enjoy the drama clubs and the opportunities to be in school productions.
177. The quality of teaching is good overall. It is satisfactory in Years 7-9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and offer a rich range of activities for the exploration of the three strands of creating, performing and evaluating. They use the accommodation well to create stimulating learning environments. The only drawback to the accommodation is the fact that the main drama studio is so cold, which affects students' work. For example, in a Year 10 lesson on movement, it was too cold for students to remove their blazers, which inhibited their ability to move with ease. Attractive displays allow for the celebration of students' work. The key words and ideas on display, in support of the literacy strategy, provide a point of reference for students on the important elements of dramatic technique. The Arts Council levels help them to assess their work and provide them with targets for improvement. Not enough use is made of National Curriculum levels for Years 7-9 to promote links between the drama and English departments, which are important in teaching the speaking and listening strand of the English curriculum. In practical work, students are provided with a wide range of stimulus materials and broaden their experience by working with visiting artists and by visiting the theatre. Teachers place strong emphasis on the idea that drama has to be carefully structured and lessons generally move in steps which are carefully planned to build up students' confidence. Carefully planned support from teachers helps to keep students working and encourages them to persevere to find their own solutions to problems. Such support enabled a Year 10 class to take their work to a higher level; they devised their moves to go with and then against the music. The pace of lessons is brisk and purposeful, for the most part. On occasion, such as in a Year 7 lesson, the behaviour of a few students can disrupt the flow of the lesson and so time can be wasted. Teachers also place an emphasis on students evaluating their work carefully. The diaries of the GCSE students use critical vocabulary correctly and show very good levels of insight into their practical work. This, combined with teachers' constructive feedback, allows them to keep track of their progress. It also helps them to know how they can improve. Good account is taken of the needs of all the students. This also extends to the extra-curricular provision. A club for the gifted and talented runs for students in Years 7 and 8 as well as a club for all other students. There is particular provision for Year 9 students, as their club is intended to supplement the one period per fortnight which the subject has at this level. This is to encourage students to choose the subject for GCSE. The fact that four groups run in Year 10 is evidence of the success of the venture. For Years 10 and 11 the Kingsway School Theatre Company is an innovative way of catering for the needs of the most able both in practical drama and in the technical side of theatre production.
178. The quality of learning is correspondingly good. In the work observed, the vast majority of students had a highly developed sense of what it means to enter into the life of the drama. They understand the difference between 'real' life and the created life. They focus well and have a good understanding of the ways in which drama can be shaped. In their own devised work, Year 11 students in rehearsal showed that they could deliver lines with confidence and they were able to use stress and emphasis as appropriate. They were also able to manage the use of the space well. They thought carefully about the placing of both people and furniture in the scene and so were able to create strong visual pictures for the audience. They also thought carefully about their moves; they used the different levels well and changed easily from the natural to the representative mode to convey characters.



179. The leadership of the department is very good. The head of department has a clear vision as to how he wishes to develop the department further. Greater emphasis is now placed on support for other members of the department, especially those who are non-specialists, to help them become more confident in teaching the subject. The schemes of work are being re-written to ensure greater consistency across all classes and good attention is being paid to issues of equal opportunities. For example, there will be a greater emphasis on the multi-cultural dimension. There is a keen awareness of the fact that the nature of the subject contributes to students' learning in the deepest sense. Topics such as bullying, homelessness and stimulus material from Bosnia enable students to reflect on some important social and moral issues. The many theatre trips contribute to their cultural education and the drama clubs are clearly popular. As a result the drama department makes a significant impact on the life of the school. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good.