

INSPECTION REPORT

STOKESLEY SCHOOL

Stokesley, North Yorkshire

LEA area: North Yorkshire

Unique reference number: 121669

Headteacher: Mr Brian Owen

Reporting inspector: Mark Woodward
Rgl OIN: 11049

Dates of inspection: 18 – 21 March 2002

Inspection number: 190638

Short 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 18 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Station Road
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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs J Kitching

Date of previous inspection: 2 December 1996

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19414	Janet Flisher	Team inspector	Drama	Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural
17709	Alan Giles	Team inspector	Physical education	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Stokesley School is a larger than average comprehensive school, serving 1433 pupils aged 11-18. It serves a mainly rural area around the small town of Stokesley and is approximately a 25 minute drive from the centre of Middlesbrough. The socio-economic circumstances of the pupils are largely favourable. Six per cent of the pupils are eligible for free school meals which is below the national average; a small minority of pupils live in less favourable circumstances. Very few pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds with less than one per cent having English as an additional language. Around nine per cent of the pupils are on the register for pupils with special educational needs which is below the national average, and just over two per cent of pupils have statements of special educational needs which is broadly in line with the national average. The standards achieved by the pupils when they enter the school are well above average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Stokesley is a successful school in which pupils achieve well. Standards are well above average mainly because the pupils are taught well and because the school has a strong culture that promotes learning and personal growth. This culture is fostered by the whole school community: teachers, managers, non-teaching staff, pupils, parents and governors. The school is well led and some aspects of management are very strong; it provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Academic success is a key priority for the school; pupils of all ability levels achieve well.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- Pupils' positive attitudes, the support that they receive from their parents and the very good relationships in the school mean that pupils take good advantage of learning opportunities.
- The strategic direction of the school has been well planned by the headteacher and governors.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted very well through the wide range of activities that take place inside and outside the classroom; for example in the performing arts.
- The educational provision is strengthened considerably by the resources and additional learning opportunities that community status offers.

What could be improved

- The achievement of pupils in modern foreign languages.
- The structure and job descriptions of the senior management team to enable them to support and monitor teaching and learning more effectively.
- Subjects' use of information about pupils' progress.
- The use made of form period time.
- The accommodation for music, history, English, mathematics, the sixth form and for the pupils during wet weather. The school also has a considerable problem of managing the movement of pupils around the buildings.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in December, 1996. Since then it has made good progress. Standards are still well above average while improvements have been made in the quality of teaching and in the overall level of educational provision. The attitudes and behaviour of the pupils have improved substantially. The school has grown considerably both in the main school and the sixth form because of its high reputation in the community. Most of the key issues identified by the last inspection have been effectively tackled although form period time is still not used productively by a significant proportion of teachers and there remain difficulties in keeping pupils dry during wet weather. Statutory requirements for religious education in the sixth form and for a daily act of collective worship are still not met.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	A	A	A	A
A-levels/AS-levels	A	A	A	

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

Standards are well above average throughout the school and the achievement of the pupils is good. In the National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 9, pupils achieve results that are well above average overall. Results have sometimes been higher in mathematics and science than in English over recent years; this may partly be explained by the lower than average curriculum time for English in Years 8 and 9. On average, boys' results were lower than girls' results in English and mathematics compared with the results of boys and girls nationally over the past three years; in science the results of boys and girls were similar. National Curriculum test results have risen at a rate broadly in line with the national average over the past five years. Similarly, the rising trend in GCSE results is broadly in line with the national average. Over the past two years the school's GCSE results have been higher than expected given the same pupils' results in the National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 9. Higher ability pupils tend to make most progress. A strength of the school is that almost all pupils gain at least five GCSE passes including those with special educational needs. Girls' GCSE results are generally higher than those of boys, even when taking into account the better performance of girls nationally. This is particularly evident in the proportion of pupils gaining five A*-C grades and the proportion of A* - A grades. In the 2001 GCSE examinations, the school achieved all its targets and pupils achieved particularly well in science, design and technology, drama and business studies.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils want to learn and respond very well to the good quality of the teaching.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils behave very well both inside the classroom and around the school site. Movement around the school is difficult because of the numbers of pupils using the building; pupils behave very responsibly under these conditions.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. The very good relationships between pupils and teachers helps to create an atmosphere in lessons that promotes good quality learning. The provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural education has a very positive impact on pupils' personal development.
Attendance	Very good.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

Pupils benefit from teaching in most subjects that stretches their thinking and prepares them well for tests and examinations. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, plan lessons well and expect pupils to produce high quality work. Pupils learn very well in response to the teaching; they sustain concentration and work hard to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills in all subjects. The teaching meets the needs of all pupils well, as results in examinations at the end of Year 11 indicate. Of the core subjects, teaching is stronger in science and mathematics than in English and this is reflected in test and examination results. The national literacy, numeracy and Key Stage 3 strategies are being implemented effectively in English and mathematics. In this short inspection, the sample of lessons was not broad enough to give an accurate judgement of teaching quality in each subject, however some particularly high quality teaching was seen in drama and design and technology. The teaching methodologies used in modern foreign languages provided insight into why pupils achieve less well in this subject than in others; this is an area currently being tackled by the school.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. The curriculum is broad and balanced and pupils of all ability levels achieve well. A strong emphasis on the arts and sport extends the curriculum's breadth but the range of vocational courses is limited.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory. Pupils taught in special classes are supported well and almost all pupils gain a good range of GCSE passes. However, as the school has already identified, subjects are not well enough involved in formulating individual education plans and targets are not reviewed systematically. This means that the progress of pupils with special educational needs, including members of the travelling community, is not monitored effectively. The school has developed an action plan to tackle this issue.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	A very small proportion of pupils in the school have English as an additional language and all are sufficiently competent in the language to take full advantage of the curriculum.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Pupils enjoy a wide range of opportunities for personal development both in lessons and in the other educational provision offered by the school. The extra-curricular programme is very strong, for example, in the performing arts and sport. A wide range of visits in this country and abroad is also very valuable as is the contribution of the pupils to activities and charitable work in the local community.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. Pupils are cared for well by pastoral and subject staff; their needs are at the heart of the school's work. Some weaknesses in health and safety practice have been reported to the school.

Day-to-day assessment of the pupils is effective. Pupils understand how well they have succeeded with individual pieces of work and this supports their learning. Subjects have different methods of making assessments, which the pupils understand, but not enough use is made by most departments of standardised measures such as National Curriculum levels. This means that the monitoring of pupils' progress is not rigorous enough.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher has been successful in improving the school over recent years and in leading it to technology status. Members of the senior management team work hard and are highly committed to the school. Their roles include too many administrative tasks. They do not spend enough time supporting and monitoring the development of teaching and learning. Some heads of department lead and manage their subjects very well.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. Governors bring a wide range of expertise and skill to the school. They work hard and tackle issues such as building projects with great determination. They have a strong and valuable impact on the school's strategic planning.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. Some good work is done in this area both within departments and across the school but it is not systematic and consistent. Where practice is good, for example in science, improvements in performance are clear.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Financial planning and control are strong. Subjects are given higher than average budgets and they use these well to improve pupils' learning opportunities. The accommodation is in need of improvement in a number of areas; it is used to capacity. Very good use is made of teaching and non-teaching staff.

The school is entering a new phase of development with the achievement of technology status. The planning for, and execution of, the bid were of a high quality. There are some statutory breaches that the governors have not tackled, most particularly the provision of religious education in the sixth form. The principles of best value are mostly being followed.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils are expected to work and achieve well • Pupils make good progress • Pupils like school • The quality of teaching is good 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The information about pupils' progress • The links between home and school • The quantity and quality of homework • Standards in modern foreign languages

Twenty per cent of parents completed the inspection questionnaire and 44 attended the pre-inspection meeting; their views are therefore not necessarily representative. Inspectors agree with parents about the areas that they identify as strengths. They also agree that standards in modern foreign languages could be higher and that, while the school gives regular feedback about pupils' effort in class, information about progress is not as regular or detailed. The school works hard to communicate with parents and to develop partnerships with them. Homework is generally well planned and challenging.

ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM

STOKESLEY SCHOOL

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form serves 284 students, which is nearly double the size of an average sixth form; there are 28 more girls than boys. The sixth form has grown by 20 per cent since the last inspection. Around two thirds of the students from Year 11 continue into the sixth form. Given that almost all the pupils continue in further education of one form or another, around 20 per cent, therefore, choose to enrol at other schools or colleges. All the courses, apart from GCSE re-sits in mathematics, are of an advanced level standard either as academic AS and A2 courses or vocational A levels. The school is the principal provider of post-16 education in the immediate area. Pupils enter the sixth form with well above average GCSE results.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form is cost effective and provides good value for money. Standards are well above average and the students achieve well, although A level results are a little lower than at the time of the last inspection. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. The range of courses meets the needs of the great majority of students in the school but it is not broad enough to serve the community's needs most effectively. The sixth form is well managed and organised.

Strengths

- Students achieve well.
- The quality of teaching is very good.
- Students' attitudes to learning are very positive; very few fail to complete courses.
- Relationships between teachers and students are very good; they provide a strong foundation for learning.
- The school responds to the course combinations favoured by the students by operating an open option choice.
- The enrichment programme is strong, for example in physical education.

What could be improved

- The achievement of the students in French and English language.
- The breadth of courses to enable students not suited to AS level or vocational A level courses to continue in education at the school after the age of 16.
- The use of assessment information to track the progress of students and to set examination targets.
- The provision of formal careers guidance

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Good. Standards are above national standards and the achievement of students is good. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. AS results in 2001 indicated satisfactory achievement for students, with half of students attaining the highest grades. A level results were close to the national average; maintaining the level of attainment evident at the last inspection.

Biology	Very good. Standards are well above national standards and the achievement of students is satisfactory. A level results have been well above average over the past three years, girls performing better than boys. Students learn well due to the high expectations of the teachers and the strength of the monitoring and support that they are given. Some lessons feature too much dictation of notes.
Chemistry	Very good. Standards are well above national standards and the achievement of students is good. Over the past three years A level results have risen and were very high in 2001. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and expect students to produce high quality work.
Business education	Good. The course attracts students from a wide ability range. They achieve well based on prior performance, standards overall being in line with the national average. Teaching and learning are good, students enjoying a wide range of learning experiences that enhance their preparation for examinations. Courses are not matched well enough to the interests and capabilities of the students.
Design and technology	Good. Standards are above national standard and the achievement of the students is good. Teaching and learning are good and recent improvements in the accommodation have enhanced the quality of the subjects' work.
ICT	Satisfactory. ICT will be examined for the first time in 2002. Standards seen are average in relation to national standards and the achievement of the students is satisfactory. Teachers have good subject knowledge and this enhances students' learning.
Physical education	Very good. Students achieve very well because they enjoy the programme of activities and are very well taught.
Art	Very good. Standards are above national standards and the achievement of students is good. Teaching and learning are very good, students being successfully helped to develop their technique and creativity.
Drama	Very good. A and AS level results were above national averages in 2001 and standards are well above average in Years 12 and 13. The quality of teaching is very good. Excellent relationships between students and teachers lead to a real partnership in learning. The department is very well led and managed.
Geography	Very good. Standards are well above national standards and the achievement of students is very good. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic and plan lessons very well.
History	Very good. Standards in history are above the national average and the achievement of the students is very good. The quality of teaching and learning is very good, teachers expecting the students to produce high quality work and to develop good independent learning skills.
English	Satisfactory. Standards are average in relation to national standards and the achievement of students is satisfactory. Standards and achievement are higher in English literature than in English language, partly because of differences between the quality of teaching in the two subjects. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall.
French	Satisfactory. Standards are average in relation to national standards but the achievement of students is unsatisfactory. This is recognised by the school and action is being taken to tackle the issue. Teaching and learning are satisfactory but students' speaking skills are not good enough because too much English is used in some lessons.

A small sample of lessons and students' work was seen in other sixth form subjects. Standards seen were above average in most cases. Some particularly good teaching was seen in a physics lesson on

electrons and waves in which the teacher gave a very good demonstration and then skilfully consolidated students' learning by asking them provocative and demanding questions.

Encouraging students to think and to develop their analytical skills is also a characteristic of sociology lessons. A Year 12 class were challenged to explain their understanding of different sociological and political perspectives of education. They responded well, the teacher ensuring that all made contributions to the lesson. All were able to take notes during the discussion without the need for copying verbatim from the teacher.

A strength of the music provision is the encouragement given for musicians of all styles to take part in courses and extra-curricular activities. Students develop their performing skills well through the extensive programme of instrumental teaching and opportunities to give concerts.

A German lesson was taught well by a skilled linguist. Students showed average standards overall but were less confident speakers than writers.

In health and social care, students show imagination and thoroughness in their studies of the needs of others, for example, in the design and function of children's toys. Very good teaching and the provision of appropriate resources promote high standards.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	The head of sixth form and her team of tutors know and support the students well. Care is taken to help students settle into sixth form life and they are given good opportunities to develop a range of personal skills through curricular and extra-curricular programmes. Students are given good guidance when applying for university but careers education is unsatisfactory.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	The sixth form is managed and organised well. Students are given good information about courses and effective programmes are organised to provided them with a broad educational experience. The role of head of sixth form does not formally include responsibility for monitoring standards. Informally, the head of sixth form does tackle matters that students raise about the progress they are making but a more structured approach to quality assurance is needed. The commitment of the school to equality of opportunity is good as shown, for example, by the open choice of sixth form courses; however, the range of courses does not fully serve the needs of the community.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The academic and pastoral support they are given The information about courses The range of courses on offer The induction arrangements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The provision for careers education The information about their academic progress The responsiveness of the school to their views The extent to which they are treated as young adults

Students' views, as expressed by the responses on the questionnaire (which almost all students completed), were surprisingly critical given the high quality of education that they receive. The views expressed by students during the inspection were more favourable and balanced. The inspection team agree that students are supported well by teachers and managers and that they are prepared well for life in the sixth form. Students receive good information about courses and the range of courses is good if

you are a student capable of advanced level work. Careers education is unsatisfactory and not enough information is given to students about their expected examination performance or their academic progress. Students are treated well; their views are given due consideration by teachers and managers both in the classroom and about whole school issues.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Academic success is a key priority for the school; pupils of all ability levels achieve well.

1. Academic standards are well above average throughout the school and they have been maintained at this level since the last inspection. Pupils achieve well by the end of Years 9, 11 and 13, particularly in GCSE examinations.
2. The ethos of the school is one in which standards are expected to be well above average. This is partly because pupils' levels of achievement on arrival at the school are also well above average and also because teachers and managers challenge pupils to work hard and achieve well.
3. Trends in the results of National Curriculum tests and in GCSE examinations have been similar to national trends. This represents a good level of performance because it is harder for schools that already achieve high standards to raise standards at the same rate as schools that start from a lower baseline.
4. Pupils achieve particularly well at GCSE. Over the past three years, pupils made significantly more progress during Years 10 and 11 than pupils across the country. Achievement is good for pupils of all ability levels. Particularly impressive is the performance of lower ability pupils. Almost all pupils gain at least five GCSE pass grades; in 2001, for example, only one per cent of GCSE examinations resulted in fail grades.
5. Performance in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science is variable. Standards in science are highest, followed by mathematics and then English. In science, pupils consistently raise their levels of performance at higher than average rates as they move through the school. The achievement of pupils in mathematics is also good overall. In English, pupils do not make as much progress as in other subjects. This can be seen in the analysis of the pupils' performance in English in the National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 6 (before they join the school) compared with their subsequent results in the National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 9, GCSE examinations and A level examinations. An exception is in the good level of performance of the pupils at A level in English literature. Part of the reason for slower progress in English is the lower than average teaching time in Years 8 and 9. Another factor is that the teaching is not always well enough focused on ensuring that pupils learn at a fast enough pace.
6. Pupils achieve very well in the performing arts. This is evident both within the curriculum and through extra-curricular activities. Drama is a particular strength. Through their work and through developing skills in organising their performances, pupils gain a wide range of creative, performing and other skills which make a major contribution to their personal development.

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

7. Teachers expect pupils to achieve well. Most teachers provide challenging work that interests and stimulates pupils' learning. Lessons are carefully planned, drawing off the teachers' very good subject knowledge. Pupils learn well because they are well taught and because they are well motivated.
8. The quality of teaching in some subjects is very good. For example, in drama, teachers develop pupils' learning by teaching them core drama skills and encouraging them to explore their creativity. The drama teachers have created a working ethos that enables the pupils to feel safe when experimenting. This raises standards because the pupils stretch themselves within this very secure framework.
9. The headteacher plays an active part in leading improvements in the quality of teaching and learning. He has published articles on the subject and has encouraged teachers to experiment

with strategies found to be effective in other schools. He has also appointed a senior manager to co-ordinate good practice across the school and this resulted in the 'learn to learn' programme, which has proved to be both successful and popular with pupils, parents and teachers.

10. The 'learn to learn' programme has been well designed. It has a different focus in each of Years 7 to 11 and trains pupils to think about how they learn best and helps them devise ways of maximising their learning. It also helps teachers to consider how to present work so that all pupils learn effectively. One strategy used is to seat boys and girls next to each other in class. This has been found to be beneficial as it has improved classroom behaviour and has enabled boys and girls to experience each other's particularly ways of learning. Pupils and parents are very positive about the programme. Pupils enjoy the activities and find them stimulating, while parents welcome the opportunity to become more actively involved in supporting their children's learning.
11. The impact of the 'learn to learn' programme was clear to see in some of the teaching seen during the inspection; for example, in a Year 11 English lesson, the teacher used a range of methods to develop pupils' understanding of Andrew Marvell's poetic style. Pupils read the poem 'To his coy mistress' and analysed it through discussion. They were also encouraged to be active listeners, the teacher emphasising that 'listening's all about learning'. To reinforce the learning, the teacher gave the pupils visual reminders of key points using an overhead projector.
12. Following the success of the 'learn to learn' programme, a new senior management role is to be created to take the work further. This is an appropriate development, particularly to make sure that best use is made of the methodologies throughout the school.

Pupils' positive attitudes, the support that they receive from their parents and the very good relationships in the school mean that pupils take good advantage of learning opportunities.

13. The great majority of pupils are highly motivated. They come to school wanting to learn and to take advantage of the opportunities that the school offers. This is a very significant factor in explaining why the achievement of the pupils is good. Teachers are able to build on the positive attitudes of the pupils and in turn this stimulates them to develop curricula that the pupils find interesting and challenging. In a top set Year 9 science lesson for example, the pupils were really made to think about refraction both during whole class theory sessions and through practical activities. Throughout the session, the pupils made a major contribution to each other's learning by providing well-considered answers to the teacher's questions and by predicting and analysing the results of experiments. The interactions between teacher and pupils were stimulating to all and made for a highly successful lesson in which the pupils learned a great deal.
14. Relationships between pupils and between pupils and teachers are very good. The atmosphere in classrooms is relaxed yet purposeful. No evidence was seen of any tensions in classrooms; this marks a significant improvement on the findings of the last inspection.
15. The great majority of parents are very supportive of their children's learning. They encourage a learning culture at home, which builds well on the learning ethos that prevails at school. A large proportion of pupils have access to a computer at home and this also supports their learning. Parents' attendance at parents' evenings and school events is very high.

The strategic direction of the school has been well planned by the headteacher and governors.

16. From September 2002, the school will become a technology college. This marks a major new direction for the school which the headteacher has led with considerable skill. The rationale for applying for this area of specialism is well founded. The school serves a wide area and therefore has a responsibility to provide a broad curriculum. Technology status was rightly seen by the headteacher as the most broadly based of the specialist options and therefore the most appropriate for the school. Following a period of consultation during which the plan was analysed rigorously, the governors agreed for a bid to be made. The bid was of high quality owing to the

attention to detail of the senior manager appointed to the task. It was good management to devolve responsibility for this job to a specialist post-holder rather than by giving an additional task to an existing member of the senior management team.

17. Prior to the technology college bid, the school also had a clear development strategy which resulted in standards rising and the quality of education offered improving.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are very well promoted through the wide range of activities that take place inside and outside the classroom; for example in the performing arts.

18. Pupils experience a wide range of social opportunities. In class, pupils often work in pairs and groups, for example, to solve problems in science or to create drama performances. They participate in a wide range of extra-curricular activities, although these are less accessible to those living a distance away from the school.
19. The spiritual dimension of the curriculum was criticised at the time of the last inspection. The statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship is still not met and religious education is not provided in accordance with the locally Agreed Syllabus in the sixth form. However, in many ways, the school nurtures pupils' spiritual development successfully. In recent years several pupils have tragically died. The school has created a special Place for Peace in the school grounds where these pupils are remembered. It is a focal point of the site and provides a reminder to all pupils and staff about the value, joy and fragility of life.
20. Pupils' spirituality is also nurtured through well-planned assemblies and most particularly in the way that they are invited to consider the more profound aspects of human experience within the curriculum. Within lessons, pupils are regularly invited to reflect on the spiritual aspects of the work that they are studying; for example, in a Year 7 history lesson, pupils considered the values and beliefs of followers of Islam in studying the design of a Mosque. They were encouraged to discuss the cultural differences between muslims and other religious orders and how these affected the construction and use of religious buildings.
21. The Stokesley School Standard is the latest initiative to secure the school's moral framework. Its standards include showing respect for others, the expectation that pupils will try and achieve their best and the principle that no pupil has the right to disrupt the learning of others. These are all powerful statements which can be seen in action in the way that the school runs on a day-to-day basis.
22. The curriculum features a strong emphasis on creative and performing arts and on physical education. There are also a number of educational visits each year both in this country and abroad. The experiences that pupils gain in these areas have a powerful impact on their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
23. Pupils are encouraged to take an active part in the life of the local community. The school council has established links with other community groups, for example, a county councillor has canvassed their opinions about investment initiatives. Pupils also take part in Pride in our Town and other local events.

The educational provision is strengthened considerably by the resources and additional learning opportunities that community status offers.

24. Community status brings many benefits to the school and to the local community. The sharing of resources means that educational opportunities are enhanced for all and value for money is improved. One of the major benefits for the pupils is the high quality of the physical education facilities, which have been substantially enhanced by the community elements, such as the sports hall, astro-turf pitches and a swimming pool. Good shared usage arrangements mean that pupils have a much wider range of learning and leisure opportunities than is typical for pupils in a secondary school.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The achievement of pupils in modern foreign languages.

25. Pupils do not achieve well enough in modern foreign languages relative to their performance in other subjects, this is recognised by the school and action is being taken to tackle the issue. The core problem is that pupils do not develop strong enough speaking and listening skills because too much of the teaching is conducted in English. They therefore do not achieve high enough standards by the time they take the GCSE examination and this puts them at a disadvantage when taking courses in the sixth form.
26. The other main reason why standards are not higher is because in some lessons, teachers do not adjust their teaching to meet the individual learning needs of the pupils. For example, a Year 9 French lesson was pitched at a level suited to the less able members of the group. This meant that the more able were not able to push ahead with their learning despite having understood the concepts quickly.

The structure and job descriptions of the senior management team to improve the quality of the school's review of its own performance.

27. The senior management team have supported the headteacher well in developing the school's work. The school runs efficiently, which is testament to their good organisational skills.
28. The senior management team has made a number of significant improvements since the last inspection, for example, in devising stronger arrangements for promoting pupils' good behaviour, the positive impact of which are clearly seen in the atmosphere both in lessons and around the school. Senior managers, notably the headteacher and deputy headteacher responsible for pastoral provision, are highly visible during the day. This helps to maintain good order, particularly at breaks between lessons when the numbers of pupils moving around the building cause great congestion.
29. Senior managers, however, have too many organisational and administrative tasks and their leadership role is not strong enough. Not enough of their time is spent supporting the work of subjects in raising the quality of their work. Their links with subjects are based on the responsibilities that they carry. Therefore, for example, the deputy headteacher in charge of the curriculum liaises with all heads of departments about curriculum issues and the deputy headteacher in charge of pastoral issues liaises with them about pastoral issues. This creates multiple lines of accountability which means that no one member of the senior management team has a complete understanding of how well each department is performing and what support is needed to help them meet their development plan targets.
30. By not having a clearer accountability structure for supporting and monitoring the work of departments, the school is not able to identify development issues as quickly as it might. It is also not able to monitor the implementation of policies effectively, such as the teaching and learning strategy, to spread good practice effectively or to tackle weaknesses.
31. The proportion of the budget spent on administrative staff is below average. An increase in the number of administrative staff would be beneficial in giving them the capacity to take on some of the work currently performed by senior managers.

The use made of information about pupils' progress.

32. The school, through the work of one of the members of the senior management team, has established an effective system to track pupils' progress. GCSE and National Curriculum test targets are set and the school monitors the extent to which these are achieved. Pupils who are underachieving are also identified and remedial action is taken to try to raise their performance. The half-termly effort checks also contribute to this overview of pupils' performance.

33. Although the system for assessing pupils' progress is effective, the information that it generates is not used to its full potential. This is partly because regular formal discussions about performance do not take place between head of department and senior managers. The onus is placed on heads of departments to approach the senior manager in charge of assessment in the school for information. Some consult regularly while others do not and they are not as familiar with how to use the data. The information is therefore not used to best effect to help departments identify successful and unsuccessful practice. The impact of this can be seen in examination and test results, which show different levels of performance between subjects. Some of these have been sustained over a number of years without the issues behind them having been clearly identified.
34. Some subjects do not make best use of assessment to promote pupils' learning. This is particularly the case during Years 7 to 9 when too little use is made of National Curriculum levels, for example, in English. Where levels are used to assess the pupils, the results are not always discussed with them. This means that opportunities to explain to pupils how they might improve the quality of their work are not taken.
35. Pupils with statements of special educational needs have their learning needs met well. Pupils at other stages of the special educational needs register do not have clear targets as part of their individual educational plans. As a result, subjects do not plan work for these pupils in sufficient detail and pupils' progress is not monitored well enough.

The use made by teachers of form period time.

36. Form period time is not used well by a significant proportion of teaching staff; this was also the case at the time of the last inspection. It is mainly used as administration time but, for this purpose, fifteen minutes is too long. It gets the day off to a slow start for the pupils.

The accommodation for music, history, English, mathematics, the sixth form for the pupils during wet weather, and for aiding the movement of pupils around the buildings

37. The accommodation for music is unsatisfactory. The classrooms are adequate spaces but there are not enough practice rooms to enable groups of pupils to develop and practise their compositions and performances. This means that large numbers of pupils have to work in the classrooms and the volume of sounds becomes too loud for sensitive music-making and listening. Only when pupils perform their work in front of each other do they really get to hear what it sounds like. Standards are therefore being limited by the accommodation.
38. The department does have two practice rooms but these are in use most of the time by the visiting music teachers. It is good for the visiting teachers to be based within the department because it means that they feel part of the overall music provision. A solution to the accommodation issues needs to bear their needs in mind too because instrumental music is a strength of the school's educational provision.
39. The accommodation for history, English and mathematics is unsatisfactory because too many lessons are taught in rooms that do not reflect the nature of the subjects. Resources are also, therefore, not readily available and teachers have to travel around the site; this is inefficient. In history, for example, sixth form lessons take place in several mobile classrooms, a range of other classrooms, a food technology room and a room in what was the school caretaker's house.
40. Facilities for the sixth form are inadequate given its size. Students do not have enough private study areas and their social space is also cramped.
41. As at the time of the last inspection, very limited indoor or undercover space is available to pupils during wet weather; this is detrimental to the provision of a positive working environment.

42. Owing to the growth of the school, corridors and stairways are overcrowded. The school has appropriately developed systems for managing the safe movement of the pupils; however, the volume of 'traffic' is still high and lesson time is used up with pupils having to take long routes around buildings.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

43. In order to raise standards further, the headteacher, governors and staff should:
- Improve the achievement of pupils in modern foreign languages by;
 - Reducing the speaking of English in lessons
 - Matching work more closely to the needs and capabilities of the pupils
(Paragraphs 25-26)
 - Develop senior management roles to be more focused on quality assurance by;
 - Giving all senior managers formal responsibility for supporting and improving the quality of subjects' work
 - Increasing the number of administrative staff to relieve senior managers of some of their organisation and administrative tasks
 - Re-modelling the job descriptions of the senior management team
(Paragraphs 27-31)
 - Ensure that better use is made of information about pupils' progress by;
 - Developing a formal and regular process by which heads of department and senior managers use assessment information to monitor pupils' academic progress and take action to tackle the issues that are raised
 - Making better use of standardised measures of pupils' academic performance, particularly National Curriculum levels
 - Using the individual education plans of pupils with special educational needs more effectively to monitor their progress towards reaching learning targets
(Paragraphs 32-35)
 - Ensure that the use made of form period time is appropriate to the time available.
(Paragraph 36)
 - Improve the accommodation by;
 - Creating more practice rooms for music
 - Establishing more bases for the teaching of history, English and mathematics
 - Improving sixth form facilities
 - Developing more covered areas and social spaces for pupils to use during wet weather
 - Improving the facilities to enable pupils to move around the buildings safely
(Paragraph 37-42)

In addition, the headteacher and governors should take action on the health and safety issues reported and should ensure that the prospectus and annual governors' report to parents meet statutory requirements.

Sixth form

- Improve the achievement of students in modern foreign languages and English language by;
 - Reducing the speaking of English in modern foreign language lessons
 - Matching work more effectively to students' learning needs
(Paragraphs 44-45, 48-49, 52-53, 61, 67-68, 197-205)

- Broaden the curriculum to meet the needs of the community more effectively by introducing courses which are accessible to students who have difficulty in reaching A level or vocational A level standard
(Paragraphs 72-80,105)
- Improve the monitoring of students' progress by;
 - Setting examination targets for all students in all subjects based on their GCSE performance
 - Using assessment information to gauge students' learning more rigorously
(Paragraphs 90-92,120,140,173,188,196)
- Provide more formal and comprehensive careers guidance.
(Paragraphs 76,95)

In addition the headteacher and governors should ensure that statutory requirements for the teaching of religious education are met.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7-11	38
	Sixth form	54
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		43

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7-11							
Number	2	10	18	6	2	0	0
Percentage	5	27	47	16	5	0	0
Sixth form							
Number	2	24	17	11	0	0	0
Percentage	4	44	32	20	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting the percentages for Years 7-11 and the sixth form as each lesson represents close to two percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1150	284
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	64	0

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	24	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	120	8

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	15
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	27

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.1
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.5
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001	135	101	236

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	99	100	108
	Girls	92	77	84
	Total	191	177	192
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	81 (77)	75 (83)	81 (81)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	44 (46)	58 (64)	48 (53)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	100	112	110
	Girls	92	86	88
	Total	192	198	198
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	81 (83)	84 (88)	84 (81)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	44 (57)	56 (61)	55 (56)
	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	110	106	216

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	68	108	109
	Girls	90	106	107
	Total	158	214	216
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	73 (75)	99 (96)	100 (97)
	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	51.4
	National	39

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

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

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	69	79	148

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	20.3	22.6	21.5	0	0	0
National	16.9	18	17.5	2.6	2.9	2.7

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	32	100
	National		

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	2
White	1418
Any other minority ethnic group	14

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	31	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)	86.1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.7

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	25
Total aggregate hours worked per week	611

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

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

Key Stage 3	21.7
Key Stage 4	19.4

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	3556691
Total expenditure	3574656
Expenditure per pupil	2495
Balance brought forward from previous year	185660
Balance carried forward to next year	167695

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	14.9
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	10

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
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)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1434
Number of questionnaires returned	287

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	38	58	4	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	43	54	2	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	28	54	10	1	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	21	60	13	3	4
The teaching is good.	30	65	2	1	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	38	45	16	1	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	52	41	4	1	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	62	36	1	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	25	56	15	1	2
The school is well led and managed.	39	52	5	1	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	38	52	6	1	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	44	40	7	1	8

PART D: THE SIXTH FORM

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

44. Over the past four years A level results have been well above average in comparison with results nationally. In 2001 the results were: very high in chemistry; well above average in English literature, biology, physics, history and geography; above average in design and technology, art, drama and sociology; average in economics, German and mathematics; and well below average in English language. In all the other subjects, too few students were entered for the results to be statistically significant. Girls' A level results in 2001 were above average compared with girls' results nationally, while boys' results were well above average compared with boys' results nationally.
45. Results in the AS level examinations in 2001 were well above average. The proportion of A or B pass grades was 45 per cent overall and was particularly high in art, English literature, French, geography, mathematics, music and physics. The proportion of A – E pass grades was 95 per cent overall. More students failed to gain pass grades in biology and mathematics than average within the school.
46. Thirty two students took Advanced GNVQ examinations in 2001. All passed the examinations, the results being well above national averages. Most of the students taking GNVQ courses were boys, but their average points score was lower than that of the girls by a significant margin. Overall, the boys' results were not as far ahead of boys' results nationally as girls' results were ahead of girls' results nationally.
47. An analysis of the average points score of the students who took A level examinations in 2001 and 2000 compared with their average total points scores in GCSE examinations reveals that they made well above average progress in the sixth form. While the collective performance of the school is high, the performance of individual subjects is more variable. For example, results in mathematics in 2001 were relatively lower than the same students' results in their other subjects in 2001.
48. In the thirteen subjects chosen for inspection, standards seen were: well above average in biology, chemistry, geography, drama and physical education; above average in mathematics, design and technology, history and art; and average in English, information and communication technology (ICT), French and business education.
49. The achievement of the students in the thirteen subjects chosen for inspection is: very good in history, geography, physical education and drama; good in mathematics, chemistry, biology, design and technology, art and business education; satisfactory in English and ICT; and unsatisfactory in French.
50. Standards seen in other subjects seen during the inspection (but not part of the main sample) were above average overall. They were: well above average in physics; above average in sociology, economics and health and social care; and average in music.
51. Students achieve particularly well in drama because they are given challenging work and they are well-guided towards meeting its demands. Teachers have a high level of subject expertise which they use to stimulate students' thinking. They also have high level teaching skills which give them the confidence to work as equals with their students in developing and refining practical work; the partnership that ensues continually drives standards upwards and gives the students a very rewarding educational experience.
52. Pupils do not achieve as well in French as they do in most other sixth form courses despite the strong performance of students in the 2001 AS level French examination. The main reason for this is that students have not developed good enough speaking and listening skills during Years 7 to

11. While some overcome this during Years 12 and 13, a significant proportion continues to be under-confident. Recruitment to the A level course has also been relatively low with only 18 pupils taking the examination over the past three years compared with, for example, 55 in art and 57 in physics. Recruitment to the AS level course is higher.

- 53. Students also do not achieve well enough in English language because the teaching is not always planned well enough to meet students' individual learning needs. This means that the pace of learning is too slow.
- 54. The achievement of students with special educational needs is good. Those with specific learning difficulties (dyslexia) are aware of their own needs and are able to cope with the demands of their chosen courses. The school provides appropriate support for students with physical disabilities and visual impairment, to ensure that they can participate fully in lessons and learn successfully.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

- 55. The sixth form has continued to gain in popularity since the last inspection and the students display very good attitudes to their learning and to school life. In lessons they show a high level of commitment and concentration; they work hard and come well prepared. They are keen to answer questions and take careful notes. They have high expectations and a determination to succeed. They enjoy participating in many of the wide range of extra-curricular activities available and they appreciate the curricular enrichment opportunities offered on Wednesday afternoons.
- 56. The behaviour of the sixth form students is very good, as is to be expected from such committed young people. Only one sixth former has been excluded in the past seven years. Sixth formers sign a contract with the school when they enrol and they exhibit high levels of self-discipline both in their behaviour and in their learning. Their rates of attendance are very good.
- 57. Students' relationships, both with their teachers and with each other, are excellent. They support each other and show respect for each other and for their teachers. They engage actively in class discussions and are able to debate and challenge others whilst respecting their views.
- 58. Students' levels of personal development are excellent. There are many opportunities for them to take responsibility and to show initiative. Some students help younger students with their learning, for example with mathematics. Others take on joint responsibility for a sports team. About twenty students per year achieve the Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award. The sixth form committee is a valuable forum for discussion and for getting things done. It masterminds whole school issues, such as which charities will be supported and members plan their own social events. Two members run the School Council which gives all students a sense of responsibility and ownership of the school. Sixth formers readily volunteer to help with community fund-raising. For example, when a local Rotary club asked for help with stewarding a sponsored walk over Middlesbrough's Transporter Bridge, there was no shortage of volunteers.
- 59. Stokesley sixth formers are very pleasant, confident, mature and responsible young people with a strong social conscience.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

- 60. The quality of teaching and learning are very good. Lessons are planned very well, teachers giving students challenging tasks that build their knowledge, understanding and skills very effectively. Results over recent years indicate that students are well prepared for examinations. Overall, students are positive about the quality of teaching they receive although a small proportion is critical of the performance of some teachers. Students are very appreciative of the commitment given to them by the great majority of teachers.
- 61. In the thirteen subjects chosen for inspection, the quality of teaching and learning is: very good in mathematics, history, geography, art, physical education and drama; good in biology, chemistry,

design and technology, ICT and business education; and satisfactory in English and French. Very good teaching was also seen in other lessons that were observed, in physics, sociology and health and social care.

62. The school has a strong ethos for learning; this is one of the main reasons why students achieve well. Teachers foster this ethos well by expecting students to produce work of a high standard and to think in depth about their chosen areas of study. For example, in a Year 12 history lesson, students were challenged to consider how the relative dominance of the two sides in the English Civil War changed over the course of its duration. Probing questions targeted at individual students ensured that all had to maintain a high level of concentration throughout.
63. Most teachers plan lessons very well. In a Year 12 chemistry lesson on reversible reactions, for example, the teacher structured the activities in a very logical way. Students were not given the answers to problems, they learned by having to predict the likely outcomes of experiments and by observing what occurred. Throughout the session the teacher asked demanding questions, which checked the extent to which the students had assimilated the concepts that had been introduced.
64. Teachers' subject knowledge is very good. In art, teachers use their expertise to give individual tuition to the students about the development of their work. The result is creative and vibrant work that also draws well on learned techniques.
65. Some teachers make very good use of ICT to promote students' learning. In a Year 13 geography lesson, for example, students used commercial presentation software to demonstrate arguments for the further regeneration of Teesside. The activity enabled students to refine their ICT skills and to consolidate their learning of geography.
66. Teachers are aware of the needs of students on the special educational needs register and take these into account when planning their lessons. A pupil support assistant works effectively with the student to whom she is allocated. Good planning ensures that materials are suitably adapted to meet this student's needs and enable full participation in all lessons.
67. The teaching of French is satisfactory in the sixth form but this is a lower level of performance than achieved by most other subjects. The main reason for this is that not enough of the teaching is conducted in the foreign language and therefore the students are not as skilful in speaking as they are in reading and writing. Students' lower speaking skills are a legacy of the style of teaching in Years 7 to 11 and this further impedes the quality of teaching and learning that can be achieved in the sixth form.
68. The quality of teaching in English language is lower than in English literature and this explains why students do not do as well in English language as they do in their other subjects. The key factors are that lessons are not conducted at a fast enough pace and that teachers' planning is not well enough focused on meeting students' individual learning needs. For example, in a Year 12 lesson about Philip Larkin's poetry, the teacher set a challenging activity that the students were unsure how to tackle because they had not been systematically prepared for it.
69. The key skills of communication, application of number and ICT are taught effectively within the additional and general studies programmes as well as through work in examination subjects. Students are given a wide range of opportunities to develop the skills of working with others and problem-solving through the style of learning that they are offered in subjects, through units of work in the additional and general studies programmes and through extra-curricular opportunities such as involvement in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme.
70. The additional studies and general studies programmes have been reduced in scale in the current academic year because of the pressure felt by students studying for the new sixth form courses. The lessons observed were of a satisfactory quality.
71. The physical education and activities programme on a Wednesday afternoon is of a very high quality. Students are offered a wide range of activities and are given very good tuition and

encouragement. Many of the sixth form students are actively involved in sport both at school and in the community; they very much appreciate the opportunities that the school offers them.

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

72. The sixth form curriculum offers a good range of courses towards Advanced Supplementary (AS), Advanced (A) level and Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) certification. Students are offered a free choice of subjects and teaching groups are created based upon their choices. The school is successful in meeting students' requirements, provided that last minute changes in choices are not made. The grouping of some subjects, for example mathematics, into one option block has allowed further choice of modules to be studied within that subject.
73. Students are able to study four AS subjects in Year 12 and usually continue to study three of these to A level standard. Variations of this model are permitted by amending the number of courses studied at each level. AVCE courses are offered in health and social care and business studies. These are offered as single or double accreditation. Students are able to study a mix of AVCE and AS courses. Advanced level courses are well matched to the aspirations and potential of the students who have the ability to work at this level.
74. Students are mostly able to follow courses in the sixth form for which they have been well prepared in Years 7 to 11. In addition to the study skills fostered in individual subjects, the learn to learn programme has further developed students' independent learning skills. Some weaknesses in the continuity of learning need to be tackled: students in modern foreign languages do not develop strong enough speaking skills during Years 7 to 11 to enable them to make best progress in the sixth form and not all students who complete the GCSE business studies course are best suited to the demands of the AVCE business education course.
75. The school is recognised by the local community for its high quality of academic performance and this is reflected in the curriculum provided. However, as the only secondary school in the area, the range of courses offered does not fully reflect the learning needs of all the young people in the community. Around forty students in 2001 left the school at the end of Year 11 to pursue further education elsewhere.
76. Students intending to go on to higher education are well supported with talks on and assistance with university application during suspended curriculum time. Opportunities for students to engage in work shadowing, which will support their application for certain professional university courses, are well supported by the school. While good provision is made for supporting students' applications to university, there is little careers information related to starting work after Year 12 or Year 13. This is a weakness in the school's provision. Students are critical of this element of the school's work.
77. Further to the academic courses, students follow a general studies course in which various elements of ethics and key skills are addressed. However the range and depth of religious education provided do not fulfil statutory requirements. Students are given the option of entering for an AS general studies qualification. Further enrichment is provided through the additional studies course including, for example, financial management, 'grub on a grant', independent living and driver awareness. In a 'grub on a grant' lesson, the students made and ate a vegetarian meal. This lesson showed the value of additional studies in extending the range of students' learning in the sixth form. They really enjoyed the session and learned some useful skills. Physical education offers participation in team sports and the recreation afternoon provides opportunities for students to further widen their activities; utilising the sports centre's many amenities, taking part in drama or in a community programme or going off-site for golf and horse riding.
78. The key skills of communication, application of number and ICT are taught partly through timetabled lessons although the school continues to evaluate the effectiveness of these sessions. The wider skills of working with others and problem solving are well taught through subjects in the curriculum and through opportunities to help younger students and community service in primary schools and nursing homes. Some subjects such as drama are very effective in teaching students how to improve their own learning and performance, the other key skill, but in other

- subjects vital information about attainment and achievement is withheld from students and this seriously impedes their ability to improve.
79. Equality of access and opportunity is good. Students have equal access to all courses, dependant upon their prior attainment, and teachers provide appropriate support for students with special needs. Transition study materials, from GCSE to AS level, and extra support lessons are provided by some subject areas, to ensure students are able to benefit fully from their sixth form studies.
80. A very good range of extra-curricular activities further enriches the curriculum. For example, visiting speakers develop students' awareness of the outside world. The drama department provides a wide range of experiences and opportunities with clubs, theatre visits, opportunities to perform and visits from a variety of theatre groups. Students studying modern foreign languages are given opportunities to engage in international exchange visits and there has been an expedition to Africa for some students. This is due to be repeated in the near future. Some students are given opportunities to support lessons in the main school and help in the running of teams during extra-curricular activities.
81. Overall, the school makes very good provision for students' personal development with particular strengths in the opportunities offered for social development.
82. The way in which the school community has come to terms with the deaths of several students and students in the last few years demonstrates the strength of mutual support within the school. The Place for Peace garden where these young people's lives are commemorated is a moving testament to the way the school provides opportunities for students to reflect on life and death. A further example is the way the drama department provided space and opportunities for students to write about their feelings after the terrorist attack on New York. Assemblies offer further thought-provoking opportunities for the consideration of religious, spiritual and moral issues whilst avoiding dogma. Subjects such as English, history and drama enable students to explore and understand their own and other people's feelings, beliefs and values.
83. The code of conduct contained within the Stokesley School Standard permeates the whole of the school. It is based on a mutual respect and this is exemplified by the very good relationships between students and between teachers and students. Students show very good moral awareness, whether in studying the distribution of wealth and poverty in geography, or considering political correctness in their study of the development of language. Charity work is well supported, both locally, for instance in the students' involvement in Pride in our Town, and, on a more global scale, in their funding of six Ugandan boys' schooling.
84. Social development is particularly strong. Students show their collaborative skills in the numerous opportunities offered in lessons for working with others. They run their own Year Committee and chair the School Council. Many support students in Years 7 to 11, either working with them in English and mathematics lessons, or helping in the provision of extra-curricular activities such as drama, music, ICT and physical education. The organisation of concerts, performances and social events and the community service undertaken through the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme all develop and strengthen students' social awareness and confidence.
85. The school works hard to extend students' cultural awareness. The awareness of their own culture is developed through the curriculum in English, drama, art and music and through visits to theatres and art galleries. There are email links with European schools, regular contact with foreign language assistants and annual exchange visits with a French and a German school. The school is aware that in a predominantly white area it is important to give students some experience of living in the multi-cultural society that many of them will meet as soon as they leave school. The art department ensures that elements of Indian and African art are part of the learning environment. In addition, 18 students together with six teachers will have the rare opportunity to visit six countries in southern Africa in July 2002 as some did in 2000. The wealth of experience they bring back to the school is invaluable in promoting the global understanding of all students.

86. Stokesley School forms an integral part of the town and its links with the community are excellent. The Schools Curriculum Award 2000 underlines the strength and value of community links. The local provision for adult education is funded by the school governors. The head of community education is also an assistant head of the school. Much of the community education takes place on the school site. All the school departments both use and help with community education from which around 1,400 students benefit. Community and school education are seamlessly intertwined.
87. The school also has very good links with its feeder primary schools, especially Stokesley Primary. There is a carefully planned induction programme for Year 6 children transferring to Year 7 and all the primary schools are visited by Stokesley School staff. Primary schools are also offered sports facilities and sporting expertise. Links are also strong with many universities and with local further education colleges in Middlesbrough, Guisborough and Redcar where some students go for vocational courses unavailable at the school.
88. The school has over one thousand employers on its work experience database. Several of these offer the school help and sponsorship in various ways. The dual school/leisure centre is another excellent partnership which enhances students' sporting experiences.
89. Since the last inspection the good curriculum provision has been maintained, both in academic and enrichment activities.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

Assessment

90. The school's procedures for assessing students' attainment are good. However, some students find the use of an A,B,C, + & - system for grading confusing with the grading system used for public examinations. The use of attainment data to monitor progress and to set targets shows considerable variation between departments; the systems for using assessment data to drive school and individual improvement are not strong enough.
91. The assessment co-ordinator provides departments with information and analyses about the performance of students and departments. Much is left to departments to decide how to use assessment information. Only a very few departments set targets for students, which are based on their GCSE performance, although most do provide a predicted examination grade. Examples of good practice are to be found in drama and chemistry. Students are critical of the information they are given about their academic progress.
92. Many heads of department are not well enough informed about how to use assessment data to realise its potential value. As a result they do not make regular use of it to analyse how well they are promoting students' learning and therefore action to improve the quality of departments' performance is not always decisive enough, for example in the cases of English language and French. Day- to- day use of assessment is generally good; students mostly feel that they can ask for help when they perceive that they are not achieving the results that they need and staff do monitor students and offer their help.

Advice, support and guidance

93. As in the main school, the pastoral care of the students is good. Students have a range of sympathetic listeners from form tutors to subject teachers. A group interviewed during the inspection gave particular praise to the head of the sixth form. They appreciate the help and care given to them. One student said he would be happy approaching any of his teachers with an academic or personal problem.
94. There is a well-organised programme of induction into the sixth form that starts in the summer term after the GCSE examinations. Stokesley students and those wishing to join the sixth form

from other schools spend two days in school. They are able to meet the teachers and discuss their programmes of study. In September they start a day earlier than most students and, as well as an introduction to their studies, there is emphasis on the social side of sixth form life. Students are given a free choice of subjects from those that the school offers; this is a flexible and commendable approach. Teachers are both flexible and understanding if, early in the course, students find they have made the wrong choices and they are helped to find something more suitable.

95. Careers guidance, which is very good for Years 9 to 11, is very limited in the sixth form. The help and advice given to students applying for university is very good and students are very successful at gaining admission. However, more advice could be given to those students who do not wish to go to university, do not qualify, or simply seek post-A level employment. Sixty one per cent of the 254 students who answered the questionnaire were critical of the provision for careers education.
96. Measures to ensure child protection cover the whole school. The designated teacher implements the policy of the local authority. However there is an unsatisfactory element to child protection as not all staff are made aware of the procedures. Other issues raised during the inspection concerned students' and students' health and safety. In the design and technology department the dust extraction system is inadequate and there are no demarcation lines around the machinery. There is also an issue at lunchtimes when students are allowed to go into the town. There is no signing out system so the school does not know the whereabouts of all students during the lunch break.
97. Annual reviews of statements for students with special educational needs are carried out efficiently. Good links with the local careers service ensures that transition plans for students with special educational needs are reviewed regularly.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS AND STUDENTS?

98. Most parents are very pleased with the school, which is oversubscribed. They feel that: their children are happy; they are well taught; they are expected to work hard and make good progress. Most feel comfortable approaching teachers with questions or problems. Year 13 students interviewed were very positive about the school. They are happy, feel well provided for, very well taught, have very secure preparation for examinations and really appreciate the extra-curricular provision.
99. Responses from the questionnaire completed by students were more variable than the views expressed during the inspection week. Overall, students were positive about the teaching they received and the commitment of their teachers, although a relatively small proportion of negative responses indicated dissatisfaction with some of the teaching. Students were also positive about the information they were given about courses, the range of courses on offer and the way that they are cared for. Students are highly critical of the careers provision, do not feel that they are kept well-enough informed about their progress and suggest that the school is not sufficiently responsive to their views or their status as young adults.
100. A minority of parents do not feel the school works closely with them or that they are well informed about their children's progress. Some concern was also expressed about the quantity and quality and about standards in modern foreign languages. Inspectors found that the school works hard to develop links with parents. Regular feedback on the commitment of students is given through half-termly effort grading but academic progress monitoring is not as detailed as it could be. A level targets are not set in many subjects and therefore it is difficult to measure the extent to which students are on track to reach the results that they are capable of. Annual reports are detailed and include comments from the students. Parents' consultation evenings are annual but teachers will always meet concerned parents by appointment. Inspectors found homework to be generally interesting and challenging but agreed with parents that standards in modern foreign languages should be higher.

101. The school prospectus and the sixth form prospectus are well produced, interesting and informative. However, neither the school prospectus nor the governors' brief annual report to parents fully meets statutory requirements.
102. Members of the parent/teacher association are active and keen. They raise funds and support the school in many valuable ways. Activities include fashion shows, with both students and parents as models, and family ceilidhs. "Parents in Partnership" has been set up to strengthen links with parents. The main focus is to raise standards by helping parents to help their children. The school offers parents a range of helpful resources aimed at helping them to tackle the kind of academic, personal and emotional issues that confront teenagers. Sixth form parents are given a very helpful booklet about funding for higher education and there is an excellent guide for new parents.
103. Overall the school's partnership with parents is effective; it is giving mutual support and helping to raise standards.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

104. The sixth form has grown significantly since the last inspection. It is a popular choice for both students already at the school and those at other schools in the region, many of whom choose to travel considerable distances to attend. The growth of the sixth form has not been part of a strategic plan. It has been the result of parents and students noting the sustained success of the school in examinations and the success of former students at university.
105. The size of the sixth form enables a wide range of academic A levels to be offered together with a three vocational A levels. This gives academic students a good platform from which to move on to university, something which most of the students aim to do. There are no courses for pupils who are not able to meet the demands of A level and therefore the school does not meet the further education needs of a significant proportion of young people in its community. At the end of Year 11, the great majority of students (in 2001 it was 85 per cent) continue in further education. Of these, most continue into the sixth form while around forty choose alternative schools or colleges that are situated several miles away.
106. The sixth form is well managed by a member of the senior management team. Her core roles are pastoral and organisational and she is well regarded by students. Students appreciate the information that they are given about sixth form courses and the efforts that are made to help them settle into sixth form life. The great majority enjoy being in the sixth form and much of the credit for this is lies with the head of sixth form and her pastoral team. They have a good knowledge of the students and support them well.
107. The head of sixth form does not have enough responsibility for the standards achieved by students. This an area for the school to develop and it ties in with the leadership and management issues for the whole school. Informally, the head of sixth form does tackle matters that students raise about the progress they are making but a more structured approach is needed if students are to make the best possible progress in all their subjects.
108. Very few students fail to complete courses that they start at the beginning of Year 12. A small minority change their minds about courses during the first few weeks of term, after that, drop-outs are rare.
109. The school is in the process of reviewing its special educational needs policy in order to meet the requirements of the revised Code of Practice. The special needs co-ordinator has identified some appropriate priorities for development. Among these is the need to ensure that all individual education plans are reviewed more regularly, as the current arrangements for only one review each year are inadequate.

Resources

110. The headteacher and governors are aware that the income based on the number of sixth form students exceeds the cost of the provision by about three per cent of the total budget. This is explained by the relatively large numbers of students and the size of some teaching groups. It is an economy of scale and does not detract from the quality of provision. The money saved subsidises the provision for pupils in Years 7 to 9, by funding an extra group and thus reducing class sizes.
111. Finance is well-managed and systems for monitoring and administration are good. The most recent audit report confirms the good practice and noted only two concerns, both of which have been addressed. Decisions taken by governors are based on a good understanding of the school's priorities through an awareness of the school development plan. There is also clear planning for the accrued underspend to support capital development in the school, following the successful practice of recent years. The principles of best value are mostly applied well. The sixth form gives good value for money.
112. Teaching staff are suitably qualified and experienced to teach the sixth form curriculum. There has been some recent difficulty in recruiting to vacancies. The school spending on technical, administrative and clerical support is below the national averages. This results in unsatisfactory support in almost half the subject areas. The headteacher is aware of this deficiency. He has already allocated additional help to a number of departments and plans to make further appointments in the near future. There is good support for modern foreign languages in the provision of foreign language assistants and a clerical assistant in the library provides a valuable service.
113. Arrangements for performance management fulfil statutory requirements in outline but are not rigorous enough. They are not part of a strong enough quality assurance framework. Staff development opportunities are similarly variable by curriculum areas. There is good support for newly qualified teachers through a designated programme but there is no central scheme of induction for experienced newcomers.
114. The level and variety of up-to-date learning resources are good. School expenditure on books and materials is very high, following a policy that all pupils should have access to individual copies of books and other materials; this is very beneficial in supporting the achievement of high standards. The library provides a good source of reference materials and is regularly used for resource-based teaching and learning. There is a good level of funding for library purchases and heads of department have the opportunity to identify books they need. The library book stock for sixth form use is very good. The overall quality of book provision is reduced by a small number of departments keeping book selections out of the library.
115. There are good central resources for ICT, including a designated sixth form area and the English department has its own intranet facility. However, a lack of co-ordination of resources leaves some facilities under-used and levels of supervision are insufficient to prevent some inappropriate use of computers, such as game-playing.
116. Accommodation for the teaching of the curriculum is satisfactory but includes several concerns. There is an adverse impact on the sixth form curriculum caused by the lack of music practice facilities; the absence of any designated spaces for teaching history and some small teaching spaces in the sixth form block. The sixth form study and social spaces are too small. Circulation around the school is hindered by narrow staircases and corridors and small landings. Only the good behaviour of pupils and students when moving around the school prevents difficulties.

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

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

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

GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	48	79	71	50	32		
Biology	71	85	84	37	36		
Chemistry	36	97	87	42	42		
Design and technology	9	100	85	22	25		
Business Studies	10	90	87	20	28		
Art	30	100	88	63	43		
Drama	25	100	-	40	-		
Geography	35	100	91	48	39		
History	41	98	94	37	43		
English Language	63	100	95	44	37		
English Literature	27	100	95	59	37		
French	20	100	91	65	47		
Economics	26	100	88	46	42		
German	17	94	92	41	45		
Music	4	100	95	100	45		
Physics	26	100	86	50	41		
Sociology	44	93	86	41	33		
Health and Social Care	1	100	-	0	-		

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	42	81	87	38	43	5.3	5.8
Biology	54	91	88	48	34	6.3	5.3
Chemistry	39	97	91	72	43	8.2	5.9
Design and technology	14	93	91	36	30	6.1	5.4
ICT	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Physical Education	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Art	21	100	96	33	46	6.8	6.6
Drama	8	100	100	38	38	7.0	6.6
Geography	24	96	92	63	38	7.2	5.7
History	19	95	88	47	36	6.6	5.5
English Language	30	93	92	7	29	3.8	5.3
English Literature	19	100	95	58	37	6.8	5.9
French	4	75	89	50	38	5.0	5.6
Economics	20	90	89	25	36	5.2	5.5
German	5	100	91	20	40	5.2	5.8
Physics	26	100	88	42	40	6.8	5.7
Music	1	100	93	0	35	6	5.7
Sociology	22	91	86	27	35	5.8	5.3
Business	10	90	-	20	-	4.4	-
Health and Social Care	5	100	-	40	-	6.4	-
General Studies	1	100	85	100	30	8	4.9

Advanced vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		Average point distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Business Studies	11	100		36		36	
Health and Social Care	21	100		29		71	

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

Mathematics

The inspection covered Advanced (A), Advanced Supplementary (AS) level and further mathematics courses. Achievement and attainment of students following the further mathematics course are very high. Teaching of this course is very good.

The quality of provision for mathematics in the sixth form is **good**.

Strengths

- The standard of teaching is very good.
- The most able students achieve the highest grades possible.
- Students have very positive attitudes to mathematics and they appreciate the help they receive from teachers.

Areas for Improvement

- To agree examination targets with students based on their GCSE performance.
- To improve the analysis of assessment data to identify reasons for underachievement by some students.

117. In 2001, results in A level examinations were close to the national average. In the last three years there has been a decline in overall performance from well above average in 1999 to being in line with the national average in 2001. During this period, entries to A level examination have increased from 27 to 45 students, which has widened the ability range of students taking the course. Analysis of students' individual performances in 2001 indicated that, for half of the students, achievement was below expectation. The AS results of 2001 were above average with half of students attaining the highest grades. Twenty one per cent of students failed to gain a pass grade but that was still a better level of performance than students managed nationally. Almost all students from the AS course continued their studies to A level. At both A and AS levels, able students achieve very well. In 2001 all three 'further mathematics' students achieved the highest grade possible. There are no significant differences in the performance of male and female students.
118. The standard of A level work seen in students' books and during lessons is above average. Higher ability students work fluently, showing well-expanded answers when working with Venn diagrams and probability. Mathematical rigour and accuracy is a feature of most students' work, indicating a good understanding of mathematical processes. When investigating the equation for a circle, Year 13 students showed very good understanding of the changes produced in the shape and position of graphs by altering the function. Those following the further mathematics A level showed very good algebraic skills when manipulating functions in order to sketch curves of rational functions. The very good relationships that exist between students and teachers allow students to develop their understanding and exchange ideas with their classmates. For example, after investigating methods of solving questions related to the laws of motion, groups of students showed good understanding as they presented their findings to the rest of the class.
119. Very good provision is made to ensure students with special needs and others, whose background in mathematics is limited, are included fully in the sixth form courses. This is done through close personal support or by the provision of transition materials, from GCSE to AS level, and the provision of extra support lessons in Year 12.
120. The teaching of A level mathematics to sixth form students is very good. The high quality of teachers' subject knowledge ensures insightful and interesting delivery of new concepts to students. Teachers use a wide variety of styles to engage students' interest and challenge students to think for themselves. Students respond well to this approach and as a result they show a firm grasp of underlying concepts. Students appreciate the very good day-to-day assessment and the willingness of teachers to assist them at any time. Homework is set within deadlines that allow students time to seek any required assistance before completing their work. This builds the confidence of students in their ability to complete tasks. However, some students confuse the 'A, B, C' marking scheme for normal homework with a possible A level predicted grade. Teachers make good use of the resources of the department, including high quality use of overhead projectors and graphical calculators, which enhances the students' understanding of both concept and process of solution. All teachers are eager to share their enthusiasm for the subject and colour their lessons with interesting snippets from real life or develop the wonder of mathematics with additional information. For example, towards the end of a lesson on vectors, the teacher mentioned the recent television programme on Pythagoras' lost manuscript and discussed this with students. The interest developed in students is evident in those who assist in the teaching of pupils in the main school. By Year 13, students have accepted responsibility for their own progress yet recognise the value of the teachers' close monitoring. Students are encouraged to read around their topics using different texts and the school's computer network.
121. The head of department provides good direction for the development of the subject in the school. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory; A level results have been maintained at national average levels, the new AS course has been introduced and high quality results in further mathematics have been sustained. Resources have been improved, particularly access to ICT. Recently the department has engaged in developing the school's bid for technology school status. However, the uses of examination data are underdeveloped as analytical or predictive tools.

SCIENCES

The focus was on biology and chemistry, but physics was also sampled. In physics at the 2001 examinations the A level results were well above the national average and this was also true for the AS examination. One very good lesson was observed in which students considered a wave theory of electrons. The teaching struck a very good balance between telling and asking students to think for themselves. The teachers very good knowledge of the subject was well used to produce an interesting and very informative lesson that resulted in very good learning and a desire to know more.

Biology

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

Strengths

- Good teaching from well-informed teachers promotes good learning and high standards. Good monitoring and support for individual students.

Areas for Improvement

- The standards achieved by boys.
- Using teaching methods in all lessons that make the students link.

122. In the 2001 A level examination, results were well above the national average. The students' achievement, in the light of their GCSE grades was good. Girls outperformed boys with very high standards, whereas boys' standards were in line with national averages. At AS level in 2001 the results were in line with the national averages; the achievement of these students was satisfactory relative to their GCSE grades. Over the last three years results have risen, almost entirely due to the good performance of the girls. The numbers of students opting for biology in the sixth form are rising, mainly due to more boys choosing the subject. The retention rate is good: only one student who set out on the AS course last year failed to complete it and all who joined the A2 course finished it.
123. The standards of work seen in the present Year 13 are well above average and the students are achieving well. This was exemplified by a group who demonstrated that they could consider the structure and function of the placenta by applying the basic principles, which apply to the design of all effective interchange surfaces. They also had a working knowledge of the hormonal systems involved in the preparation for and maintenance of pregnancy.
124. Students in Year 12 also show a good standard of work: most have built upon their GCSE knowledge and skills well. In one lesson, for example, students were extending their knowledge of heart structure and function by considering pressure changes during the cardiac cycle at various locations. They were able to account for the reasons why and how they occurred over time.
125. The quality of teaching is good. Lessons are well thought out to deliver definite objectives, which are made clear to the students. The teachers' knowledge of their subject is very good and usually well used to produce interesting lessons, taught to high levels with broad perspectives. Teachers provide clear explanations and regular checks to ensure that the students have learned, followed by reinforcement if necessary. Learning from the previous lesson is usually checked, but the new learning is not always brought together at the end. Some teachers make good use of presentations using ICT to provide a varied and stimulating framework for their lessons. In the best lessons students' ideas are sought and they are stimulated to develop them by discussions and questions to drive the lesson towards its objectives. In such lessons good use is also made of basic principles, such as those for interchange surfaces when considering the structure and function of the placenta. Where lessons are less successful they can be periods of dictated notes, punctuated by questions to check student understanding. Students are not required to think or to participate, but they are expected to learn. There is some good marking of students' practical work with useful comments and suggestions for improvement. Assessments of mid and end of module tests give students a useful insight into their probable AS/A2 grades. Suitably challenging homework is frequently set, requiring thought and research.

126. The quality of learning is good. The students work hard, listen well and most are keen to learn, although some are happier to be told and reassured by questioning than they are to reason for themselves. Learning is greatly helped by their good relations with teachers, which result in a productive two-way traffic. Teachers are always willing to help, if asked. They also keep an eye on individual performance and proffer help if they feel that it is needed: thus progress is well monitored and supported. Teachers do promote independent learning and give some guidance in this area, but it could be improved. The main library offers a good selection of books and computer facilities to support research and a wider interest; there are no scientific periodicals.
127. The subject is well led and managed. There is a new enthusiastic and effective head of department with many good ideas for development. There are good systems of assessment and they are well used to provide assistance to the individual student and will be used to modify curriculum delivery as the new course beds in. The curriculum is enhanced by a field course, last year to Filey Brigg and this year to Malham: also by visits to Manchester University for revision lectures. Links are presently being developed with food manufacturing and Teesside University. The staff are well qualified and enthusiastic. The accommodation is very good. The good resources are deployed and maintained by an effective technical staff. While the department makes good use of its ICT resources, more are needed to enable it to realise the potential of both its staff and students. For example, more data logging equipment is needed and more access to computers from the laboratories. Standards have risen since the last inspection and the department's future looks to be good.

CHEMISTRY

The overall provision for chemistry is **very good**.

Strengths

- The good teaching from well qualified and enthusiastic teachers, which leads to the high standards.
- The strong linkage between theoretical and practical work, which ensures a firm understanding.

Areas for Improvement

- Strengthening of industrial and university links together with a programme of visits.
- Consolidation and checking of the new learning at the end of lessons.

128. In the 2001 A level examination, results were very high compared to the national average. The achievement of students was very good relative to their GCSE grades. Girls and boys did equally well overall, but the girls gained more of the top grades. Over the last three years results have been rising. At AS level in 2001 the students did well: results were above average, whilst their achievement was as expected relative to their GCSE grades. The numbers of students wishing to do sixth form chemistry are increasing, especially for boys. Nearly all the students who set out on the AS course complete it and, last year, all the students who began the A2 course finished it.
129. Standards of work in the current Year 13 are well above average. Many students are competent chemists, as they demonstrated during a largely practical lesson centred on enthalpy and solution. Students were able to predict how well substances would dissolve in various solvents from considerations of the energies involved in breaking and making bonds and then to verify practically that they were correct: which most of them were.
130. Students in Year 12 are working well and have made good progress from the standards that they achieved at GCSE. This was seen, for example, in a lesson considering chemical equilibria. Students showed a good understanding of Le Chatelier's principle and so they could explain how and why the positions of dynamic equilibria should change with pressure, concentration, temperature and catalysis.
131. Teaching is good and the students learn well as a result. The teachers have a strong subject knowledge, which they use effectively to develop interest and to give perspective. There are crisp

objectives, which are made plain to students. Strong features of much of the teaching are the good planning, clear explanations and logical stepwise development of ideas; interspersed at intervals with questions to test understanding before continuing on. Teaching ensures that practical and theory are strongly linked and that students setting out on practicals know not only how to do them, but also why they are performing procedures and what they mean. Only some lessons start by checking the learning from the previous one and conclude by consolidating the new learning. The best lessons seek not only to teach and check, but also to involve and to interest the students in the generation and development of ideas. Where lessons are less successful and interesting they are note-taking sessions with questions to test understanding. The assessment by teachers does provide students with a good indication of their standards in relation to AS/A2 grades. Good homework is usually set: it complements, challenges and extends learning.

132. The students' learning is good. They take their tasks seriously and work hard at them. Their learning is enhanced by good relations with teachers. In most classes students' willingness to listen and to work hard, together with the good relationships, generates a pleasant, but purposeful and productive, working environment from which all benefit. Whilst they are keen to answer questions and to ask them when confused, they generate few of their own. Teachers are always willing to offer individual help and they keep a good watch on the progress of each student. Students are encouraged to become independent learners, but their approach is not very well structured. The main library offers a good selection of books and computer facilities to encourage research and interest but it has no scientific periodicals.
133. The department is well led and managed; this together with the good teaching has promoted the good learning and high standards. Progress since the last inspection has been good. A level results have risen and the good standard of teaching has been maintained. The capable and well-qualified staff cover the curriculum in sufficient depth to enable the students to access the highest grades. The curriculum is enriched by some industrial links from time to time, such as with a steelworks at Redcar, and the department offers a residential revision course. However, the area of industrial and university links with visits is not well developed. Assessment is done well and used to benefit individual students by identifying problem areas, which are then addressed. The accommodation is very good as are the resources apart from those in ICT. More laboratory access to computers and networks and more projection equipment would be well used.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

Design and Technology

Design and technology is offered at A and AS levels. Fourteen students took A level examinations in 2001, four boys in technology and six boys and four girls in communication. Nine students took the AS level examinations, six boys and two girls in product design and one boy in systems and control.

Provision overall in design and technology is **good**

Strengths

- Good quality teaching.
- Very good quality provision for the application of ICT.
- Very good leadership and management of the subject.

Areas for Improvement

- Health and safety provision in respect of dust extraction in technology workshops and in the proper demarcation of working zones in the proximity of machinery.

134. A level results in design and technology in 2001 were above the national average. Two out of the four boys gained A grades in the technology examination while thirty per cent of the students gained A or B grades in communication. All but one of the students gained pass grades. The results maintain a steady improvement in results over recent years and represent a good level of

achievement. Boys attained better results than girls and gained a significantly larger proportion of the highest grades. AS level examination results were broadly in line with national averages; the one boy who took systems and control gained an A grade. All the students gained pass grades.

135. Students display good designing and making skills in Year 13 A level projects. They show imagination in design and good craftsmanship in construction with an appropriate concern for standards of finish and presentation. In Year 12, students demonstrate an advanced understanding of input and output in systems and control projects. Attainment is aided by very clear analysis of systems in the teaching. Information technology is used extensively in the work of the department. Students are introduced to both computer-aided design and computer-aided manufacture - CAD-CAM - and word processing is used extensively. The design and technology area is well equipped in this area specifically and the provision of resources for learning is very good generally.
136. Students show imagination and thoroughness in their studies of the needs of others, in the design and function of children's toys, for example. Here too, high standards and good progress were promoted by very good teaching and the provision of appropriate resources.
137. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Strengths include clarity of objectives and organisation of teaching material. Lessons are well planned and prepared and are taught at a good pace which is reflected in students' rate of learning. The intervention of the teachers in the individual work of students is well judged and appropriate to individual need. Assessment is very thorough and is used effectively to monitor progress and to help planning.
138. Leadership and management are very good. Teaching is monitored by the head of department who sets a strong example to others. There is a clear vision of the role of the department and of the needs for future development. The department is effectively staffed. Resources are well managed and maintained with the help of a knowledgeable and efficient non-teaching technician. There are, however, two health and safety problems; the dust extraction system currently installed is inadequate for the amount of dust generated by the use of existing machinery and there is a need to indicate boundaries in the proximity of machinery to isolate the operative.
139. Good progress has been made since the last inspection. Standards have risen and the range of courses has been extended successfully. The accommodation has been improved substantially and further improvements are about to take place, all of which are helpful in raising the quality of education.

BUSINESS

The Economics and Business Education department provides two separate progression routes for students in the sixth form, economics at AS and A2 levels and the Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) in Business Studies. AVCE Business Studies was inspected in depth and one economics lesson was observed. Courses, particularly economics, attract new entrants to the sixth form from outside the school but business studies students come largely from the school's own population. Many of these students have done GCSE business studies in Years 10 and 11 where a far greater than average number of pupils takes the subject. GCSE business studies results in 2001 were very good, with far more than average A*/A grades. This provides a very able "pool" of potential business studies talent into the sixth form. No GCSE economics exists in Years 10 and 11. Discussions with students showed several of them regretting that no AS/A2 level business studies option existed in the school when they were selecting their programmes of study. Several students currently studying on the AVCE course have levels of prior attainment which indicate that the demands of any advanced level course are too great for their capabilities. No lower accreditation is available for these students and despite re-sits of some unit tests, some students' standards remain very low. Other, abler students on these courses are well suited to the AVCE provision, as they would be to an AS/A2 level progression route.

AVCE Business Studies

The school's sixth form provision for business studies AVCE is **good**.

Strengths

- Good teaching and learning.
- Students achieve well and have a good range of additional opportunities to enrich their learning experience.
- The students have positive attitudes to learning.

Areas for Improvement

- Not all students' prior attainment is well matched to the provision of advanced courses.
- The department receives too little information about students' prior attainment to set appropriate targets.
- Most students' independent learning skills are not well enough developed.

140. The past four years' vocational business studies results have been varied. The courses, GNVQ advanced business studies in the past, have attracted more boys than girls and this is still the case. Boys' results in 2001 placed their performance very high relative to the national average, with too few girls taking the course to be statistically significant. Girls' performance, however, brought the school's overall performance to above average, rather than well above average in 2001. Evidence indicates that many students following the vocational business studies courses are, and have been, amongst the lower ability students from Year 11, with a few higher attainers who see business studies as a potential vocation amongst them. Overall performance in 2001 therefore represented good achievement for most students, with "value added" data showing most achieving beyond what might have been expected given their prior attainment. The department does not use this data to set targets for individuals. Nor do they identify clearly what students' potential is, as they begin and move through the course.
141. The nine remaining students of the eleven starters on the current Year 13 AVCE business studies course, embarked on it at a time when the only alternative on offer was a 12 unit, 2 A level equivalent AVCE. Standards in the lesson seen and in students' portfolios and units of coursework are variable but overall are broadly in line with the expectations for this advanced course. Coursework assignments, taken together with students' already assessed tests, show no students likely to attain A grade overall, although some individual units and tests have been assessed at this standard. Several are on track to gain B grades, although these higher attainments are balanced by the likelihood of some students gaining much lower grades. Overall, students' standards match the range expected based on their prior levels of performance. Given that several students entered the course without the minimum of 5 A*-C grades generally required for the school's sixth form, these attainments again represent good achievement for many students. A few on this course in Year 12 are struggling to meet the standards required of an advanced level course.
142. The school's provision for the current Year 12 students in business studies changed, so students on this course are taking the AVCE 3-unit course, equivalent to AS level. Those who choose to continue into Year 13 will have the option to do 3 further units to the equivalent of A2 level. Most students interviewed from this group plan to do so. Retention rates on the sixth form courses in business education are good. Reasons such as entry into employment account for the few drop-outs.
143. No Year 12 lessons could be observed on the day of inspection, but portfolios show a similar range of attainment to that in Year 13, in line with expectations for the course.
144. Some students in both years feel that the lack of business studies A level provision was a disadvantage when they were selecting their options. A few economics students from Year 13 have chosen to take the 3-unit business studies vocational option alongside Year 12, because they feel this will give them a greater range of business education experience. Many higher ability post-GCSE business studies students in both years have selected A level economics in recent and current years. Sampled work in economics in both years shows students in line to achieve standards that match or exceed the national average, similar to results in 2001 which were also average. In Year 12 too, some business studies students' prior attainment is below the standard generally expected to embark on an A level course. In some economics groups, persistent, often inadequately explained absences diminish a minority of students' potential achievement. Attendance in business studies AVCE groups is better.
145. Students from both years on the business studies AVCE courses spoke very favourably of their experiences on their courses. Both business studies and economics students had recently returned from an educational visit to New York, primarily to visit commercial and financial

organisations. This had clearly been very useful, both as a opportunity to incorporate knowledge gained into their academic studies and as a vehicle for their own personal development. Most, for example, had clearly been very moved by their visit to “ground zero” resulting from the attack of September 11th. Students’ involvement in other activities such as Young Enterprise is also very valuable and informs aspects of their coursework. Many also use aspects of their own workplace experience, visits to local workplaces, opportunities to compete in “virtual” share-trading and so on, to refresh their coursework with real experiences.

146. Students work successfully in groups, for example in preparation for a task creating an induction training programme seen in the Year 13 lesson, but few are very highly independent learners. Most do not, therefore, readily adopt the individualistic learning style often found on vocational courses. Students’ access to ICT is appropriate, with computers readily to hand in the classroom in which they work. Business studies students use much more ICT in their work than is apparent in economics work, although all students say they are very familiar with the use of computers in their studies.
147. Teaching and learning seen in business studies and economics lessons were good. Scrutiny of students’ work shows that across the courses, teaching and learning are also good in the longer term. Students value greatly the very good relationships they share with their teachers, speaking of the pleasure with which many anticipate their lessons in the department because of this factor. Teachers’ knowledge and understanding of the subject and of the vocational elements of the courses are good, so they can teach the subject in a variety of different ways, which students appreciate. Most enjoy the humour with which teachers’ knowledge is imparted and value the opportunities they are given to become involved in discussions of various kinds. Good sessions were seen during lessons where teachers drew themes together to promote students’ understanding; this provided students with a good basis on which to complete tasks and to develop their learning. Planning to cover the range of the required curriculum is secure and teachers know students well enough to understand who needs additional help, providing this where they can. For example, additional lessons for some students for re-sits of unit exams were provided. Some improved their grades significantly through this provision. Others did not, sometimes because individuals are wrongly targeted at too high a level. As is common on vocational courses, teachers return some students’ initial submission of units for assessment, to be worked into in greater depth so that they can gain a better grade. Where these are re-assessed, teachers have to go through the whole assessment process again and students sometimes interpret this as a delay in turn-round in the marking of their projects. These timings need to be mutually negotiated.
148. Department management is good, though not enough use is made of attainment data to monitor students’ performance. Curriculum arrangements at school level create a situation where not all students are studying post-16 business studies courses which are well-matched to their prior attainment. The accommodation, with its arrangement of resources such as computers in rooms which are also used for Year 10 and 11 lessons, creates a satisfactory learning environment, but one which is more appropriate for post-16 teaching of a more academic nature than for a vocational course.

ICT

No students took A, AS or vocational ICT examinations over the past two years. 2002 will see the first examination of AS level course. The introduction of key skills ICT has created further opportunities for sixth form students.

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

Strengths

- The good subject knowledge of the teachers.
- The relationships between teachers and students.
- The very good attitudes of students.

Areas for Improvement

- The development of course in Years 10 and 11 to prepare students for AS level courses.
- Staff training in preparation for A2 courses.

149. No students took AS or A level ICT examinations in 2000 or 2001. Standards of students' work seen during the inspection are at expected levels for AS students, there are no students taking the A2 course. Students have a satisfactory knowledge and use of a range of software expected for AS examination work. They are able to make effective use of word processing, desk-top publishing and spreadsheets, and understand the importance of relating their work to a target audience. Students make particularly good use of word processing skills in creating a range of business letters, business cards, flyers and well laid out questionnaires. Prior to the inspection week students had the results of one of their questionnaires about 'Homes and Jobs' published in The Darlington and Stockton Times. As part of their course students have studied in depth and evaluated spreadsheet design. Students in Year 13 make good use of Powerpoint presentations in geography to illustrate issues about regeneration of Teeside and the Tees valley. They make effective use of backgrounds and appropriate fonts, and use a good selection of charts, graphs, tables and digital images to create imaginative and thought-provoking screens of information.
150. There is satisfactory achievement by students as they make increasing use of a wide range of software to complete their units of work required for the AS examination. Students who have taken a GNVQ in ICT in Year 11 are better prepared for sixth form work and make more rapid progress; for some, their progress and achievement is good. Students in Year 13 who have had little experience of using Powerpoint in previous years in the school quickly learn how to make effective use of this software for their presentations in A level geography.
151. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have good technical knowledge in the use of software which gives students the essential information to help them make good progress in the subject by increasing their knowledge and understanding. Lessons are well prepared and good use is made of the technology, such as interactive white boards and data projectors, which helps students understand the tasks that they have to complete in lessons. There are good relationships between teachers and students, and students are very positive about the subject. However students are given insufficient opportunity to express their views and share their knowledge during question and answer sessions. Students' work is well marked and helpful comments provide them with information on how to improve their work.
152. There is satisfactory management of the subject in the sixth form. Teachers taking AS classes have undergone training with the examination board, which needs to be extended to prepare for the teaching of the A2 course. The response to the last inspection has been a satisfactory. Students continue to make use of ICT skills in other subjects, and the introduction of both AS and key skills ICT has created further opportunities for sixth form students.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The school timetables two periods of opportunities for physical recreation in the sixth form each week.

Overall, the quality of provision for sixth form physical recreation is **very good**.

Strengths

- Highly valued by students and staff.
- Excellent range of learning/recreational opportunities.
- Very positive ethos which encourages personal development and relationships.

Areas for Improvement

- To provide further opportunities, via coaching awards or examinations, for those who wish to develop their skills further.

153. Standards observed during the inspection in many activities are well above average. Many students see these activities as an opportunity to extend their skills and interests in the sixth form. In netball, football and hockey many pupils show very good application of games-related techniques. They acknowledge the importance of this programme to further their aspirations to play outside of school. The programme is successful in maintaining the interest of many pupils to participate in inter-school competitions. A considerable number continue to higher representative honours.
154. The recreation programme is highly valued by physical education staff and the students. The underpinning philosophy is to promote healthy activity and positive attitudes to participation. In discussions, all students comment positively on the activities. The management of the programme, in conjunction with the school-based leisure centre, means that students have an excellent range of learning opportunities on offer. During the inspection this included netball, boys and girls football, mixed hockey, trampolining, basketball, swimming, aerobics, squash, badminton and weight-room facilities. Excellent facilities and resources further add to the positive learning ethos.
155. The quality of teaching is very good. A positive approach to each activity is achieved because the teachers consider carefully the needs and requirements of the students. These arrangements affect the way lessons are organised and taught. In football, netball and mixed hockey students work hard in competitive games and teachers challenge accordingly to develop understanding further. By prior arrangement a group of students are involved in a specialised form of aerobics, developed by the teacher, based on boxing skills. Many students acquire the necessary qualifications to work in the fitness room and they prepare and follow their own programmes. Others individually develop skills further in the swimming pool and on the squash courts. The department strives to offer the widest form of opportunities and students take the opportunities to participate in more leisure-based badminton, golf and horse riding.
156. Students have very responsible attitudes to the programme. Although they can make arrangements to participate in non-physical recreation the majority decide to participate. Their personal commitment is evident in the high numbers that participate weekly. They are encouraged to make personal choices and independently decide on their needs. Many organise activities in collective groups and become very involved in the social aspects of physical activity. The sixth form provision for recreation achieves the important objectives of sustainable understanding of healthy lifestyles and challenging environments. Many students commented that these expectations were clearly established in earlier learning experiences in their school life and that they were more than willing to carry them on into their sixth form work. They also felt strongly that the programme was a refreshing addition to their overall programme of studies.
157. The recreation programme is very effectively managed. The head of physical education expertly co-ordinates the considerable strengths of her staff, and the staff at the leisure centre, to make use of the superb on-site facilities. Developmental issues are considered in respect of maintaining the flexibility and diversity of the programme. The standards and learning ethos achieved with younger pupils is certainly carried over into the sixth form. However, the department recognises that certain students' needs are not catered for and that higher coaching and examination qualifications in sport would further enhance the programme on offer.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Art

Art is offered at A and AS levels. It is a popular subject with 21 students completing the A level course in 2001 and thirty completing the AS level course. More girls than boys take the courses.

Overall the quality of provision for art and design is **very good**.

Strengths

- Leadership and management of the subject area.

- The quality of teaching and learning.
- Standards are well above average and this is reflected in examination results.
- Students have very positive attitudes to the subject.

Areas for Improvement

- Students knowledge and understanding of the function of colour in art and design.

158. In 2001, A level results were above average; they were well above average in 2000. All students passed the examination and nearly two thirds gained A or B grades. The results of girls and boys were similar. AS level results in 2001 were also above average. All students passed the examination and a third gained A or B grades.
159. Standards seen in Year 13 were well above average in drawing and painting. A feature of the work seen in lessons and on display in the department, is the very profitable use of art historical material this is explored as a form of knowledge in its own right and also used as a source for the development of students' own creative work. Drawing is very strong and creative ideas very imaginative. A comparative weakness in students' work is the absence of a thorough knowledge of ways in which colour functions in their own work and in the work of major figures in art. Progress in lessons is purposeful and standards attained represent good achievement over time.
160. Students in Year 12 display strong drawing skills and good imaginative ideas in their pictorial compositions and preparatory work for projects. Standards attained are consistent with targets set and constitute a good foundation for the maintenance of good standards in Year 13. As in Year 13, art history is incorporated in student creative work to very good effect with knowledge and creative understanding developing together.
161. ICT is in course of development in the work of the department and a member of staff has specific responsibility for increasing its contribution to students' learning. Digital cameras are used by students in collecting material and there is some use of computers in design.
162. The quality of teaching is consistently very good in both Year 12 and Year 13. A major strength in the teaching is the level of teachers' subject expertise and enthusiasm. This is an important element in the very good working atmosphere that prevails in the department. All lessons are rigorously planned and prepared and they are taught sensitively to meet the individual learning needs of the students. This enables students across the whole range of prior attainment to make successful progress at their own rate and to reach their full potential. Learning is further promoted by the very good attitudes and response of students and excellent behaviour during lessons.
163. Assessment is thorough and informal assessment takes place continuously during lessons. Student progress is carefully monitored and at the beginning of each lesson observed individual progress was reviewed.
164. The curriculum in the sixth form is virtually unrestricted in terms of the range of creative emphases available to students. The A level syllabus allows for individual choice in the selection of direction of major projects and, additionally, the AS level course allows students whose special interest lies elsewhere to experience advanced work in art and design as a secondary interest. Extra-curricular provision is very good. Studios are available at lunchtimes and after school for students to develop their work. A four-day visit to London galleries takes place each year and local galleries are visited regularly.
165. Leadership and management are very good; the head of department sets a tone for the department which enables students and staff to achieve high standards. Relationships in the department are very good and the very good rapport which exists between teachers and students is an important factor in the success of teaching and learning.
166. The resources provided for the subject are generous and consumable materials are in plentiful supply to support learning. The accommodation is generally satisfactory but there are shortcomings in the provision of storage space and the continuous occupancy of studio space

creates difficulties for staff preparation. These problems are, however, resolutely met and do not have a significant effect upon the overall quality of provision for the subject.

167. Since the last inspection the subject has made good progress. Standards have risen as has the quality of teaching and learning.

DRAMA

Drama is offered at GCE AS and A level and is an increasingly popular course, with 35 students currently studying the subject in Years 12 and 13. Community drama is also offered as a non-examination recreational subject.

Overall provision for drama is **very good**.

Strengths

- The subject is very well led and managed.
- Teaching and learning are very good; teachers make very good use of their excellent subject knowledge and professional expertise.
- Excellent relationships between teachers and students encourage a real partnership in learning.
- Students' attitudes are excellent; they work very hard and put a great deal of time and effort into achieving high standards.
- Drama makes an excellent contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Areas for Improvement

- Assessment data is not sufficiently well used to set targets and monitor progress

168. Overall, standards are well above average. In the 2001 A level examinations the results achieved by students were above average and over the last four years standards have been consistently above or well above the national average. In the 2001 AS level examinations at the end of Year 12 the current Year 13 achieved very good standards, with 40 per cent gaining A or B grades and all candidates gaining at least a pass grade. The standards observed during the inspection in lessons and in students' work confirm that current standards are well above average and that students' achievement is very good.
169. Students have good knowledge of Artaud, Brecht, Stanislavski and Berkoff and are able to talk with confidence about how these important practitioners have influenced their own work. They research the social, cultural and historical contexts of drama and demonstrate how these affect performance. Students' written work is mostly of a very high quality both in the fluent and confident expression of ideas and in their perceptions and understanding of texts and performances. They analyse the playwright's use of language, and how he/she uses structure and form to achieve dramatic effect. In their personal notebooks students record their successes, set personal targets, evaluate their own progress and reflect on how they might improve. Some entries also consider the issues they have addressed in their practical work. For instance, the topic for the Year 13 devised piece in the autumn term, 'man's inhumanity to man', gave rise to some thoughtful and moving writing exploring their responses to the holocaust and to the position of Afghan women during the Taliban regime. Students also assessed the piece's dramatic significance and how well they had communicated their ideas and feelings to the audience.
170. Students' practical skills, as observed during the inspection, are of a very high quality. Year 12 students rehearsing a modern version of the Greek play, 'Lysistrata', demonstrated very good vocal and movement skills. Their voices were varied, clear and audible, they used pause, pace and inflexion to good effect and some were able to adopt a variety of different accents. Their performances were further enhanced by gesture, stillness, carefully considered groupings and well-sustained characterisation. By Year 13 these skills are further refined and some very successful interpretations of a range of plays from 'Medea' to 'A View from the Bridge' were observed in rehearsal. Some groups showed real flair and imagination in the way they communicated their interpretations of the text to the audience. Students demonstrated energy, concentration and consistency in their drama, using symbolism and stylisation to convey moments of real drama.
171. Students have extremely positive attitudes towards the subject. They spend much of their own time rehearsing to improve their practical work. In discussion, students praised the commitment of their teachers and the selfless way in which they give of their time and support. They say that

the work is hard but always enjoyable, partly because it is a different kind of work from most of their other subjects. They are expected to take responsibility for their learning, and they recognise that even though most of them do not look towards the theatre as a profession, the personal, problem-solving and organisational skills they are acquiring through their drama work will be invaluable in many areas of life.

172. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers use their excellent knowledge of drama and theatre to provide very good intellectual challenge in lessons. In a very good Year 12 lesson the teacher used his knowledge of the Alexander Technique to prepare students mentally and physically for the following work on their performance of 'Lysistrata'. He then used Uta Hagan's work on objective/obstacle/action to demonstrate to students the way that 'high stakes' for characters leads to dramatic significance and a greater truth in their acting. Through this demanding session, students came to understand more deeply the importance of drama in keeping us in touch with reality. Excellent relationships encourage a real learning partnership in lessons and during the rehearsal process, with teachers and students working as equals to improve and polish practical work. Drama makes a very good contribution to the development of the key skills of communication, working together and problem solving through the very practical approach to work and through the way in which students are expected to take responsibility for their own learning.
173. Continuous assessment is fundamental to good drama and is used very well. In practical sessions, students set themselves targets, and, with their teachers' help, assess both their own success and that of others. In one lesson a group of Year 10 pupils watched Year 13 students rehearsing and were encouraged to assess the performances. Their comments showed insight and good evaluative skills, and the Year 13 students welcomed and noted the useful feedback. Teachers' marking of written work and assessment of practical work is always related to the course assessment criteria and mark schemes and this ensures that students know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve their grades. These procedures could be further enhanced by a better understanding and use of the wide range of assessment data available to the school in setting longer-term targets.
174. The department is very well led and managed. The head of department has clear aims and works tirelessly, along with the second full-time teacher, to provide a very good experience for students and to support their personal growth. She ensures that the curriculum for drama is enriched by many opportunities to work with professional actors, visit theatres and perform to an audience. Progress since the last inspection has been good. The head of department does not attend heads of subject meetings; her inclusion would be valuable, particularly in helping other subject areas to improve the quality of teaching and learning.
175. This is a very good department which constantly reviews its own practice in order to effect further improvement.

HUMANITIES

Geography

The provision for geography caters for 52 students at present. There are 3 groups in each year of AS and A2 students. The admissions policy is inclusive and students join the course from other schools and the department also accepts students who may not have previously studied geography.

Overall the quality of provision for geography is **very good**.

Strengths

- Standards on the A level course are well above average.
- Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic and lessons are well planned.
- There is very good, well planned and varied provision for fieldwork and coursework.
- The provision of a resource room for teachers and students to share promotes good relationships

and good independent learning experiences for students.

Areas for Improvement

- Numeracy is not well developed and the use of measurement and calculations, for fieldwork and hypothesis testing could be more widely used.
- Students' ICT skills need further development and the use of ICT for coursework, especially graphs, could be extended.

176. A level results are well above national average with girls consistently achieving higher grades than boys; there has been a steadily rising trend since 1999 for the higher grades. All students who started the AS level course completed it in 2001; their results were above national averages. Standards seen in lessons and in students' work were well above average. Most students start the course with grades A-B at GCSE, but some are lower and the inclusive policy of the department allied to the consistently high grades at A level represents very good achievement.
177. Students show good knowledge and understanding of their work in lessons, and work in their files indicates good understanding of a wide range of physical and human geography topics. They work confidently on their own to build up case studies and complete research using a variety of sources. Students write detailed essays, draw maps, make a variety of graphs and analyse them with understanding. In addition detailed spider diagrams, tabulation and carefully annotated diagrams are included in their notes; colour is well used by some students to make reading and revision easier. All students contribute well in discussion. In a Year 13 lesson, paired discussion on pro and anti natalist policies in various parts of the world had students absorbed in the exchange of ideas and in detailed discussion of causes and effects.
178. Teaching is very good overall and students learn very well. Lessons are well structured, resources varied and timing is very good. Teachers are knowledgeable and have an enthusiasm for the subject. This provides good support and encouragement to students. Some marking is through oral feedback, which provides clear advice, and some work is marked with critical written comment offering clear direction for improvement. Written marking is for a limited number of specific tasks and for aspects of coursework. Homework is frequently used for students to build up their own case studies and to research topics. This encourages and supports independent learning. Literacy is supported through some use of writing frames, for example, for video notes and for some case studies. ICT is widely used for Internet research and is well used by students when they select and study a syllabus topic for themselves.
179. Students complete all fieldwork studies. It is well planned, stimulates students' learning and is appreciated by them. The visit to Manchester is used for urban studies and also to complete a decision making exercise on planning. The Holderness coast visit is used to illustrate coastal processes and management, and students use the information to complete their own case study. The rural villages study is used for submitted coursework. This involves students using of a wide variety of graphs, maps and diagram work and some very good use of annotated photographs. In addition individual students undertake interviews with local agencies and finally select their own format for presentation. The whole topic provides a very good experience of independent learning in Year 12. This and other fieldwork develops research skills and the good use of a wide variety of resources which further benefits students when they reach Year 13. Students consider themselves well supported by teachers.
180. The subject is led and managed well and there is very good departmental co-operation through the sharing of ideas and resources. There is also a strong commitment to maintain the current high standards. Planning for the schemes of work is ongoing and there is some good, planned syllabus overlap with GCSE work and within the A level course, which supports and consolidates student learning. There is target setting for students through bi-annual report cards but target setting through assessment is not fully developed. The provision and very good use of the shared resource room is a department strength. In addition the development plan for sixth form geography ensures good educational planning for the future.

HISTORY

The school offers AS and A level courses in history and recruitment is good. Nineteen pupils took the A level examination in 2001 and 41 took the AS level examination.

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is very good; teachers expect students to produce high quality work.
- Teachers' knowledge of the subject and of examination requirements is very good.
- Teachers expect students to learn independently and provide good opportunities for them to do so.
- Students have a very positive attitude towards their work.

Areas for Improvement:

- Medium and long-term planning for the development of the department.
- Individual learning and attainment targets for students.
- The provision of suitable accommodation for the teaching of sixth form groups.

181. The GCE A level results in 2001 were well above the national average. This is a similar standard to that reported at the time of the last inspection. From 1998 to 2000 all students who took the course gained a pass grade. In 2001 only one pupil did not gain a pass grade. For the past four years the results of girls have been consistently above average at grades A to E and a well above average proportion has gained grades A or B. The proportion of boys who gained a pass grade has similarly been above average for the past four years, but the proportion gaining an A or B grade fell to below average in 2001. This did, however, largely reflect the grades expected by the department. Students' achievement is very good. In three of the last four years girls have performed better in history than in their other subjects, and boys have done so in two of the four years. The results in the AS examination in 2001 were above the national average for grades A to E, and a little below at grades A and B. Only one out of 41 students did not gain a pass grade.
182. The standard of work seen from students in Years 12 and 13 is above average. Students in Year 13 show a good understanding of the religious tensions that underlay the reign of Charles II. A group investigating different interpretations of Oliver Cromwell's achievements successfully used their wide knowledge about Cromwell's military and political life to illustrate different ways in which his rule can be viewed. The most able students show the potential for A grades. Their essays are well-researched, well-structured, and contain valid arguments, substantiated with sound historical evidence. The essays from the lower ability pupils tend towards narrative rather than analysis, and although indicating good knowledge of the theme of the essay, often fail to answer questions fully, or answer them in only a superficial way. Some work on portraits of royalty in the 16th and 17th centuries showed good understanding of the nature of royal propaganda. Students make good notes, which provide a sound basis for their revision.
183. Students in Year 12 have good knowledge and understanding of the events they are studying. They use sources well to build up a picture of the past. A group studying the First Civil War, for example, successfully used two maps and a time line to identify three phases of the war and to explain the reasons for the pattern they identified. Another group used a genealogical table to explain and evaluate the claims to the Spanish throne in the late 1690s. They disentangled the complex relationships between the claimants with considerable success. The work seen in a sample supplied was largely of above average standard. The majority clearly demonstrated a good understanding of the nature of 17th century society, although a minority occasionally tended to apply 21st century values. The essays from the most able students were well organised, putting forward a clearly argued point of view supported by well-chosen evidence. The essays from the lowest ability students were, however, more descriptive in approach, and lacked depth and detail. In a small proportion of the essays, words in common use in history, such as Parliament, were wrongly spelt.
184. As at the time of the last inspection, teaching and learning are very good overall, and contribute to students' very good progress in both Years 12 and 13. Teachers have very good subject

knowledge, which they communicate effectively. The work set is appropriately challenging, and matched well to the requirements of the examinations. Work is marked to examination criteria, and the usually detailed comments on marked work provide students with clear guidance and ways to improve their answers in the future. Students respond well to the guidance that they are given and this helps them to learn. Teachers have high expectations of their students, and ensure that they understand what is needed to reach the top grades.

185. Teaching methods ensure that students have opportunities to work independently, and not to depend on their teachers exclusively. Students are encouraged to use the resources in the library and the Internet for their own research. Where appropriate, however, good whole class teaching helps students make very good progress. In a lesson with students in Year 13 the teacher worked through a series of activities with the group to deepen their understanding of the events leading to the Exclusion Crisis in the 1670s. Work in pairs or small groups helps students to work co-operatively and support one another, as for example, in their collection of evidence for and against the view that Oliver Cromwell's Protectorate could be defined as "years of retreat". Lessons proceed at a good pace, and students are expected to work hard.
186. Teachers rightly emphasise students' oral contributions to lessons, and give them good discussion opportunities. Following their group research into aspects of Oliver Cromwell's rule, individual students summarised their findings for the whole class. The majority of students express themselves well orally. Their contributions are articulate and usually confident. Students work hard, and they come to lessons prepared for work, thus enabling the teachers to cover topics at a brisk pace.
187. The good provision for history in the library, where there is a wide range of books available, helps students to become independent learners. The good ICT provision for the sixth form enables them to make effective use of the Internet for research but some teachers do not make enough use of these facilities.
188. The subject is very well led and managed. The head of department is committed to maintaining the popularity of the subject and the take-up of history in Years 12 and 13, and to ensuring that the subject continues to be a successful one in terms of high attainment in public examinations. The team of qualified and largely very experienced teachers works well together and sets high standards. They do not, however, have a departmental base in which to meet or from which to work. This is an unsatisfactory situation. Careful thought has been given to the choice of the new syllabus, in order to make best use of the teachers' knowledge and skills built up during the years of the previous syllabus. The lack of attainment targets for individual students is, however, a weakness in the department, as is the lack of written planning for the continuing development of the department beyond the current year.
189. The provision of accommodation for the sixth form history teaching is not satisfactory. Lessons are taught in a large number of rooms spread across the school site. Lessons take place in several mobile classrooms, a range of other classrooms, a food technology room and a room in what was the school caretaker's house. During the two days of the inspection sixth form history lessons were taught in ten different rooms, and in one week one teacher teaches five lessons in four rooms and another, four lessons in four different rooms. As a result teachers have to carry resources around the site, and students often work in rooms that do not have any feel of history about them.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English, Languages and Communication

English

English language and English literature courses were observed and reported on in detail. Courses are popular, with 30 students taking English language A level in 2001 and 19 taking English literature. Sixty three students took English language AS level in 2000 and 27, English literature. Girls outnumbered boys on all courses.

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

Strengths

- Students achieve well above average standards in English literature.
- Good teaching of literature courses enables students to learn successfully.
- Students have positive attitudes to English language and literature and this makes an important contribution to their learning.

Areas for Improvement

- A level results in English language are well below average.
- There is insufficient monitoring of teaching or schemes of work to ensure consistent learning for all students.
- Assessment data is not used to monitor students' achievement or to set them challenging targets.

190. A level results in English literature in recent years have usually been above the national average. They improved in 2001, when all students passed the examination and the proportion gaining the highest grades, A and B, was well above average. The school's first students to study A level English language took the examination 1999. Their results were close to the national average. However, in 2000 and 2001, results were well below average. In most years, girls do better than boys in both subjects, but relatively few boys study English and this makes comparisons unrealistic. In 2001, most students achieved well in English literature and built well on the high standards that they had reached at GCSE. Students' achievement in English language was poor, especially in comparison with their performance in other A level subjects. Results in AS examinations in 2001, for Year 12 students, were very good in English literature. All students passed and well over half gained the highest grades. AS results in English language were good. All 63 students passed and almost half gained grades A or B.
191. Since the last inspection, the English department has successfully introduced English language to the curriculum and it is now a more popular option than English literature. Standards in English language are improving, but students do not yet achieve as well as they do in literature. The standard of work of current Year 13 students is well above average in English literature. Students are building well on their success at AS level and are maintaining very good standards. There are many higher ability students who express mature, personal views in class discussion and make close reference to the text to justify their ideas. In one such discussion, all students provided a fascinating, high quality analysis of women's experiences of war, based on three contrasting texts. They read fluently, with good expression from difficult texts. Even lower ability students are able to bring texts to life, as in an initial reading of a scene from Joan Littlewood's *Oh! What a Lovely War!* Most students plan and structure critical essays very well. They can sustain extended comparisons between texts and sum up their arguments with clear conclusions. Students express their ideas clearly in writing, but a few spoil the effect by making quite frequent spelling errors.
192. In English language, standards of current Year 13 students are close to the national average. Their achievement, from their earlier AS level work, is satisfactory. They are completing research projects and have investigated topics in which they are clearly interested. Higher ability students explain their chosen methodology clearly and structure the discussion of their findings very well. They have a good understanding of specialist vocabulary, which helps them to analyse texts more

precisely. However, there are also many lower ability students who lack confidence or insight when discussing texts. They can identify basic ways in which language has changed. For example, when analysing the account of Noah's flood in the King James translation of the Bible they were able to identify archaic words and the writer's frequent use of repetition. However, they struggled to explain how meanings had changed with time, or the way in which religious belief affected the meaning of words.

193. In Year 12, students of English literature are making good progress from their earlier GCSE level of work. They have a very good understanding of the historical and social context of the texts they study. They use this well to help their analysis of texts, for example when comparing Shakespeare's portrayal of Hamlet with the traditions of revenge tragedies. All students are developing their ability to structure essays. Higher ability students smoothly integrate quotes from texts into their essays. Average and lower ability students tend to stray from the essay title or question and their discussions do not always lead to a clear conclusion.
194. The achievement of current Year 12 students in English language is satisfactory. The wide range of attainment is in line with their earlier GCSE results. Higher ability students produce impressive pieces of original writing. For example, one student published a beautifully designed leaflet to publicise a charity. She then analysed it, showing a sound understanding of the importance of register, graphology and literary devices, to appeal to a target audience. However, lower ability students still lack the skills to analyse texts beyond a superficial level.
195. The teaching of English is satisfactory overall. It is better in English literature than in English language and one excellent literature lesson was observed. As a result, students' learning is good in English literature and satisfactory in language. Teachers have very good skills in managing students and classes move smoothly from one activity to another. This is helped by the very good relationships between students and teachers, which make a significant contribution to students' learning in all lessons. For example, students share their views willingly with teachers and are prepared to ask questions when they do not understand. Teachers have a very sound knowledge of the texts that they are teaching in English literature. This enables them to provide clear explanations of texts and to ask challenging questions that help students to build on their initial ideas. Teachers also prepare good additional resources that help students to learn about the historical and social context of set texts and their writers' lives. However, teachers' knowledge of requirements for the English language course is sometimes less secure. As a result, they do not always have sufficiently high expectations of some students. For example, a teacher praised a student's "thorough analysis" of a text despite the fact that only the layout and graphology was discussed. The standard of teachers' marking varies. Some provide clear, detailed advice that helps students to improve their written work, but others make only short, general comments. Teachers plan a variety of activities in both literature and language lessons. They use a good range of resources that interest and motivate students. However, in some English language lessons, the focus of the activities is unclear. As a result, students discuss texts in general terms, but teachers do not provide them with a clear enough framework to help them to organise and structure their analysis.
196. The newly appointed head of department (in post for two terms prior to the inspection) provides good leadership. He has identified some important areas for development, in order to improve the management of sixth form provision and is starting to tackle them effectively. At present, however, there is insufficient monitoring of teaching or the coverage of schemes of work to ensure consistently good learning experiences for all students. This is especially the case in the teaching of English language. The department does not yet analyse GCSE results and performance in AS and A level exams in order to identify how well students are achieving in English. Available data is not yet used to set challenging targets for students, to help ensure that they achieve as well as they should.

French

Four students took the A level examination in 2001, while 20 took the AS level examination. Girls outnumbered boys by three to one in both courses.

Provision for French in the sixth form is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Teachers' high level of French language skills.
- Students' attitudes and commitment.

Areas for Improvement

- Raising the level of students' speaking skills.

197. A level results in 2001 were broadly in line with national averages, although based on a small number of candidates. Half the students entered attained either Grades A or B. The number of students following the course and the level of attainment have both fallen since the last inspection. Students' average points score in French has fallen by over 3 points in four years. The results of girls continue to be higher than those of boys. Only one of the four students in 2001 reached the A level grade predicted by their GCSE results. The achievement of students in French is unsatisfactory although standards are now rising.
198. The proportion of students gaining pass grades in the 2001 AS level examination was above national averages. The proportion of students attaining A and B grades was also above the national average. Girls' results were well above the national average but boys' results were below the national average. The great majority of the students on this course achieved or exceeded the grades predicted by their GCSE results.
199. The numbers of students taking a French course in the sixth form has recovered in the last two years after a steady fall in numbers since the last inspection. The great majority complete the courses that they begin. A high proportion of those who took AS Level French in 2001 has progressed to the A2 course in 2002.
200. Standards observed confirm the recent improvement in examination results, although standards are variable in the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Levels in reading and writing are good. Students display good understanding and, particularly in Year 13, are beginning to develop a good writing style.
201. Students enter the sixth form short in speaking skills and confidence. Some make good progress during the two-year course but many in Year 12 have speaking standards which are below average. In particular, many do not respond spontaneously to the French they hear.
202. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers are gifted linguists, who plan well and, in the majority of cases, use French as the basis of their teaching. In some lessons, however, too much English is used and this impedes the development of students' speaking skills. For example, in a Year 12 lesson, the introduction was conducted in English which prevented the students from spontaneously thinking and working in French. The group work that followed showed students reluctant to use French and they were not challenged to do so with enough determination by the teacher.
203. Students are encouraged to retrieve information from the Internet, although no use of ICT was observed during the inspection. Relationships between students and teachers are very good and make a significant contribution to learning.
204. Students work with concentration and commitment although a lack of confidence in speaking limits progress for a significant minority, particularly in Year 12. The most able pupils are developing an extended vocabulary and use of idiom in their written work.

205. Leadership and management of French are satisfactory. The school has successfully overcome a declining situation in the numbers studying French and the standards seen in Year 13 suggest that A level results will improve. Assessment procedures contribute to students' learning and fulfil course requirements. Marking is thorough and helps students to improve. Accommodation for sixth form teaching is often in very small rooms away from the languages suite and does not provide a satisfactory teaching and learning environment.