

# INSPECTION REPORT

**THE TRINITY CATHOLIC TECHNOLOGY  
COLLEGE**

Leamington Spa

LEA area: Warwickshire

Unique reference number: 125756

Headteacher: Mrs C Fields

Reporting inspector: Mr Ian Hodgkinson  
20588

Dates of inspection: 4<sup>th</sup>- 8<sup>th</sup> March 2002

Inspection number: 190694

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Voluntary aided

Age range of pupils: 11-18

Gender of pupils: Mixed

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: The Very Reverend Canon E M Stewart

Date of previous inspection: December 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
20588	Mr I Hodgkinson	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it? How high are standards? The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
12775	Mrs J Goodchild	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
03731	Mr W Robson	Team inspector	English	
20527	Mr B King	Team inspector	Mathematics	
01407	Mr P Scott	Team inspector	Science Chemistry	
30518	Mr M Johnson	Team inspector	Art and design	
31779	Mr V Harrison	Team inspector	Design and technology	
16930	Mr J Plumb	Team inspector	Geography	
22458	Mr G McGinn	Team inspector	History	
30046	Mr R Parker	Team inspector	Equal opportunities Special educational needs	
16950	Mrs C Orr	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages Russian English as an additional language	
30297	Mr G Spruce	Team inspector	Music	
19295	Mr P Wall	Team inspector	Physical education	
02928	Mr W Baxendale	Team inspector	French	How good are curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
15163	Mr E Deeson	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

The Trinity Catholic Technology College is a denominational comprehensive school of average size educating 1074 boys and girls in the 11-18 age range. Numbers on roll have fallen by about 150 since its previous inspection in 1996. It has an average sized sixth form of 177 students. When they start the school as eleven-year-olds, the pupils' attainment is average. The school is in an area of considerable social advantage in terms of social class and the educational background of adults. It does, however, draw its pupils from a broad geographical area, and includes those with more socially disadvantaged backgrounds. The percentage of students eligible for a free school meal is below the national average. There are 30 pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. Few pupils have English as an additional language, with only one who is a beginner in English. The proportions of pupils with special educational needs and those with statements of special educational need are broadly average, and have risen markedly since the last report, particularly in the numbers of those with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The school currently operates a split site, with two miles between the two locations. Plans have been approved for the school to move to a single site by September 2003. Since September 2000, the school has been a technology college, with especial commitment to new developments in mathematics, science, design and technology and information and communication technology. The school is well known for its liberal ethos, with no school uniform and the widespread use of first names between pupils and teachers.

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

Trinity Catholic Technology College is an effective school with a unique, long-standing ethos and some very good features. It provides a good quality of education and standards are above average. In the last few years its results have been improving above the national trend at all stages. There are some weaknesses in leadership which have resulted in poor communication between groups within the school community which have damaged relationships between the school leadership and a significant number of parents, but the management of the school has ensured that good improvement has been made since the last inspection by establishing appropriate educational priorities for development and taking effective action to raise standards. The school produces particularly mature and well-rounded pupils who have very positive attitudes to learning. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

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

- Standards of attainment are above average by the age of 16 and well above average by the end of the sixth form. Pupils' achievements are good
- Standards in art and design, history and information and communication technology are significantly above average
- Teaching in art and design and modern languages is often excellent, and frequently very good in geography, history, information and communication technology and music
- Overall teaching is good, and it is very good in the sixth form
- Students develop very good learning skills and are able to organise their own learning very effectively
- The students' attitudes to learning and their behaviour are very good; the development of pupils' personal responsibility, and their relationships with teachers, are excellent
- Provision for the students' moral and social development is very good

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

- Communications between governors, school managers, subject departments, teachers, students and parents are not clear nor efficient enough, so that school policies are not applied with consistent effect across the school. There has not been adequate consultation before important changes are made to school practices
- Too many pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties are excluded from lessons
- Attendance procedures are not rigorous enough
- General care and maintenance of the school's accommodation and grounds are unsatisfactory

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good improvements since it was last inspected in 1996. Many initiatives to raise standards of attainment and the quality of teaching and learning have been effective, so that standards of attainment have risen at a rate above the national trend, and the quality of teaching has improved well. Some of the key issues at the last inspection have not been addressed fully. The poor quality of the accommodation and grounds in some areas remains a key issue, and the organisation of the school day continues to constrain learning in many areas, but these issues should be addressed by the imminent move to one site.

## STANDARDS

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

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

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

Attainment by the age of 14, measured by the national tests, has been around the national average for each of the last five years. The school's results in these tests have improved faster than the national trend in recent years, with a particularly strong overall improvement in mathematics and science in 2001. Inspection confirms good achievement in mathematics and science by age 14 and satisfactory achievement in English. In all other subjects at age 14, achievement is at least good, and it is very good in history, information and communication technology and art and design.

By the age of 16, the proportion of pupils obtaining five or more GCSE/GNVQ passes at grades A\*-C exceeded the school's target and was above the national average in 2001, though the GCSE points score per pupil was average. This difference in interpretation is mainly a result of the school's flexible approach to the curriculum at this stage, which allows pupils to determine, with their teachers, the number of GCSEs they will take and to prioritise between subjects. Pupils may in consequence get a lower average total points score than would be the case had they taken more GCSEs, but their performance in individual subjects is mostly above or well above average, with especially strong performance at the higher grades of A\*-A in some subjects. In relation to schools whose pupils had similar prior attainment at the age of 14, overall GCSE performance was well above average, and reflects the good achievement of pupils between ages 14 and 16. Achievement at this stage is very good in art and design, information and communication technology and music; it is good in all other subjects except mathematics where it is satisfactory.

In the sixth form, A and A/S level performance has ranged between above average to very high for the last three years. Boys do particularly well at this level. Overall standards across the school are above average. Pupils achieve well throughout their time in the school: having entered the school at age 11 with average levels of attainment, they reach ages 16 or 18 with results which are above or well above average respectively.

At all ages, pupils' basic skills are good and contribute strongly to their success in their subjects. Pupils are highly articulate and are able to set out their views and argue their cases clearly. They write well, and develop good technical and evaluative vocabularies. They use computers very effectively to improve their work. Their number skills are also good when applied in different subjects.



## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	<b>Very good.</b> Pupils are prepared to work hard and get a sense of satisfaction when they achieve success in their studies. They participate enthusiastically in the wide range of enrichment opportunities the school provides.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	<b>Very good.</b> Behaviour in lessons was mostly very good, and conduct around the school and in breaks is orderly and purposeful. There have been no permanent exclusions for three years, but fixed term exclusions have risen considerably and are above average.
Personal development and relationships	<b>Excellent.</b> The mutual respect shown between staff and pupils is striking. Pupils are confident and express their feelings articulately on a range of moral and social issues; they listen with sensitivity to the views and opinions of people that may differ from their own. Pupils respond very well to the responsibilities they are given in organising their own learning.
Attendance	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Attendance was average, though unauthorised absence was above the national average for 2000/2001. Since September 2001, attendance in Years 8 and 11 has fallen below 90 per cent.

Pupils' attitudes and values are a key strength of the school, particularly in the maturity with which pupils organise their learning and take quiet pride in their achievements.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching seen was good overall, with very few unsatisfactory lessons. Teaching in art and design and Spanish is often excellent, and it is frequently very good in French, German, geography, history, information and communication technology and music. In these subjects, teaching is characterised by very good subject knowledge from teachers who have high expectations of their pupils and use a variety of approaches and materials to stimulate pupils' interests. Very good planning and well-structured lessons are also features of these subjects. Mathematics teaching has improved significantly as a result of better lesson structure. Teaching is mostly good in other subjects, but in Italian, while teaching is satisfactory, the expectations of pupils are not high enough and there is not enough use of the Italian language in lessons. English teaching is satisfactory over Years 7-9 but good in Years 10 and 11 where teacher' planning is better. Pupils' learning is good overall, and work is mostly well matched to pupils' needs. A particular strength is in the interest they show in their subjects, and the independence with which they organise their work, although some pupils in Years 10 and 11 do not keep up with their GCSE coursework and so do not complete some of their courses.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	<b>Good.</b> The curriculum is flexible enough to be tailored to meet the needs of individual pupils. The involvement of pupils in decisions about the type and number of courses they will study, especially in Years 10 and 11, is well managed. It develops pupils' personal responsibility and contributes to successful GCSE results in many subjects. The quality and range of vocational courses has been weak but is improving.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	<b>Good</b> , and very good in the sixth form where the Outlook course effectively helps students make the transition to further education. Elsewhere, good provision is made to support the development of basic literacy, communication and numerical skills. Too many fixed term exclusions involve pupils with identified emotional and behavioural difficulties.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	<b>Good.</b> All pupils are appropriately assessed and given extra support and guidance whenever it is required within the school.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	<b>Very good.</b> Provision for pupils' social development is excellent in the extent to which pupils are encouraged to work together in lessons and other activities, and in the strong and effective commitment of the school to promoting citizenship. The school actively promotes moral values in all of its work. Good provision is made for pupils' spiritual and cultural development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Good support and guidance is given to promote the academic and personal development of pupils, and there are very effective procedures for promoting good behaviour. Provision for health and safety is unsatisfactory however, because of risks arising from inadequate procedures for recording attendance and lack of fencing around the pond.

Historically the school has benefited from the support of its parent body, many of whom chose to send their children to Trinity because of its liberal approach to education. A significant number of these parents have been angered by a lack of adequate consultation with parents by the school leadership over what they perceive to be a change in culture towards that of a more traditional school, and especially over the issue of school dress. The effectiveness of links with parents is therefore currently poor.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	<b>Satisfactory.</b> The principal and senior staff have directed the school well in raising standards of attainment and improving the quality of teaching and learning in recent years. Heads of department are mostly very effective in promoting high standards in subjects. There is insufficient delegation of management responsibilities to ensure that school policies are implemented with consistent effect throughout the school. Decisions over the implementation of a school dress code have divided the school and damaged Trinity's otherwise very strong relationships.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Governors are well informed about the academic progress of the school, and have been fully involved in successful initiatives to improve accommodation and resources. Some key strategic decisions have not, however, been efficient, because they have not taken sufficient account of the views of parents and pupils.
The school's evaluation of its performance	<b>Good.</b> The principal, governors and key staff have a good understanding of how the school needs to improve academically, and have taken effective action to address important issues.
The strategic use of resources	<b>Good.</b> Careful management has returned the school's budget to balance, and good planning has given the school access to important new sources of funding. Technology college funding has been very effective in improving the quality of planning throughout the school, and in improving the quality and quantity of work done with computers. Overall, however, principles of best value have not been applied adequately, because important decisions over admissions and dress code have not been well supported and have led to falling rolls and uneasy relationships with parents.

Overall the school has sufficient staff to provide its curriculum, but there have been particular problems of recruitment and retention of staff in some areas. The school's split site continues to impose significant constraints on the organisation of the curriculum and the school day. The standards of care and maintenance of classrooms and school grounds are generally unsatisfactory, with dirty conditions in some areas offering unpleasant working conditions. The quantity and quality of learning resources such as books and computers has improved markedly since the last inspection and is now satisfactory.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good teaching</li> <li>• Good progress made by pupils</li> <li>• Strong expectations that pupils will work hard</li> <li>• The school helps its pupils become more mature</li> <li>• Pupils like the school, and behave well</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How closely the school works with parents</li> <li>• Information about pupils' progress</li> <li>• The leadership and management of the school</li> <li>• The range of activities offered by the school</li> </ul>

Inspectors agree with the positive views that parents have of the school. Inspectors also agree that the leadership of the school needs to take more account of the views of parents and others when making decisions which involve fundamental shifts in the school's character. However, inspectors found overall leadership and management to be satisfactory, with particular strengths in promoting improved attainment, teaching and learning. The school was found to offer a good range of activities for its pupils, despite some weaknesses in opportunities in music. The information given to parents on the progress of their children is good.

## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM**

The sixth form of this about average sized comprehensive school has 177 students, just above the national average. Very nearly all the sixth formers are from within the school. There are more girls than there are boys. Numbers have fallen by about 25 per cent since the previous inspection, but the proportion of students staying on in the sixth form in what is now a smaller school is higher than it was. Entry qualifications, at least four higher grade GCSEs, are slightly less stringent than for some other schools in the area. Attainment on entry is above average. There is a very good range of A/S and A-level courses and there has been a recent extension to provide a one-year course for students who are not ready to go on to other providers of education and training. Close collaboration with further education compensates to some extent for a comparative weakness in the provision of vocational courses, and helps to provide continuing education, post-16, for well over 80 per cent of each Year 11 group.

## **HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS**

Overall, this is a good sixth form, in which standards are well above average and which meets well the needs of its students. The students generally make greater progress than their GCSE results suggest they will. A-level results have been well above average and the students learn very well, mainly because they benefit from a very good quality of teaching. Most are mature, independent learners who make the best of their sixth form experience, cherishing the informality and appreciating the responsibility its unique ethos affords them. Many have, however, begun to feel that the school now fails to listen to their points of view. The sixth form is cost effective.

### **Strengths**

- Standards are consistently well above average.
- Teaching and learning are very good across the board.
- The students' personal development and the relationships they form are excellent.
- The students' key skills development is very good.
- The establishment of an Outlook course for less mature students, often with special educational needs, has improved provision substantially.

### **What could be improved**

- Management of the sixth form has no overview of performance over time to help it analyse trends and decide where best to allocate resources.
- The sixth form curriculum is weakened by the limited number of vocational courses.

*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	<b>Good:</b> Standards in mathematics are rising; half the A-level grades awarded in 2001 were at A or B and results overall were above average. Teaching and learning are good; the teachers have thorough subject knowledge and promote the students' learning well through good communication skills.
Physics	<b>Good.</b> Supported by good teaching and their positive attitudes to learning, the students make good progress and exceed the standards predicted from their GCSE results. The 2001 A-level results were above average. Problems with staffing and resources constrain further improvements in the subject.
Design and technology	<b>Very good.</b> A-level results are well above average, with good proportions of candidates obtaining high A/B grades. Current standards of work are high and students have a very good understanding of design. Teaching, learning and leadership are very good.
Information and communication technology	<b>Very good.</b> A-level results were well above average in 2001 and current attainment is at least as good. Teachers and technical staff provide a good service for the students, who have well-developed practical skills.
Physical education	<b>Good.</b> A-level results were about average in 2001, but students achieve well in this subject compared with the others they do. Overall teaching is very good, but students sometimes need a better understanding of their progress.
Art	<b>Excellent.</b> A-level results were well above average in 2001. Teaching and learning are excellent and leadership is inspirational. High quality displays, portfolios and eloquent commentaries on their work characterise current students' excellent achievement.
History	<b>Very good.</b> A-level results were below the national average in 2001; a dip compared with previous years. Current students' attainment is better. They achieve very well and work well independently and analytically. Such very good learning is promoted by challenging and stimulating teaching.
English language	<b>Very good.</b> Students reach well above average standards at A-level. Good teaching enables them to achieve well and their mature attitudes and excellent relationships with teachers have a positive effect upon learning. Sometimes students need to be given greater encouragement to do more independent research.
French	<b>Very good.</b> Very good teaching and learning lead to well above average fluency, knowledge of institutions and literary appreciation. A-level results were above average in 2001 and are set to rise to well above average this year. Boys tend to do better than girls.
Russian	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Recent A-level entries are too small to allow reliable comparisons with national statistics, but results in 2000 were good. Students are interested in the subject. Current standards are below average; the students do not have clear enough study targets and they do not work hard enough at home or in the library.

Work was sampled in several other subjects and, although Italian was weaker; standards were mainly above average in all the rest. Demanding teaching and good quality learning characterised much of the work. In business, for example, the students' very good key skills in communication and information and communication technology were amply demonstrated as they gave very good simulated sales presentations based on thorough analysis of data from surveys they had conducted.

### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	<b>Good.</b> Students are given good advice and information about appropriate courses within the school and about alternative provision locally before entering the sixth form. They settle into the sixth form well; very few students leave after one year, and retention on courses is good. Support offered to learning within subjects is very good, and teachers give freely of their time to help students make progress. Students are not, however, always clear about how well they should be doing, are doing and about ways to improve. Advice and guidance about careers and further/higher education is satisfactory; an increasing proportion of students are moving into higher and further education after sixth form.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	<b>Satisfactory.</b> The prolonged vacancy for a deputy headteacher has thrown taxing responsibilities for managing the sixth form onto two senior teachers who work well together, but whose other duties detract, to some extent, from their effectiveness. A weakness, for example, is the absence of any thorough overview of performance and trends that would help decisions on where to place resources. Steps taken to raise standards are proving effective in many subjects. The dialogues with sixth formers about measures to improve sixth form provision are not regular enough and do not offer clear enough outcomes.

### 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"> <li>• The accessibility of teachers and the ways they are willing to help.</li> <li>• The wide choice of courses that are well tailored to each individual's talents.</li> <li>• The way the school helped them to settle into the sixth form.</li> <li>• The very good teaching and the challenges they have to do their best.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The range of worthwhile activities is too small; there is not enough sport.</li> <li>• Information about progress could be improved.</li> <li>• The quality of advice on what they should study.</li> <li>• The school is not listening closely enough to them.</li> </ul>

Inspectors agree fully with each of the positive findings from the sixth form survey that elicited a 50 per cent response. Discussions with sixth formers reinforce the above survey outcomes. There are variations in the ways different subjects convey information on what a student needs to do to make further progress. Gaps in the management of the sixth form are leading to instances where decisions and actions are taken without the consultation that sixth formers' maturity warrants. The range of out-of-school activities is good overall and sixth formers may need to take the initiative and organise activities themselves.

### COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Overall standards are above average. Pupils achieve well throughout their time in the school: having entered the school at age 11 with average levels of attainment, they reach ages 16 and 18 with results which are above and well above average respectively.
2. The standards of attainment of pupils entering the school at age 11, measured by national tests in English, mathematics and science, are average. In science, while the proportion of pupils reaching national curriculum Level 4 or above is above average, a smaller-than-average proportion reach Level 5. In other subjects, attainment on entry to the school is also broadly average, although there are wide variations in pupils' levels of skill in design and technology and physical education.
3. Attainment by the age of 14, measured by the national tests, has been around the national average for each of the last five years. The school's results in these tests have improved faster than the national trend in recent years, with a particularly strong overall improvement in 2001. Science results have improved especially well over the last two years. The performance in English and science was above average in 2001 and has slightly exceeded the national average for girls and for boys in recent years. Mathematics results were average in 2001, though over recent years performance for girls and boys has been slightly below average. After a period of sustained decline in results for mathematics between 1997 and 1999, there was a strong recovery in 2001 as a result of a radical review of methods of teaching and learning in the subject. Boys did marginally better than girls in mathematics at age 14 in 2001, but in no subject is there a difference in gender performance in the national tests which is significantly greater than the national difference. Inspection of lessons and pupils' work confirms that improvements in mathematics and science will be sustained: inspectors report good achievement in these subjects by age 14 and satisfactory achievement in English.
4. By Year 9 in English, pupils' speaking and listening skills are very good. Pupils develop a good interest in reading, and understand the plot and relationships in texts they read. Writing standards are average, with higher and average attainers writing well in a range of styles, but lower attainers – boys in particular – need a lot of help to write at length.
5. In mathematics by the end of Year 9 standards are in line with those seen in schools nationally. In past national tests, fewer high grades were obtained than would be expected, but now more pupils are aiming for the higher levels. Pupils are confident in numeric work, data handling, transformation geometry, determination of areas and volumes, and use of Pythagoras. Some weaknesses are evident in decimal calculations and in some algebraic understanding, such as the construction and use of formulae.
6. In science, attainment is above average by Year 9. Pupils' literacy and oracy are particularly strong, and they write in a range of styles, such as letters, scientific reports, biographies and information leaflets, to develop their understanding of the wider applications of science. Good numeracy helps pupils to analyse data. Pupils have good practical skills, but they do not use computers much to help them in scientific enquiry.
7. In all other subjects by age 14, achievement is at least good, and it is very good in art and design, history and information and communication technology. In art and design,

attainment is above average as pupils' work is technically very accurate with a good understanding of three-dimensional concepts and proportions. Pupils observe objects sharply, and broaden their ideas by looking at history and art in other cultures. In design and technology, standards are above average with particular strengths in practical work; good quality products result from detailed investigations into design problems. In geography, standards are above average and much has improved since the time of the last inspection. Pupils select information well from a range of resources and use graphs effectively to analyse data in geographical enquiries. Such good enquiry skills, and the ability to write well at length and in various forms, also lead to above-average standards in history, where pupils of all capabilities have a good knowledge and understanding of the detail and timing of key events. Varied forms of writing, undertaken carefully and accurately, are features of pupils' work in modern languages, where standards are above average, and where pupils speak well with good accents and intonation. Standards in information and communication technology are well above those expected nationally, as pupils can perform complex tasks using the Internet and word-processing, spreadsheet, database, and presentation programs to create high quality documents, presentations and solutions to problems. In physical education, attainment overall is in line with the national expectation by Year 9, although boys' games skills are above average. Pupils' personal fitness develops strongly over Years 7, 8 and 9, and progress is particularly good for girls and boys in gymnastics. In music, standards are above average overall, but there are significant differences in the rate of progress made by pupils, so that standards achieved by some in Year 8 are higher than those achieved by those in Year 9.

8. By the age of 16, the proportion of pupils obtaining 5 or more GCSE/GNVQ passes at grades A\*-C was above the national average in 2001, though the GCSE points score per pupil was average. This difference in interpretation is mainly a result of the school's flexible approach to the curriculum at this stage, which allows pupils to determine, with their teachers, the number of GCSEs they will take and to prioritise between subjects. Pupils may in consequence get a lower average total points score than would be the case had they taken more GCSEs, but their performance in individual subjects is mostly above or well above average. In 2001, results were very strong in art and design, English literature, French, German, history, information and communication technology, physical education, Spanish and religious education, and strong in design and technology. In art and design, design and technology, English, French, history, information and communication technology and religious education, there was especially strong performance at the higher grades of A\*-A. Results were also well above average in GNVQ health and social care. In relation to schools whose pupils had similar prior attainment at the age of 14, overall GCSE performance was well above average, and reflects the good achievement of pupils between ages 14 and 16.
9. Governors set appropriately challenging targets for attainment at GCSE in the school. The school has broadly met the targets for the percentage of pupils getting at least one pass at A\*-G, and for pupils' average GCSE points score. It has exceeded its target for the percentage of pupils getting five or more A\*-C grades, a category in which performance improved strongly over time.
10. In art and design, history, information and communication technology and physical education, boys did very well at GCSE in 2001, but in English boys' results were below the national average and significantly below those of girls. In mathematics the considerable underachievement of boys led to overall below average results in the subject at GCSE in 2001. Pupils at this stage in mathematics still have some numeracy weaknesses arising from previous approaches to learning in the subject, but inspection evidence indicates that new approaches to teaching and learning are addressing the problem of boys' underachievement successfully.



11. By the age of 16 standards seen in work in English are above average. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are particularly strong, and the most competent pupils discuss literature with real insight. Pupils read widely and develop good skills of analysis. While care is taken in the presentation of written work, essays are not always well structured; they do not always refer to the question sufficiently or summarise ideas in a clear conclusion.
12. In mathematics by Year 11 standards seen are average. Pupils show good application to study, but weaknesses in their work, often due to earlier deficiencies, are apparent. Understanding of algebra is one such weakness. Pupils are not all in the habit of showing their workings as they develop answers to problems, something which will lose them marks in examinations.
13. Attainment in science is above average by the end of Year 11. Pupils have a good understanding of the relationships between variables and offer appropriate explanations of causes and effects in scientific enquiries. Pupils' practical work is good; they use microscopes effectively to develop observation skills, they weigh accurately and measure temperature correctly. Pupils continue to write well and to use scientific language correctly and appropriately at this stage.
14. In art and design, too, pupils' use of technical language is good. By age 16, attainment in art and design is well above the standard expected. Pupils' sketchbooks are excellent, observational work is strong, and interests, ideas and understanding is developed by exploration of important movements in art and design or the work of particular artists. Standards are above average in design and technology, where practical work remains strong and where design work is enhanced by detailed research and analysis of existing products to help develop ideas. In geography, pupils in Year 10 attain standards above those expected for their age, while those in Year 11 attain standards in line with the national average. Some disaffected pupils in Year 11 geography have fallen behind with their work; Year 10 pupils are also better grounded in fieldwork methods, such as in the gathering and analysis of data. In history, attainment is well above average, with particular strengths in writing at length and making effective use of evidence to support their arguments. Pupils evaluate carefully the usefulness and reliability of historical sources. Standards are also well above average in information and communication technology, where pupils of all levels of attainment produce very well designed solutions to problems they are given. The work of higher attainers in information and communication technology is particularly impressive, both in terms of its high level of technical competence and the pupils' own evaluation of their work. In modern foreign languages attainment is above average, and pupils in French, German, Russian and Spanish have particular confidence in oral work, though this is less so in Italian where there is not enough use of the target language in lessons. Higher attainers in modern languages write with flair, in detail and at length; they have a quick recall of vocabulary and use it well in expressing their views. Attainment is well above average in music, with particular strengths in performing and composing. In physical education, standards are above average, and many boys and girls play a range of games to a good standard. Pupils sustain a good level of physical fitness, which provides a very sound base on which to improve their own personal skills in different activities.
15. Achievement at age 16 is very good in art and design, information and communication technology, and music; it is good in all other subjects except mathematics where it is satisfactory.
16. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well in lessons. Support staff adapt the demands so that pupils can understand the key concepts, so that in an excellent science lesson pupils pulled together their work on energy, and successfully developed

their literacy by writing to the principal with advice on how to cut down heating costs in the hall. In Years 10 and 11 students with special educational needs are benefiting particularly from GNVQ courses where they can gather evidence of their achievements, and have a clear understanding of what they have to do, step by step, to succeed. Pupils with English as an additional language are well motivated to succeed and achieve well in lessons.

17. At all ages, pupils' basic skills are good and contribute strongly to their success in their subjects. Pupils use computers very effectively to improve their work through research, data processing, report compilation, and product design and manufacture. They were seen giving highly professional presentations on topics on a number of occasions during the inspection. In art and design, geography, history and science, though, pupils do not make enough use of computers in their work.

### **Literacy across the curriculum**

18. Standards of literacy are good and enable pupils to understand and make progress with the work that they do in all subjects. Pupils in all years speak confidently and often give extended responses to teachers' questions. They listen attentively to each other in group discussions. Standards of pronunciation and intonation are very good in modern foreign languages and, in music, pupils can give very articulate talks about musical instruments they play. Standards of reading and writing are also good overall. Most pupils read aloud from text books fluently and confidently. In information and communication technology they can find and select information efficiently, which helps them to produce effective *Power Point* presentations. Many read widely, because of the emphasis placed on this in the English department. Pupils have a good ability to write for different purposes. For example, they show good note-taking skills in history and geography. The annotation of sketch books in art and design is of a very high standard. In science they write short biographies of important scientists. In geography, Year 8 pupils were able to write newspaper articles in an appropriate style, to highlight the effects of flooding and damage to rainforests.

### **Numeracy across the curriculum**

19. Pupils' numeracy skills at intake are enhanced both through the mathematics course content in Year 7, and also in the use of a computer program in which the enthusiasm of pupils to achieve correct answers and increase their accuracy profile promotes their learning. Basic mental calculation skills are strengthened, they progress into long division calculations, problem questions, data handling and directed numbers. In other year groups numeracy is sound though there is a need to strengthen work with decimals. Pupils can use calculators confidently, substitute into formulae, tabulate information and display and graph data.
20. Good numeracy skills were observed in many subjects: in structure and rhythm patterns in music, in use of formulae and bar charts in science (though line graphs were weaker), in use of bar charts in geography and history, in calculations of weight, volume and costings in design and technology, and in the use of spreadsheets in information and communication technology. Pupils confidently use numerical processes to help them solve a variety of problems. This is a good base upon which to build the school's new numeracy strategy.

### **Sixth form**

21. In the sixth form, A and A/S level performance has ranged between above average and very high for the last three years. Boys do particularly well at this level. Strong performing subjects over time are art and design, biology, English, French and history.

Good improvement in results has been evident in chemistry, information and communication technology, design and technology, general studies, mathematics and physics. Weaker subjects have been economics, geography, German, music, and Italian.

22. Inspectors noted very high standards in art and design, high standards in design and technology, English, French, and information and communication technology, and above average standards in nearly all other subjects looked at in detail. Standards are below average in Russian. Achievement in Russian is sound, given the previous attainment of students, but the students do not have high enough expectations of the quality and quantity of work required for success in the subject at this level. Elsewhere, achievement is at least good. Students develop their ideas through mature, intellectual discussion of ideas in art and design, history, English and French. Practical work is very strong in art and design, information and communication technology, physics and physical education, where students display very good skills and the capacity to learn well from the practical activities they undertake. In most subjects, students are well organised in their approaches to written work: they take notes independently in class, engage in thorough research, and show clearly the development of their ideas and of their solutions to problems. There are, however, some relative weaknesses in the extent of independent research undertaken in English and Russian, in the evaluation of products and processes in information and communication technology, and in the quality of written responses in physical education.

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

23. The attitudes of pupils towards school are very good. Pupils are prepared to work hard and get a sense of satisfaction when they achieve success in their studies. They participate enthusiastically in the wide range of enrichment opportunities the school provides. School productions in particular are well supported not just by performers but also by stage management and lighting crews. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, or those with special educational needs, are fully integrated into the school community.
24. Attitudes and behaviour were exceptionally good in art and design lessons seen in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form, and in drama/theatre studies in Years 7, 11 and the sixth form. These lessons were characterised by real enthusiasm for the subjects by teachers and pupils and complete application to tasks during lesson time. In information and communication technology lessons, too, most pupils were similarly absorbed in their work.
25. Relationships between pupils and with staff are excellent. One of the most striking characteristics of the school is the mutual respect shown between staff and pupils. Pupils are valued for their individuality. They respond positively to this and develop during their time at school into confident young people. There are many opportunities for collaborative or group work to further develop pupils' social skills and they willingly share and support each other in their learning. Pupils are encouraged, through debate, to express their feelings on a range of moral and social issues. They listen with sensitivity to the views and opinions of their peer group that may differ from their own.
26. The standard of behaviour within the school is very good. Behaviour in lessons was never less than satisfactory, and on occasions was excellent. A small number of pupils, who have emotional and behavioural problems, occasionally present challenging behaviour, and sometimes disrupt the learning of other pupils. Disruptive behaviour was noted at the previous inspection, but had a much more serious impact on learning than is the case now. Bullying is rare in this school. Pupils throughout the school are encouraged to accept responsibility for their actions, and treat everyone with

respect. On the rare occasions when a teacher's behaviour management technique is confrontational, this evokes a negative response from pupils who perceive this to run contrary to the ethos of mutual respect in the school.

27. Since the previous inspection the instances and number of pupils excluded for a fixed term from the school has significantly increased. In the last academic year, there were 95 periods of fixed term exclusion compared with 20 at the last inspection; the current number is above average for a school of this size. No pupils have been permanently excluded for the last three years. Exclusions statistics are analysed to identify if they are more prevalent amongst certain social groups of pupils and findings are presented to the governing body. The school was able, for example, to explain to inspectors why statistics showed a relatively large number of exclusions of pupils from the 'black – other' ethnic category in 2000/1, despite the small number of pupils in that group, by reference to detailed behaviour records. However, this information is not used to put in place early intervention strategies to manage the groups of pupils who are at risk of exclusion. Analysis of the exclusion data for the current academic year, for example, revealed that 66 per cent of pupils had been identified as having special educational needs, some for emotional and behavioural difficulties. There is also evidence that some of the behaviour that led to exclusion occurred towards the end of lessons. Lesson times are too long for many pupils to effectively sustain their concentration. This was a key issue at the last inspection. Some effective work has been undertaken in a number of subjects to develop lesson structures to keep pupils engaged throughout. The governing body is appropriately involved at all stages of the exclusion process.
28. Pupils with special educational needs have very positive attitudes. They make particularly effective use of the option to take advantage of additional support in small 'study' groups. In these classes pupils are highly motivated and overcome their literacy difficulties to reinforce their understanding in a range of subjects. For example, in one Year 9 group looking at grammatical structures, a pupil was able to identify an adverb within a sentence even though he could not read the entire word. Within lessons most pupils with special educational needs benefit from the value placed on individuals because their difficulties do not mark them out for different treatment. The exceptions occur when teachers do not have the skills to anticipate and avoid confrontations with pupils who have recognised difficulties in managing their own behaviour.
29. The development of pupils' initiative and personal responsibility is excellent. When they reach the end of Year 11 they are confident and articulate young people who are able to express their feelings and concerns in a logical manner. From first entering the school pupils are encouraged to accept responsibility for managing their own learning. Pupils make informed choices in Year 9 about what subjects they are going to study in Years 10 and 11 and post-16 and whether they decide to enter for examinations at the end of their courses. During lunch and break-times pupils organise themselves without the need for adult supervision. They move efficiently between the two sites. Some pupils volunteer to act as mentors to others who may be experiencing difficulties on an individual basis. The school council provides a forum for pupils to air their views. Not all tutors, however, are prepared to allow time for council representatives to talk to their peer group.
30. Attendance is satisfactory. For the year 2000/01 attendance was 90.8 per cent which is in line with the national average. Unauthorised absence was above the national average. There has been no improvement in the level of attendance since the previous inspection.

31. Since September 2001 the overall attendance of pupils in Year 8 and Year 11 has fallen below 90 per cent. The attendance of pupils in Year 11 is a particular cause for concern and is likely to affect their ultimate success in GCSE examinations.

### **Sixth form**

32. Attitudes to learning are very good in the sixth form. Students apply themselves very well in lessons and complete work set to high standards, although in Russian, students have not been prepared to give enough time to study outside lessons. Generally, students arrive promptly and are fully prepared for lessons. Sixth formers have mostly good attitudes to the school, and particularly appreciate the good teaching and support they receive in their studies. Some however, feel that they are not consulted well enough on developments in the school and the sixth form in particular, and a majority in the student questionnaire felt that they were not given a good range of worthwhile activities. Further questioning revealed that their main discontent was in a perceived lack of organised recreational sporting activities. Inspectors found the range of activities on offer to be good. The behaviour of sixth form students is very good. They set a good example to pupils lower down the school.
33. The personal development of students is excellent. Some help the younger pupils with their reading or with sporting activities. Relationships are excellent. Students are caring and supportive of each other. For example, a media studies student shared his expertise in making pop videos with another student who was making a similar video as part of their practical assessment for A-level. Pupils in Year 11 were supporting the Year 13 theatre studies students' assessed production by undertaking some stage management tasks. Students' personal organisation of their files and other work is very good. They are well prepared to take responsibility for their own learning by the time they enter the sixth form, and take an active role in the school council.
34. Attendance is satisfactory across the sixth form. A few students are allowing their progress to be adversely affected by non-attendance. This understandably has a detrimental effect upon their results in examinations so that some students do not always realise their potential.

### **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?**

35. Teaching is good overall for pupils across Years 7 to 11. It is better on the whole for the older pupils in Years 10 and 11, where nearly 80 per cent of teaching seen was good or better, and over a third was very good or excellent. Over Years 7, 8 and 9, two-thirds of teaching was good or better. Only three unsatisfactory lessons were seen during the inspection, and two of those came in Year 9 which is the year where overall teaching was least strong. Pupils' attitudes were not quite as good in Year 9 as in others, so that where teaching was less well planned, and where, as in science and technology, pupils had experienced a turnover of temporary or supply teachers, pupils at this age were less likely to take their learning forward themselves.
36. The quality of teaching has improved considerably since the last inspection, when there were many more unsatisfactory lessons, especially in the earlier years and in Year 8 in particular. Most of the unsatisfactory teaching at that time resulted from a failure to control disruptive and distractive behaviour and from a lack of clear expectations about what pupils should achieve. The 70-minute lessons were seen as too long for younger pupils to maintain their attention when teaching was uninteresting. The school has addressed these problems very effectively. The 70-minute lessons remain, but it is clear that good planning and a careful structure to lessons are now features of the teaching in most subjects, so that pupils are offered a variety of challenging tasks through the course of lessons to keep their interest high. Planning and management of

pupils are best in Years 10 and 11 where objectives are clearer because teachers work within awarding body specifications, and where, as in art and design, teachers can use a greater range of approaches with the smaller classes they have in those later years.

37. Teaching in English is satisfactory in Years 7, 8 and 9 but good in Years 10 and 11 because teachers plan their lessons better in those later years and are more certain about what they want their pupils to achieve. Weaknesses in planning resulted in some unsatisfactory teaching in English in Year 9. In mathematics, teaching is good across Years 7-9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11, because, in a successful strategy to raise standards, the department has focused its attention on improving approaches to teaching in the earlier years. Clearly structured lessons with a range of activities, effective use of computers to develop number skills, and the use of materials which offer appropriate challenges to pupils with different capabilities are all features of this new approach. Science teaching is good throughout, again with particular strengths in the structure of lessons, whereby the objectives for lessons are set out clearly at the start and revisited at intervals during the sessions to check on the progress being made in learning. Teaching in art and design and most modern foreign languages is often excellent, and it is frequently very good in geography, history, information and communication technology and music. In these subjects, alongside good planning and structure, teaching is characterised by very good subject knowledge from teachers who have high expectations of their pupils and use a variety of approaches and materials to stimulate pupils' interests. Teaching is mostly good in other subjects, but in Italian, while teaching is satisfactory, the expectations of pupils are not high enough and there is not enough use of the Italian language in lessons.
38. Pupils with learning difficulties are very well taught. Specialist teachers and support staff have a thorough knowledge of their needs and develop very effective strategies to help them to achieve. They monitor pupils' progress very closely, and use the detailed reports to evaluate and adapt the strategies. Support staff check the achievement of individual targets, and their assessments form the basis of informal termly reviews. In small group lessons teachers and support staff have a good understanding of the demands which pupils face in other subjects, and plan very effectively to support their learning. Subject teachers are sensitive to the needs of pupils with special educational needs when there is no additional support available, but do not play a sufficient role in setting or assessing achievement of individual learning targets. Some teachers do not have sufficient understanding of strategies to anticipate and avoid confrontation with pupils who are recognised as having difficulty controlling their own behaviour. Some teachers have not been trained sufficiently to manage these pupils by recognising early signs that a problem is likely to occur to help them either to defuse a potentially difficult situation or put in place early intervention strategies.
39. The school has a policy for literacy across the curriculum and is working on its consistent implementation. English department teachers are beginning to revise schemes of work to take account of the National Literacy Strategy, but this is at a very early stage. However, most departments have their own literacy policy derived from the whole school policy and overall provision for the development of literacy is good. For example, science, geography, music and information and communication technology teachers emphasise the correct use of technical vocabulary. The history department does likewise, although they do not provide pupils with a glossary of terms. Many departments encourage pupils to read aloud during lessons. Modern foreign language teachers help pupils to improve their accents and intonation by this means. In geography and information and communication technology pupils are taught to read for information, for example through frequent searches of websites. Most teachers insist on accurate spelling and neat presentation of written work, although mathematics teachers often leave spelling mistakes uncorrected. The science department provides pupils with excellent opportunities to write in different styles. For example, science

teachers help them to plan and write formal letters, scientific reports, biographies and information leaflets. As a result, some pupils have published attractive, folded leaflets that provide clear information about issues such as the greenhouse effect and acid rain.

40. A numeracy strategy across subjects is yet to be put in place. Recent training for heads of department is to be shared with the whole teaching staff later this term. Nonetheless, teachers in many subjects, including design and technology, geography, history, information and communication technology, music, and science, already plan activities to develop pupils' skills in using number for measurement and data analysis.
41. Pupils' key skills of communication, numeracy, use of information and communication technology, ability to work with others and problem-solving are all at least good, and develop strongly during their time in the school. By the time they get into the sixth form these skills serve them very well and help to explain the high quality of learning seen in lessons at this stage.
42. Pupils' learning is good overall. A particular strength is in the interest they show in their subjects, and the independence with which they organise their work, although some pupils in Years 10 and 11 do not show sufficient resilience in completing GCSE coursework and do not complete their courses. Nonetheless, the fact that pupils have a degree of supported choice in the courses they choose to pursue means that they are well motivated to work in those subjects.

### **Sixth form**

43. Teaching in the sixth form was said to be 'of a high order' in the previous inspection report, and continues to be so. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen; 85 per cent of teaching was good or better, and over half of teaching was very good or excellent.
44. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, and use this to set challenging activities for students in lessons. Mostly, then, the pace of learning is rapid as students clearly recognise the objectives of tasks and work quickly and with expert guidance to achieve them. In information and communication technology and French, learning, while very good, could be improved if teachers shared lesson objectives more clearly with the class at the start of lessons and reviewed success in meeting those objectives at the end. A key strength in most subjects is the way in which teachers mark work, with very helpful comments, and give students very clear indications about how they need to improve. Students respond well to this. In physical education, though, students do not have a clear enough understanding of their overall strengths and weaknesses, and in Russian they need to be clearer about the standards required by the course.
45. The students have very good key skills, and teachers can set them challenging exercises because they know that students can write and speak well, apply number, use computers effectively, and solve problems on their own or in teams.

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

46. The curricular provision for pupils in Years 7-11 is good. Broad, balanced study opportunities are the foundations of what is a very effective school community that promotes engagement and critical thinking successfully amongst most of the pupils. Long-standing practice successfully binds, through sensitively interpreted Catholicism, the expectations of nearly all parents and pupils who come from different, and often no, religious backgrounds. Interpreting very effectively the denominational value of equality, the curriculum promotes mutual respect unusually well. Its roots lie deeply in school

tradition and provision goes well beyond the requirements of the National Curriculum and religious education, which are met in full. The real strength of the curriculum is its ability to absorb nationally required change without losing its inherent quality of catering for and valuing each individual, including those with special educational needs, who receive very supportive alternative arrangements, and the gifted and talented, without recourse yet to a specific policy. With no recent permanent exclusions, the school's ready acceptance to educate numerous pupils other schools cannot handle demonstrates amply its success in engaging individuals.

47. Constraints found at the time of the previous inspection remain. Unresolved are the inconveniences of the split site and the limiting timetable that have adverse effects on the time available to teach subjects such as science. Increasing staffing difficulties undermine the school's interest in broadening yet further its vocational education provision. However, curricular improvements since the previous inspection are good. Management's success in winning technology college status is a major boost that is improving provision. Inspection evidence suggests that some parents' fears of deterioration in the justly cherished, very good provision in art and design and modern foreign languages are unfounded: some improvements in mathematics and science are the early indicators of the successful impact of technology college status on the curriculum and standards. Improvements in information and communication technology provision are also bringing good benefits to the quality of education generally. There is now broadly satisfactory provision for learning using computers through subjects, although there are weaknesses in years 10 and 11, as the progress of pupils who do not take information and communication technology courses is not monitored well enough. Specialist information and communication technology courses are very good, meeting the needs of higher attainers particularly well. Other improvements include the participation of governors who now report on the work of subjects to which they are attached. The curriculum committee is particularly well chaired, providing strong critical guidance to the school.
48. Good provision for pupils in Years 7-9 is characterised by full compliance with requirements, including now a daily act of collective worship throughout. Some very good practice in developing literacy skills arises from a well-established multimedia course devised for three classes of pupils in Years 8 and 9 who decide not to take up a second modern foreign language; these are mainly ones whose literacy needs are greater. Languages provision is good, with two languages, from a current range of four, offered from Year 8. However, the take-up of two languages in years 10 and 11 is as low as the take-up nationally. English, where the amounts of taught drama are small, is a casualty of the introduction of a second modern foreign language. Although the allocated time for learning English is lower than is customary, the multimedia course and the broadening effects of modern foreign language study compensate satisfactorily. Generally, the time allocated to the study of English, mathematics and science is lower than normal in these years and standards in mathematics and science have lagged behind, partly as a result. Personal, social and health education was not inspected, as it occurs only fortnightly and did not coincide with the inspection week. Its satisfactory content includes relevant themes among which are drugs awareness, sex and careers education, in line with governor policies.
49. Very good provision for pupils in Years 10 and 11 includes a normal range of prescribed courses that give the basis of well-balanced studies. The school has never compromised by introducing limited extra courses at this stage. The timetable is constructed annually to meet the individual selections pupils make beyond the basics and a very good range of extra, mostly certificated, courses is effectively tailored to satisfy the needs of those capable of taking up to 11 GCSEs and others who are able to take fewer. The final chosen programme of any pupil may include short courses that are for specific interest or that may provide extra time, for instance in art and design, to



complete the better their course work portfolios. Several of the short courses are well geared to developing key skills such as better linguistic communications and mastery of micro-technology. Very good TV/film and photography courses are typical of some enterprising initiatives that stimulate the interest of lower attaining pupils, improving simultaneously their use of English and fostering their cultural development. All pupils, some of whom select more arts-based courses as an alternative, do not study double award science, but measures to make sure each pupil follows a suitably balanced curriculum are effective.

50. Good collaboration with further education enables a small number of pupils who, otherwise, would be in danger of falling out of the education system to pursue individually tailored courses of a practical nature off-site. These and other comparatively disaffected pupils are well catered for and parents are kept closely informed of their achievements.
51. Pupils with learning difficulties are adequately supported by adjustments to the curriculum. There are additional classes for pupils who do not study a second language, and pupils can opt to attend for intensive numeracy and literacy support. Within these lessons support is also available for work which pupils are doing in other subjects. A similar arrangement enables pupils in Years 10 and 11 to consolidate their basic skills and to revisit concepts from their main examination subjects. Further individual support is available to develop reading and spelling, or to help pupils who find the demands of particular lessons, or the length of lessons difficult to manage. Exceptional arrangements are made for a small number of pupils who have found it hard to maintain full attendance. These include college courses and work placements; there is no planned and coherent programme to provide for pupils with these needs, and each problem is being addressed separately. Additional support is negotiated with visiting specialists for groups of pupils who find difficulty managing their time in school, and an imaginative communications skills course is available for pupils who lack confidence in groups or with unfamiliar people.
52. Comparative weaknesses lie in the paucity of vocational, for example, GNVQ courses. The outstanding devotion of a retired teacher of health and social care, travelling each fortnight from South Wales, with pupils e-mailing their work to her is the main reason they are able to continue to completion this year; Year 11 leisure and tourism pupils have much ground to cover following uncertainties in teaching of the course in the previous year, but this course has been taken on by physical education teachers in the school and is now well organised and producing good standards in Year 10. A more general weakness across GCSE and GNVQ subjects is that some students do not complete coursework. This is one of the reasons for some pupils leaving without five or more recognised qualifications.
53. Both careers education and work experience programmes are good. They provide a good basis for making choices; a factor supported well by the way the curriculum is organised and by much teaching and learning that gets the students to think, showing clearly in their eloquent, perceptive views of provision.
54. Technology college status has led to significant improvements of links between the school and its community of partner primary schools. Trinity teachers have trained staff from these schools in information and communication technology, design and technology and science, and they use Trinity's facilities, such as the cyber-café, which is also open to the wider community.
55. Although found wanting by numerous parents and some pupils alike, inspection evidence shows out-of-school activities that support learning to be a particular strength, allowing students to improve further, for example, their mathematics, science and

information and communication technology skills. Similarly, extra sessions in holiday times and also, for instance, history weekends extend this provision well. The annual skiing trip takes over a 100 children away in February half-term. Field trips are well established in geography. Other activities also make significant contributions to many pupils' social and cultural development. Physical acumen is celebrated in badminton, floor gymnastics and basketball especially; standards are high and elite squads represent the school at all levels. Participation by less proficient players is encouraged. Football is gaining in popularity amongst boys and girls. Frequent drama productions and contributions from outside speakers complement what is good provision overall. Musical activities are less well developed.

56. The provision for pupils' spiritual development is good. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. Provision for pupils' social development is excellent. Provision for moral development is very good. Good provision is made for pupils' cultural development including raising their awareness of cultural diversity.
57. Provision for spiritual development is good. English makes a valuable contribution by providing opportunities for pupils to examine and acquire insights into beliefs and values. There are opportunities for reflection. One very good example was observed in a lesson exploring the emotions raised by different values of parents and teenagers. In geography, poetry has been used effectively to focus thought on environmental issues, such as the destruction of the rainforest. In art and design good work has been done focusing on the theme of suffering and some of the discussion amongst pupils has raised their spiritual awareness. There are opportunities for prayer and reflection in the acts of collective worship. These will be reported on in detail in a separate report.
58. Provision for pupils' moral development is very good; the school actively promotes a framework of moral values. All teachers, by their own example and expectations, act as very good role models. Values of honesty, fairness and responsibility are promoted effectively and pupils are clearly made aware of the differences between right and wrong. Moral issues are explored in English, science, art and design, history and geography. In the history schemes of work there is an emphasis on being aware of other's point of view and on being able to recognise bias and unreliability in evidence. A strong emphasis is placed on sporting behaviour in physical education. In classrooms pupils benefit from learning in an atmosphere of fun where there are consistent and predictable responses, rewards and sanctions.
59. Provision for developing pupils' social awareness and skills is excellent. Relationships are based on respect and co-operation. Pupils are given valuable opportunities to work collaboratively in all subjects. In many lessons pupils are able to work in pairs and groups to develop self-confidence and the joy of sharing. The personal development of pupils and their independence in learning are promoted well. There is a strong and effective commitment to promoting citizenship. Pupils have taken a keen interest in a school in Gujarat following a serious earthquake. There is a range of opportunities for pupils to show initiative and accept responsibility and be involved in the life of the school. These include the school council and older pupils supporting younger pupils. A good range of extra-curricular activities and visits, in this country and abroad, helps to promote social interaction.
60. Provision to support pupils in developing an understanding of their own and other cultures is good. There are many visits to places of cultural interest and they are involved in drama and musical productions. In art and design a strong contribution is made providing study and reflection upon artistic traditions and styles from around the world. In history pupils are given opportunities to consider other cultures through time. In geography the study of the life of other peoples such as in Japan contributes to raising cultural knowledge and awareness. The school recognises the need to promote

cultural diversity and to prepare pupils for living in a pluralist society. However, some subjects do not do enough to promote cultural diversity.

### **Sixth form**

61. Curricular provision is good for students in the 16-18 age ranges. Interviewed students felt there was a good match between what they wished to study and what the school offered them. The school fills the local need well, collaborating effectively, for example, with other providers through strong presentations of alternatives at regular careers sessions. The entry qualifications to the sixth form are slightly less rigid than in some schools that concentrate on A-level provision, but well above average results show the success of this policy.
62. The taxing management of the sixth form curriculum is satisfactorily shared between two senior teaching staff members. They provide good personal guidance and organise suitable activities to smooth the ways students may take to their next steps in education or training. The good basic provision of 23 A/S or A-level courses is an improvement on that found at the previous inspection and an enterprising outlook course now caters effectively for small numbers of comparatively immature students with special educational needs who would find immediate transition to further education too much. Provision for these students is very good. They are able, along with all other students, to refine and receive certification of their key skills of communication, numeracy and the use of information and communication technology. The school is particularly well advanced in this respect, although the A-level students find the arrangements for key skills superfluous. Similarly they do not fully appreciate the advantages of a general studies course they feel to be thrust upon them. Provision of vocational courses is limited to an AVCE course on business and units of health and social care delivered through the outlook course.
63. The good programme of work experience begun pre-16 is imaginatively extended at this stage. Students find worthwhile experiences both in the local area and much further afield. Of particular note is how placements in France have a positive effect upon the students' enthusiasm for, and standards in, the subject. Although careers education is full and varied, the students find an imbalance between the attention paid to non-university possibilities and their own, mainly higher education, ambitions.
64. In interview, the students appreciate the constructive advice teachers give on their studies and the help they freely get from them outside school time, often through electronic communications.
65. Provision for students' personal development is satisfactory, although the students think they have too little time for recreational sports. The students, as a body, organise many charity activities, their own balls and parties; they act as mentors for pupils in other parts of the school and they think affectionately of the school as a unit. However, some Year 13 students' appreciation of the school's willingness to take them seriously is wavering, with protests over, for example, dress code issues creating tensions.

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

66. This is a caring school where the individual needs of its pupils are important. The educational and personal support and guidance that pupils receive is good. The transition from primary school to secondary school is effective. Pupils in Year 7 settle quickly and feel well supported in their early days in school. Those identified as having literacy difficulties are given extra support. The school is currently developing strategies for supporting those with numeracy difficulties. Year teams stay with their group throughout each key stage of their education. This provides an opportunity for a

constructive working partnership to be established between pupil, tutor and head of year. However, the shortage of time that tutors have with their groups limits this partnership being established. Often registration periods have only half the pupils present because they are attending lessons at the other site or the tutor is absent because they are teaching there. There are, however, tutorial periods of 70 minutes duration every two weeks on a rolling basis. Heads of year have limited time to carry out their pastoral role. Pastoral work often takes place with pupils in staff's own time at break and lunchtimes or after school. Because of the dedication of staff pupils are effectively supported throughout their time in the school. Some departments, such as art and design, media studies and health and social care run extra classes at weekends and in the holidays for pupils to extend their learning.

67. The monitoring of pupils' academic performance and personal development is good. Pupils who are underachieving are identified by subject staff in Years 10 and 11. Their progress is monitored initially through the school's cause for concern system. Some of these pupils are offered the support of an external mentor. Pupils in Year 11 identified as underachieving are mentored by some teaching staff who have volunteered their time to help them prepare for external examinations. A target setting evening is held in the autumn term for parents and Year 11 pupils. The provision is not as effective in Years 7, 8 and 9. This year an effort check has been introduced to recognise publicly and reward endeavour, to help identify underachieving pupils, and to motivate all students to achieve their best performance, but it is too early to evaluate the effectiveness of this initiative.
68. Social inclusion funding is effectively used to support disaffected pupils. External agencies such as Connexions support the school well. Work placements and other alternative curriculum arrangements, such as college placements, are arranged for pupils in Years 10 and 11. The Challenge Group helps to meet the needs of pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9.
69. Procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are poor; the systems for recording and monitoring attendance are not sufficiently rigorous to ensure that the whereabouts of all pupils are known to the school. At the last inspection some concerns were identified about the monitoring of attendance. There are clear procedures for registering pupils but they are not consistently applied. That is particularly the case when Dormer Hall-based pupils are registering at the Bishop Bright Hall. Attendance registers are only recorded once a week onto the computerised attendance recording system. This creates problems for pastoral staff who need to track the attendance of pupils identified as a cause for concern on a daily basis. Pastoral staff are limited in the time they are allocated to rigorously monitor attendance therefore attendance data is not analysed systematically and used to target individuals and encourage them to improve their attendance through a range of support strategies. The Education Welfare Service effectively supports the school.
70. The school's procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are very good. The ethos of the school promotes respect for each other and pupils know and understand the standard of what constitutes acceptable behaviour. The majority of pupils meet these standards. The issue of bullying is addressed well through the personal development programme.
71. There are a number of pupils with challenging behaviour. This was also identified at the previous inspection. The school works in partnership with the education psychologist and other external agencies to devise strategies to manage these pupils. Excluded pupils are monitored carefully by learning support assistants on their return to school, and the special educational needs co-ordinator liaises with the pupils' parents. Difficulties still arise because teaching staff have not received any training to help them

manage the behaviour of these pupils. Most staff manage these pupils well but some teachers employ confrontational techniques that only exacerbates the situation and sometimes leads to exclusion. If lessons are disrupted pupils are removed by a duty manager where they continue working under supervision. This does not always address the root of the problems and is not promoting social inclusion.

72. The care of pupils with special educational needs is very good, except for the aforementioned inconsistency in the management of pupils with behaviour difficulties. Specialist teachers and support staff know the pupils very well, and gather information continuously about their progress and their changing needs. They are inventive and flexible when they devise strategies to ensure that pupils can cope with the work, and can manage their time in school. Subject teachers are aware of individual needs, though they are not sufficiently involved in setting targets and evaluating their effectiveness.
73. Incident report forms completed by teaching staff inform tutors of any difficulties. The current behaviour management system does not show heads of department taking responsibility for managing problematic behaviour within their department. Heads of year produce a behaviour register that records incidents and actions taken; these are discussed at weekly meetings attended by heads of year, the special educational needs co-ordinator and the appropriate key stage co-ordinator. Monitoring of the behaviour of individuals is therefore good, but the registers are not systematically analysed to identify particular groups of pupils who may need additional support or particular subject areas where difficulties regularly arise.
74. The arrangements for child protection are good. The nominated person is fully trained and aware of their responsibilities. The staff handbook contains procedures to follow if incidents occur. Appropriate procedures are in place for children in the care of the local authority.
75. The provision to manage health and safety is unsatisfactory. The recording of the attendance of pupils is a cause for concern and could lead to difficulties if an emergency arose. The local education authority undertakes regular safety audits and this was identified as a risk area at the last audit in 2000. The area around the pond is unfenced and constitutes a safety hazard. This was also identified in the local education authority safety audit.
76. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are satisfactory. There is no whole school assessment system, but there is a whole school assessment policy from which all departments have developed their own methods. While there are different systems for recording marks, grades and levels on pupils' work, information is analysed at key times, using agreed methods that make possible comparisons across subjects. The results of external examinations are systematically analysed by subject departments. The achievement of boys and girls is monitored and the school is devising strategies, with the support of university researchers, to address any differences in performance.
77. National Curriculum Key Stage 2 test results, and data from the school's own assessment procedures, are used effectively to build up a profile of pupil's attainment when they enter the school. This data forms a baseline for tracking pupils' progress over their time in school. This information is sent to all members of the teaching staff. Predicted grades for both end of key stage assessment tests and GCSE examinations enable teaching staff to set targets for pupils, though the effectiveness with which the information is used varies between subjects. Subjects are beginning to use data which shows improvements in performance over time of pupils nationally to set targets for their own pupils. Pupils are mostly aware of their predicted grades and the level they

are currently working at. In Years 10 and 11, though, those pupils not taking an accredited course in information and communication technology do not have their performance in the subject assessed and reported as required, and so do not have any indication of their progress.

78. Use of assessment information is satisfactory. There is a lack of consistency in its use to guide curriculum planning across departments. There is particularly good practice in the art department where staff regularly assess pupils' work and monitor their progress against predicted grades. Individual discussion helps pupils to raise their level of attainment.
79. There is an inconsistency in the quality of marking of pupils' work. There are many examples of well-marked work with constructive comments that help pupils to understand how they can raise their standard of work but this varies amongst teaching staff. Where work is not marked, or annotated, pupils are not clear about how to improve their work to achieve higher grades.

## **Sixth form**

### **Assessment**

80. The continuous assessment of students' work is good overall. In design and technology, they receive very good information on how they are reaching their target grades throughout the year. Assessment and feedback is excellent in art and information and communication technology places pressure upon students to improve. Students are not, however, clear in all subjects about how well they should be doing, are doing and about ways to improve: in physical education and in Russian, students need clearer information on their progress.

### **Advice, support and guidance**

81. Students are given good advice and information about appropriate courses within the school and about alternative provision locally before entering the sixth form. They indicate that the quality of written information they were given on courses available to them was good; this is supported by information evenings and consultation at the start of the autumn term before registering for their courses. Information supplied to students is good throughout; they are helped in this regard by having a sixth form centre where much of the teaching and learning occurs. Students settle into the sixth form well; very few students leave after one year, and retention on courses is good. Support offered to learning within subjects is very good, and teachers give freely of their time to help students make progress. Study facilities within the sixth form centre are good. Advice and guidance about careers and further/higher education is satisfactory; an increasing proportion of students are moving into higher and further education after sixth form.

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

82. The parents' views of the quality and effectiveness of what the school provides and achieves are good. Parents strongly value Trinity College's educational philosophies. Sixty-four parents attended the meeting prior to the inspection and 18 per cent of parents completed the questionnaire on parents' views.
83. The parents who responded to the questionnaire and attended the meeting felt their child was expected to work hard and was making good progress. They felt the ethos of the school enabled their child to become mature and confident. Most parents felt their child liked coming to school. Concerns were expressed about the ability of the school to work closely with them, the information they received about the progress of their child, the quality of the leadership and management of the school, and the range of activities offered by the school. Inspectors agreed with parents' positive comments, and to some extent with their concerns. Inspectors agree that the leadership of the school needs to take more account of the views of parents and others when making decisions which involve fundamental shifts in the school's character. However, inspectors found overall leadership and management to be satisfactory, with particular strengths in promoting improved attainment, teaching and learning. The school was found to offer a good range of activities for its pupils, despite some weaknesses in opportunities in music.
84. Pastoral staff ensure that ongoing contact is established with parents of pupils who are causing concern though the limited time they have to carry out their duties affects the consistency of this aspect of their role. The quality of information provided for parents about the progress of their child is good. The quality of annual reports is satisfactory overall. Most departments ensure that parents are clear about what their child has studied, how they are achieving and what they need to do to improve their work. A consultation meeting is held after the publication of these reports. Parents are less

clear about the meaning of the recently introduced effort grades for pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9. Parents of Year 11 pupils attend a target-setting evening so they are clear about what pupils need to do to gain their predicted grades in external examinations. At the beginning of the academic year parents attend a curriculum evening that gives them information about what their child will be studying that year.

85. The special educational needs co-ordinator maintains very good contact with parents. Individual needs are discussed as they arise, and there is an informal termly review involving parents as well as pupils with individual education plans.
86. The effectiveness of the school's links with parents is poor. Historically the school has benefited from the support of its parent body who chose to send their children to Trinity College because of its unique liberal approach to education. The lack of consultation with its parents by the leadership of the school, who, in the perception of a significant proportion of parents, want to change the culture to that of a more traditional school, has upset many parents and damaged the relationship between the school and its parents. Unless resolved there is the potential for longer-term damage to both the recruitment of staff and pupils.
87. The contribution of parents to children's learning is good. Most willingly collaborate with the school to resolve difficulties when they occur. Many parents actively support the school in many ways and are active not just in fund-raising. They support school events, help with school drama productions, accompany school trips and transport pupils to after school events. The majority of parents ensure that both homework and coursework are completed to meet deadlines. There are a number of parents, however, who do not ensure that homework and coursework are completed or that their child attends school regularly. This reduces pupils' overall progress and attainment and ultimate success in external examinations.

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

88. The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory overall. The principal and her senior team share a strongly-held guiding principle of providing full opportunities for all pupils in order for them to fulfil their potential. Good management since the previous inspection, in spite of the difficulties associated with falling pupil numbers, has enabled significant improvements to be made in the quality of education and standards in most subjects.
89. The previous inspection report indicated that the management of the school was requiring some improvement. While the school had strongly shared values, it lacked a clear sense of purpose, needed more clearly defined aims, priorities and objectives, and needed to re-write school policies. In particular, the school needed a clear development plan. Overall there has been a good degree of progress in these areas. The school has focused strongly and successfully on improving standards of attainment and the quality of teaching and learning. Its school improvement plan has a particularly sharp focus on these matters, along with very pertinent aims to improve the school environment, to develop Trinity as a technology college, and to develop the spiritual and religious life of the school. Aspects of the plan, such as improvements to lesson structure, were seen on inspection to be having direct and very positive benefits on teaching and learning in the classroom. The plan is a comprehensive document, clearly costed and with clear success criteria to allow effective review. Heads of subject have been trained in development planning, so that most subject development plans are of a high quality and link directly into the school improvement plan. A good system of line management has been established to allow line managers to monitor the progress of departments against their development objectives; they meet at least once per term with heads of subject and these meetings provide good opportunities to share



views about development within departments. Such monitoring needs to include more formal observation of teaching and learning within departments. The school has produced sharper policies on, for example, behaviour and assessment; the behaviour policy in particular provides a very clear code of expectations and sanctions which is well understood by pupils and teachers. Overall, the monitoring of the school's effectiveness and action taken to improve are good.

90. The overall quality of the leadership and management of subjects is very good. It is outstanding in art and design; very good in geography, history, information and communication technology, modern foreign languages, music, and physical education; good in design and technology, mathematics and science, and satisfactory in English. Features of very good leadership and management within departments are the promotion of high standards through the monitoring of teaching and pupils' work, very effective planning of the curriculum and resources, and the building of effective teams of specialist teachers. Newly-appointed heads of subject in music and geography are making very significant improvements in the quality of provision, and a new head of department in English has recognised important areas for development, although there is a need to improve planning, assessment, and the monitoring of teaching in that subject. In science and design and technology, heads of subject have done a good job in keeping up standards in spite of severe staffing difficulties.
91. The special educational needs co-ordinator manages the support team very effectively. Statutory needs are met, and records are detailed and up to date. She provides helpful information for her team on the management of a range of needs, and clear information on the needs of each pupil who causes concern. She monitors the work of the team closely, and obtains detailed records of individual progress, as well as emerging concerns about pupils who have not yet been identified as having special educational needs. As a result the team provide very good support to the extent that subject teachers are not assuming sufficient responsibility for all of the pupils in their care. The recommendations of the revised code of practice for meeting special educational needs have not yet been put in place. There is no clear understanding that all teachers should adapt their methods and materials to meet the needs of all the pupils in their classes. The special educational needs co-ordinator does not monitor the effectiveness of the provision in classrooms where there is no specialist support. Nor is there a requirement for all teachers to identify appropriate targets within their subject for pupils with special educational needs, and to evaluate their effectiveness.
92. Communication and consultation across the school have shortcomings which have led to a breakdown in relationships between the school leadership and a significant proportion of parents. These parents feel that the leadership of the school has broken with the school's democratic principles in driving through the introduction of a particular dress code despite its decisive rejection by parents and pupils in earlier consultation exercises and at the governors' annual general meeting for parents. There is some confusion within the school community about the general direction it is taking; some feel that recent changes signal a move to create a more traditional school with more formal dress and a more authoritarian leadership style. At the inspectors' meeting with parents, and in written correspondence, a number of parents expressed disappointment that the controversial dress code changes marked a further shift away from the school's unique and cherished liberal traditions. They indicated that some teachers had adopted a confrontational approach in managing pupils' behaviour, including over dress standards, which also broke with a tradition of mutual respect between teachers and students. The principal's rationale in strengthening the dress code is sound; she wishes to avoid students coming to school in clothing which is dangerous, offensive, and which promotes youth sub-cultures outside that of the Catholic ethos of the school. During the limited time of the inspection, inspectors noted only one concern in this regard; over the safety of the dress worn by some pupils in

physical education. The manner with which the changes to the dress code have been introduced has not carried forward the school community, and created divisions in a school where relationships are mostly strong. A significant proportion of the parents who attended the meeting before the inspection and who completed the questionnaire consider that the school is not well led and managed.

93. Communications within the school have been made all the more difficult by the failure to recruit a deputy principal who could take some management responsibilities from a heavily-burdened and very hard-working principal and leadership group. Many key responsibilities, for example curriculum and staffing, fall directly to the principal. Other responsibilities are shared widely among senior managers and teachers who are not always given appropriate time to carry them out. There is, for example, no head of sixth form. Management of the sixth form is shared between two teachers with many other responsibilities. Development of assessment systems across the school is the responsibility of a heavily committed head of science. As a consequence, very appropriate policies to improve performance, while they are taken up with success in many areas, are not implemented with consistent effect across the school. For example, monitoring of teaching and learning has led to significant improvements in standards in mathematics, but the programme of monitoring has been interrupted because of the lack of a deputy head, when it would have benefited those subjects where teaching has not been as strong as elsewhere in the school. Effective policies which encourage teachers to use assessment to recognise the gains made by students in their learning have led to some very effective target setting in many subjects, but some weaknesses remain in English, history and physical education.
94. The governing body is effective in fulfilling its responsibilities. Governors have played an important role in making arrangements for the school to move onto one site, and when accomplished, this should secure significant improvements to the school by helping to overcome many of the present difficulties of organisation of the school day. They also provided strong advice and support to the school in gaining technology college status. In order to gain greater insight into the work of the school and into key issues, many governors are now linked to specific subjects; this, along with detailed reports to the governors by the principal on progress within subjects means that governors are very well informed about the academic strengths and weaknesses of the school. They ensure that statutory requirements for the curriculum are met, although there is a need to ensure that pupils' information and communication technology capability is reported in Year 11. Action has not been taken to address safety concerns over the monitoring of pupils' attendance and the lack of fencing around the school pond.
95. Some key decisions taken by governors have not been efficient because they have not taken sufficient account of the views of parents and pupils. Principles of best value have therefore not been applied adequately. Attempts to make important shifts in the culture and ethos of the school have not been sufficiently well researched and have not given adequate heed to the views of the community which the school serves. As a consequence of a change in admissions policy to increase the proportion of children from Catholic backgrounds, the school suffered a severe fall in numbers on roll with all of the associated difficulties of financial management and staff deployment that this entails. On the issue of introduction of a dress code, relationships, and the image of the school through the local media, have been damaged because of inadequacies in the consultation procedures undertaken with parents and others in the school. The fact that a clearly successful school is much smaller than it was and remains under-subscribed indicates that, in determining its future shape and direction, the school needs to build on and celebrate its current strengths with rather more confidence and certainty.
96. Financial planning and the strategic use of resources is good. The school has done well to move from a significant deficit at the time of the previous inspection to a

balanced budget now, despite having to manage its way through a period when pupil admissions, and therefore income, fell dramatically. The split site, with associated additional administrative costs and some duplication of resource provision, imposes further constraints on financial management. However, basic income per pupil is now above average, and the school has been successful in bringing down the proportion of costs of teachers, high at the last inspection, to average levels. This has allowed an improvement - to an average level - in the allocation of funds to be spent on learning resources. In addition, the school has used significant funding from other sources, such as technology college grant, capital grants from the diocese, and National Grid for Learning grants, well to make real improvements to the quality of accommodation and resources. The school is making particularly effective use of its technology college status to make real improvements in the quality of information and communication technology in subjects, in planning, and in links with partner schools.

97. Across the school as a whole, satisfactory use is being made of new technology. Computer resources have increased and are very well used in many areas of the curriculum, but there are shortcomings in art and design and science. Information and communication technology is not used well enough to monitor attendance.
98. Overall resources are satisfactory. A particular strength is the range of information and communication technology resources. The number of computers per pupil is well above the national average. At the Bishop Bright site there are four fully equipped information and communication technology rooms and a cyber café. However, access to information and communication technology resources varies between departments. Computer resources are good in mathematics which has 30 computers housed within the department but unsatisfactory in geography and modern foreign languages where there are no computer facilities. Geography provision also suffers from books and atlases that are old and in a poor state of repair and there is a lack of audio-visual facilities in modern foreign languages. In English there is a lack of texts about other cultures and traditions. Resources in music are inadequate when two large classes are taught simultaneously and there needs to be a greater range of music technology resources.
99. The libraries on both sites are used by a large number of pupils during lunchtime and after school. Pupils also use them individually and in classes during lesson time. The librarian has a clear vision of the role of the library in the school and has made significant improvement to the environment of the library on the Bishop Bright site. Spending on books is clearly related to the needs of the school curriculum. There is a computerised system for monitoring lending by individuals and groups of pupils. However many books are old and in a poor state of repair and there are limited information and communication technology resources such as CD-Roms.
100. Overall, there is an satisfactory match of the number, qualifications and experience of the teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum. The overall pupil to teacher ratio is better than average for comprehensive schools. On average, staff teach for a higher percentage of their time than their colleagues in similar schools. This, plus the difficulties of moving between two sites two miles apart, puts a considerable strain on staff to which they respond to with serious commitment. There has been a large turnover in staff in the last two years, reflecting the picture in many schools. In most areas of the curriculum, this has not had adverse effects on pupils' learning. Generally, the match of subject expertise to the teaching undertaken is good. There are no teachers teaching outside their specialism.
101. However, there are areas for concern in the staffing. Problems of recruitment and retention have led to difficulties in science and design and technology, subjects in which there are national difficulties in recruiting teachers. These subjects have had to

rely heavily on part-time and supply staff, with design and technology having only three full time staff out of eight. Although all staff are qualified in the subject, problems of organising good continuity and progression in the teaching are constraining learning. This is especially so in physics and food technology. There are also no foreign language assistants to support the learning in modern foreign languages.

102. The provision of educational support staff is satisfactory in supporting the needs of the curriculum. The 18 learning support staff are experienced, well qualified and give very good support to pupils with special educational needs. The school is well served by its administrative and clerical staff, who make an important contribution to its smooth running. Spending on these two areas is generous and above average compared with similar schools, mainly because of operating on two sites. The provision of technician support is satisfactory. It is very good in science and good in information and communication technology. However, there is no technician in art and design, and the design and technology department was awaiting the appointment of a new technician at the time of the inspection.
103. There are good procedures for the induction of newly qualified teachers and students in initial teacher training, organised by a senior member of staff. They include close mentoring by line managers, regular classroom observation and the appropriate written feedback. Teachers have the necessary lighter teaching loads. The newly qualified teachers have been very satisfied with the support given. There are also effective mentoring arrangements for newly appointed staff, including heads of department. Good improvement has been made to the programme of professional development of staff. Appropriate priority being given to ensuring training has been focused on those areas for development identified in the school development plan. Appraisal and performance management have been satisfactorily integrated into the overall staff development programme.
104. Accommodation is adequate, in that there is enough of it and for the most part teachers and pupils work through any deficiencies to make good progress. In modern foreign languages, accommodation is unsatisfactory as classrooms are poorly decorated, furnished and lit; there are similar but less severe weaknesses in accommodation for physical education. Generally, the standards of care and maintenance of classrooms and school grounds are unsatisfactory, with dirty conditions offering unpleasant working conditions and, in the case of the pond, giving rise to safety concerns. The new building programme for the single site should bring improvements in standards of accommodation, and the newly-built information and communication technology suites and cyber-café offer very good accommodation to that subject. On the Dormer site, accommodation for the GNVQ programmes is spacious, well-organised, and well-serviced with computers, telephone and office; and the theatre offers an exciting and flexible working space.
105. The Trinity Catholic Technology College is effectively led and managed. Standards rise through pupils' time in school and pupils achieve well because they are well taught. The socio-economic circumstances of the pupils are above average, and their standards of attainment on entry are average. Standards have risen above the national trend in recent years at all stages. When the starting points of the pupils, the achievements that they make and the way in which they are taught are weighed against the above average unit cost of their education, The Trinity Catholic Technology College is judged to give satisfactory value for money.

## **Sixth form**

### ***Leadership and management***

106. Leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory. The prolonged vacancy for a deputy headteacher has thrown taxing responsibilities for managing the sixth form onto two senior teachers who work well together, but whose other duties detract, to some extent, from their effectiveness. A weakness, for example, is the absence of any thorough overview of performance and trends that would help decisions on where to place resources. Monitoring departments to ensure they give consistently high quality advice on what students need to do to make greater progress is a further weakness. The dialogues with sixth formers about measures to improve sixth form provision need to be more regular and clearer. In the absence of a head of sixth form, there are therefore some shortcomings in strategic management of the area, but steps taken to raise standards are proving effective in many subjects, where management is of a high quality. Those teachers with current responsibilities for managing the sixth form additionally ensure that students are well supported in their choice of courses to study and in the progress they make in their programmes.

### **Resources**

107. Overall, resources in the sixth form are satisfactory. There are good resources in science where laboratories are well equipped and technicians provide good support. The mathematics department has 30 computers within the department.
108. Resources are also good for sixth form students following history courses who have a access to a wide range of text books which they can borrow. The head of history has also negotiated lending rights for students at the local university library and this is greatly valued. In art and design, sixth form students have a designated working area but limited access to computers. There are also insufficient information and communication technology resources in English and a lack of audio-visual facilities in modern foreign languages. However, all sixth form students have access to four fully equipped information and communication technology rooms and a cyber café.

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

109. In order to further improve standards, governors and senior management should:
- (1) Improve communications throughout the school by:
    - introducing a communications policy to ensure that the views of all groups within the school and wider community are taken into account before important steps are taken to change school policies and practices;
    - increasing senior management positions through the appointment of a deputy principal and a designated head of the sixth form;
    - improving delegation of management responsibilities to ensure that managers have appropriate time to develop new policies and monitor their implementation in the classroom; and to allow the principal more time to take a strategic overview of the work and direction of the school.  
(Paras: 65, 86, 92, 93, 95, 106)
  - (2) Reduce the proportion of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties being excluded from lessons and temporarily from school by:
    - improving the training of teachers in the revised Code of Practice for teaching and managing pupils with special educational needs, so that they are more aware of the need to set targets within their subjects for such pupils and to adapt their methods and materials appropriately;
    - ensuring that teachers across all subjects implement consistently school policies on managing the behaviour of such pupils, so that they are not sent out of some lessons with undue haste;

- ensuring that teachers are fully prepared and supported in receiving pupils with behavioural difficulties back into the classroom after a period of fixed term exclusion;
  - improving the monitoring of temporary exclusions to systematically include checks on the special needs of pupils being excluded, so that the school can review appropriately its support for these pupils.  
(Paras: 27, 28, 38, 71, 72, 73)
- (3) Improve systems for monitoring attendance by:
- ensuring that all teachers follow prescribed attendance procedures, especially where classes begin a session away from their tutor bases on a different site;
  - improving the speed with which tutors get information on pupil absences and with which the school follows up non-attendance;
  - monitoring the attendance of pupils daily, so that calls can be made to the homes of pupils with poor attendance records on the first day of absence;
  - further exploring information and communication technology solutions to the problems of exchanging attendance information between school sites.  
(Paras: 31, 69, 75)
- (4) Improve the general care and maintenance of the school buildings, rooms and grounds by:
- fully implementing provisions within the current development plan, especially with regard to standards of cleanliness, levels of litter, and the furnishing and redecoration of classrooms;
  - monitoring standards of cleanliness, and taking action as a priority to recruit a sufficient quantity of cleaners to enable specified standards to be met appropriately;
  - using fencing or other barriers judiciously to make the school pond safe, and to allow other features of the school grounds, such as banks and borders, to become well-established and to flourish.  
(Paras: 75, 91, 104)

### **Sixth form**

- (1) Improve management of the sixth form, by appointing a head of sixth form with responsibilities for an overview of sixth form performance and for analysing trends and allocating resources in that area.  
(Paras: 44, 80, 106)
- (2) Develop further the range of vocational courses on offer within the sixth form.  
(Para: 62)

In addition to the key issues above, the following minor issues should also be included in the governors' action plan:

- to further develop the use of computers for teaching and learning in all subjects.  
(Paras: 17, 140, 145, 147, 155, 162, 169)
- to assess and report on the progress of all pupils in information and communication technology in Years 10 and 11.  
(Paras: 77, 175)
- to require that all subjects in the sixth form set clear targets for student achievement and provide students with regular and clear information on progress against those targets.  
(Paras: 80, 232, 261)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	130
	Sixth form	54
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		184

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
<b>Years 7 – 11</b>							
Number	7	32	55	33	3	0	0
Percentage	6	25	42	25	2	0	0
<b>Sixth form</b>							
Number	4	24	18	8	0	0	0
Percentage	7	44	33	16	0	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	897	177
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	80	6

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	34	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	223	4

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	7

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	14
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	38



## Attendance

### Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.7
National comparative data	8.1

### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.6
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	79	100	179

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	45	53	60
	Girls	74	72	76
	Total	119	125	136
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	66 (62)	70 (63)	76 (66)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	31 (23)	39 (28)	39 (28)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	50	52	56
	Girls	87	78	75
	Total	137	130	131
Percentage of pupils	School	77 (70)	73 (77)	74 (71)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	40 (38)	39 (44)	31 (37)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	2001	88	86	174

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	37	78	84
	Girls	61	78	84
	Total	98	156	168

Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	56 (51)	90 (90)	86 (96)
	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	39.6 (37.6)
	National	39.0 (38.4)

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
	National	N/a

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

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	39	48	87
	Average point score per candidate	20.4 (N/a)	17.7 (6.0)	18.9 (6.0)
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9 (2.7)	18.0 (2.9)	17.5 (2.7)

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	39	48	87	0	0	0
	Average point score per candidate	20.4 (20.2)	17.7 (22.4)	18.9 (21.1)	N/a	N/a	N/a
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9 (17.1)	17.9 (18.0)	17.4 (17.6)	9.8 (10.2)	11.4 (11.3)	10.6 (10.8)

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

### Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	7
Black – African heritage	3
Black – other	3
Indian	6
Pakistani	3
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	1

### Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	2	1
Indian	0	1
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0

White	1045
Any other minority ethnic group	6

White	50	11
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

## Teachers and classes

### Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	65.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.4

### Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	30
Total aggregate hours worked per week	720

### Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	78
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### Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13

Key Stage 3	24.7
Key Stage 4	21.2

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	2,935,175
Total expenditure	2,908,907
Expenditure per pupil	2,763
Balance brought forward from previous year	93
Balance carried forward to next year	26,361

## Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	21.2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	21.4

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	2.3
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	-
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	2.3

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1,069
Number of questionnaires returned	198

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	42	46	9	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	39	46	9	2	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	18	61	8	2	12
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	18	57	19	4	3
The teaching is good.	22	61	7	3	8
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	21	42	26	7	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	43	39	11	4	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	41	52	3	2	3
The school works closely with parents.	15	48	18	16	3
The school is well led and managed.	18	44	16	15	8
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	42	42	8	4	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	21	38	18	6	17

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

### ENGLISH

Overall, provision for English is **satisfactory**.

#### Strengths

- Pupils attain above average standards at GCSE.
- Teachers have an excellent understanding of the literature they teach and this enables pupils to achieve well during Years 10 and 11.
- Pupils' mature attitudes and excellent relationships with teachers have a positive effect on their learning.

#### Areas for improvement

- Schemes of work and lesson planning, especially for Years 7, 8 and 9, do not ensure enough consistency in the teaching and learning of all pupils.
- Procedures for assessing pupils' work and progress in Years 7, 8 and 9 do not make pupils sufficiently aware of what they need to do to improve.
- There is not enough monitoring of teaching to share good practice and develop more variety of teaching methods.

110. Pupils' attainment in Year 9 National Curriculum tests in 2001 was above the national average and the average for similar schools. Results fluctuate from year to year. In 1999 they were well above average, fell below average in 2000, but improved last year. In GCSE English, the proportion of pupils gaining A\*-C grades in 2001 was above the national average and well above the average for similar schools. This is similar to results in recent years. In English literature, results were very high compared with the national average, but only one third of Year 11 pupils took the examination. In most years girls attain higher levels than boys and the difference is often greater than that found nationally. In 2001, this gap in attainment was particularly wide at GCSE.

111. Pupils achieve as well as expected in Years 7, 8 and 9. They enter the school in Year 7 with average attainment and make satisfactory progress so that they currently attain average standards overall in Year 9. Achievement is better during Years 10 and 11. Current standards of work in Year 11 are above average and show that these pupils have made good progress since their below average National Curriculum results in Year 9.

112. By the end of Year 9, pupils' speaking and listening skills are very good. Nearly all pupils speak confidently and clearly during class discussions. They listen attentively to the teacher and respond with interest to each other's ideas. One class gave formal talks in a balloon debate in which most pupils spoke standard English fluently and persuasively. They used emotive language to appeal to their audience and made good use of humour and eye contact to convince them of the importance of the celebrities they were representing. Pupils maintain an interest in reading because teachers require them to read silently at the start of lessons. Some read widely as a result, although they have insufficient opportunity to share their reading experiences. High attaining pupils can read extracts from Shakespeare texts, such as Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking scene, with good expression, but lower attainers lack confidence and read slowly and hesitantly. All pupils understand the plot and relationships between characters in texts that they read. Most can identify and name literary devices, but few can explain how writers use them for effect. Writing standards are average. High and average attaining pupils can write in a range of styles, such as those required for autobiographical accounts, diary entries, newspaper articles and publicity leaflets. Lower attaining pupils,

especially boys, need a lot of help to write at length. When teachers provide clear guidelines, such as writing frames, these pupils can structure their writing correctly, but many do not succeed because they have insufficient help to organise their ideas.

113. In Year 11, pupils' speaking and listening skills are particularly strong. The majority of pupils are able to express personal, well-founded views about set texts during class discussion. The most competent pupils have an easy command of a wide vocabulary that allows them to discuss literature with real insight. For example, pupils explained how Michele Roberts portrays the mother's anguish in the story *Your Shoes* by expressing her thoughts as a stream of consciousness. Many pupils continue to read quite widely. Nearly all have a good understanding of the social and historical background to the course texts. High and average attaining pupils develop good skills of analysis and make close reference to the text to back up their views, although the work of lower attaining pupils remains at a very descriptive level. Most pupils take care with their written work and make good use of their word-processing skills to present much of their course work very neatly. However, even some higher attaining pupils do not structure critical essays as clearly as they should. They often express appropriate views but do not always refer to the question sufficiently and do not summarise their ideas in a clear conclusion. Low attaining pupils have difficulty organising their written responses to set texts. For example, some of their writing about Conan Doyle's *The Speckled Band* and Dahl's *Lamb to the Slaughter* accurately described the events and characters. However, they were unable to compare the short stories because they did not know how to structure their essays.
114. Gifted pupils achieve well and the proportion of pupils who gain grades A\* and A at GCSE is well above average. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress over time and most achieve a GCSE pass in English. Classroom assistants often provide them with valuable support, although teachers do not always plan their lessons to make full use of this. For example, in some lessons, teachers lead class discussions for a long time, during which there is little opportunity for assistants to contribute. Pupils from minority ethnic groups also make good progress.
115. Pupils have very positive, mature attitudes to their work in English and, with occasional exceptions, behave very well. Teachers and pupils treat each other with mutual respect and trust. Pupils respond enthusiastically to frequent opportunities to discuss moral and social issues and to reflect on their beliefs. These excellent relationships and very good attitudes make an important, positive contribution to pupils' learning.
116. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, although there is some unsatisfactory teaching in the lower school. It is better in Years 10 and 11, mainly because teachers plan their lessons better and are more certain about what they want pupils to achieve. As a result, learning is satisfactory in Years 7,8 and 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. For example, in one very good English literature lesson in Year 10, the teacher outlined the purpose of the lesson on the whiteboard. She planned a good variety of class, pair and individual work, followed by challenging homework, before checking with pupils whether the lesson objectives had been achieved. As a result, all pupils understood that they could now analyse how Susan Hill uses language for effect in *I'm the King of the Castle*. By contrast, where teaching was unsatisfactory the class knew what they had to do but not precisely why. Pupils learned little because the lesson lacked structure and the teacher did not explain how they should try to use techniques such as metaphor in their poems. Teachers manage classes well, especially during class discussions, when they ensure that pupils listen carefully and take their turn in contributing. They have a very secure knowledge of the texts that pupils are studying and this enables them to ask incisive questions, to build on points that pupils make and further extend the understanding of even the highest attaining pupils. However, teachers place too much emphasis on whole class discussion and do not use a

sufficient variety of teaching methods. At times, this reduces the opportunity for pupils to develop a personal response to texts before they hear the teacher's own views. Occasionally, less forthcoming, lower attaining pupils are not involved in the discussion. Teachers do not provide sufficient resources to help these pupils to structure their ideas, either in writing or discussion. Teachers make good use of homework to encourage pupils to build on the work that they have done in class, but the marking of pupils' work is inconsistent. Many teachers write good, supportive comments on pupils' work, especially in Years 10 and 11, which results in pupils re-drafting and improving the standard of their work. Some write targets for pupils when they mark work, but these are rarely followed up and corrections are not checked regularly.

117. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. The English department has maintained the examination results that were reported previously, with results improving in line with the national rate. The quality of teaching and learning has also been maintained. However, schemes of work are still in need of development. Teachers write their own schemes of work and this leads to inconsistency in the quality of teaching and content of lessons for different classes. Some teachers, especially those who have recently joined the department, have difficulty in planning their work to meet requirements for teaching drama and information and communications technology in English. The implementation of the new framework for teaching English is also inconsistent and some teachers are unsure about how to plan their teaching of the literacy strategy.
118. Leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. The existing development plan does not set clear enough targets but a new head of department has begun to identify important areas for development. Among these is the need to monitor teaching and schemes of work more closely to ensure greater consistency. The assessment of pupils' work also lacks consistency. As a result, pupils are not sufficiently aware of what they have to do to improve their work and reach a higher National Curriculum level, or a better grade at GCSE. All teachers in the English department work hard to support each other and share ideas, despite the need to work on two sites. The department does not have an office or sufficient storage space for its resources and this has hampered teachers' attempts to work as a team and share resources efficiently. A new office is nearing completion, which will ease the difficulties of communication.

## Drama

119. All pupils study drama in Year 7 for half of the year. It is now a popular option in Years 10 and 11 and the number of pupils studying the subject for GCSE has increased from nine in 2001 to 20 in the present year.
120. Most pupils develop real enthusiasm for the subject in Year 7. They are attentive and concentrate hard to develop their skills and techniques. One class was so engrossed in a lesson in which they had to mime shows that they had seen on television that they continued to work in complete silence for 30 minutes! Many portrayed the movement of machinery precisely and accurately, followed by realistic, amusing mimes of scenes from *Blind Date* and *A Nightmare on Elm Street*. Current staffing levels for drama mean that the school cannot offer drama to pupils in Years 8 and 9. This prevents the department from building on the obvious enthusiasm that is created in Year 7.
121. GCSE results in 2001 were in line with the national average, although only nine pupils studied the subject. Standards of performance of current Year 11 pupils are well above average. During the inspection they practised scenes from Martin Riley's adaptation of Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, in preparation for a forthcoming public performance



and assessment. They showed very good skills of interpreting the script. Most made good use of both voice and movement to portray such diverse characters as Chauntecleer in *The Nun's Priest's Tale* and medieval hooligans in *The Pardoner's Tale*. Pupils who were not performing directed scenes with sensitivity and awareness. Others had a good understanding of the need to match costumes and masks to the historical period.

122. The quality of teaching is very good and enables pupils to achieve very well. The teacher plans lessons well and leads pupils logically from one activity to the next. Very good class management ensures that all pupils concentrate well and make the most of the available time. In Year 11 the teacher achieves a good balance between instruction and encouraging pupils to become independent learners. As a result, most GCSE pupils are able to take responsibility for their own learning and constantly evaluate and improve their own performances, with advice from the teacher when necessary.
123. Drama makes an important contribution to the curriculum, which is further enhanced by the extra activities organised by the department. Regular theatre visits and a variety of productions, such as the forthcoming *Bugsy Malone*, provide valuable additional experience for pupils.

## MATHEMATICS

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

### Strengths

- Standards are improving by the end of Year 9.
- There is good teaching by an experienced teaching staff.
- Computers are used particularly well in Year 7 to improve the numeracy of all pupils.
- Pupils are good independent learners, and relationships are extremely good between pupils and with their teachers.

### Areas for improvement

- There are some general weaknesses in pupils' knowledge and understanding, such as mental and written calculations with decimals by Year 9, and algebraic processing by Year 11.
- Attainment at higher levels has not been strong enough in the Year 9 tests and in the proportion of pupils getting A and A\* grades and A\*-C grades at GCSE.
- There is insufficient curriculum time for mathematics.

124. Standards of attainment of pupils in mathematics at the end of Year 9 in 2001 showed considerable improvement over previous years and were close to national averages. There was no significant difference in attainment of boys and girls. The percentage of pupils gaining Level 6 or above was higher than in recent years but still below national averages, results being heavily concentrated at National Curriculum Level 5. Compared to similar schools the average points score in mathematics was below average.
125. For pupils at the end of Year 11 the percentage gaining GCSE grades A\*-C was in 2001 the lowest for several years, though in line with the school's predictions based on the pupils' performance at Year 9. Girls' results were above national averages, boys' results were significantly below. Compared to their performance in other GCSE subjects the results in mathematics for both boys and girls were nearly a whole grade lower, indicating under-achievement. The number of A-A\* grades was low, as it has been for several years. Results for grades A\*-G were close to national averages. Some lower-attaining pupils gained a certificate of achievement in place of entering GCSE.
126. At Year 7 intake there is a broad range of ability, but overall attainment is in line with national averages. By the end of Year 9 most pupils are attaining in line with

expectations. Achievement is satisfactory. In the past, fewer higher grades have been attained than would be expected in the Year 9 tests, but evidence indicates rising standards, with more pupils aiming for the higher levels in the tests. Pupils at this stage are confident in numeric work, data handling, transformation geometry, determination of areas and volumes, and use of Pythagoras. Analysis of pupils' work, and evidence from the test papers Year 9 pupils were undertaking during the inspection, suggests that there are general weaknesses in decimal calculations and in algebraic understanding such as the construction and use of formulae.

127. By the end of Year 11, overall attainment is now in line with that expected in schools nationally, and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Many pupils are well motivated and show good application to study, but weaknesses in their work, often due to earlier deficiencies in their learning, are apparent. For example there was much evidence of attempts to write down answers to questions without showing key stages of calculation – essential in examinations for award of method marks, and important training for post-16 studies. Algebraic processing is often poorly understood, even by higher-attaining pupils, as evidenced in a Year 11 lesson on quadratics where difficulties were encountered in solving even the simpler equations. A Year 10 lower-attaining class made good progress on a worksheet on transformations though, and a Year 11 lower-attaining class also progressed well using indices and standard form. Coursework in most cases is well presented with some very good understanding of the nature of the task, clear interpretation of the problem, good diagrams, and good attempts to formulate conclusions. Some pupils are capable of attaining the highest grades; they perform well in assignments and on trigonometric and spatial work. Shortage of course time continues to constrain standards reached. Curricular changes have now enabled tiered groups to be formed, targeting as appropriate higher, intermediate or foundation GCSE levels. This is leading to an improvement in standards, in spite of the below-average end of Year 9 results achieved in 2000 by the current Year 11 cohort.
128. Teaching and learning are good overall. Teaching of years 7 to 9 is good, with pupils in Year 7 especially stimulated by the variety of teaching activities taking place, and in Years 10 and 11 the teaching is satisfactory. Until recently pupils were taught in mixed-ability classes, but the introduction of paired classes in each of years 7 to 9 and tiered groups in most of years 10 and 11 now enables some measure of setting and provides sharper focus to teaching of each end of the ability range. Curriculum provision of just two 70-minute periods per week, less time than national recommendations, inhibits progress. Lower-attaining pupils can receive extra help beyond lessons and an enrichment session is available for some higher-attaining pupils. The successful introduction of a computer learning program for all pupils is enhancing numeracy skills in Year 7.
129. Most Year 7 lessons adopt a three-part structure, providing variety and maintaining pupil interest and involvement. With the paired class format each group does similar work but at different speeds and depth as in, for example, lessons observed on equivalent fractions, and pupils learn well as a result. An initial starter activity is followed by introduction of the focus topic. The class then splits into two groups, one pursuing work on this topic, the other using the computer package - they then switch over. This structure helps to make pupils keen and willing to learn; they apply themselves diligently to tasks, and enjoy greatly the computer work. This is geared to enhancing numeracy skills and benefits are evident, with many proceeding beyond basic number work to achieve success on problem questions and on directed numbers. Lower-attaining pupils, some supported by classroom assistants, can work at a slower pace, and they gain confidence as they learn and make good progress.
130. Teachers have a very good rapport with pupils and very positive relationships exist within the classroom. Pupils are encouraged to achieve through the mixture of effective teaching, gentle humour and individual support, though pupils receive insufficient

structured notes on how to set out calculations. There is good assistance from support staff for pupils with learning difficulties and other special educational needs, both within lessons themselves and through withdrawal for more individualised attention. Within some lessons further sub-grouping could ease demands on the teacher when giving instruction, so assisting learning, especially where pupils are pursuing a variety of tasks. The willingness of teachers to provide extra tuition at lunchtimes and after school is commendable and appreciated, even extending to part of half-term and in the Easter holidays for revision sessions. Marking of written exercises is done primarily by the pupils themselves, using prepared answer sheets, and teachers oversee and correct the work, and deal with misunderstandings. Overall marking by teachers is well done with supportive comments, but too much homework is left incomplete. There was no noticeable difference in the learning of boys and of girls.

131. Pupils appreciate the additional learning opportunities provided, such as the enrichment class for higher-attaining Year 9 pupils, the 'Mathematics Club' for lower-attaining Year 7 pupils, and the recently introduced Year 10 session for GCSE statistics.
132. There has been mixed progress in addressing comments made in the previous inspection report. The issue of long periods remains, but the projected move of the school to one site could alleviate this. Older pupils still have insecurity in understanding past work, such as algebraic processing; this is an effect of widespread use of workcards in the former course structure and lack of reinforcement of key ideas. Numerical competence though is now sound, and younger pupils in particular build well on former knowledge and make good progress in lessons. Improved resources have enabled greater variety in lessons. Homework has better links to classwork, but completion of homework remains an issue for a small proportion of pupils.
133. Leadership and management are good. The department is unusual in having two heads of subject, an arrangement that works effectively; there is a clear agreed division of responsibilities as well as combined decision-making. Technology college status, together with a bequest to the department, has precipitated significant developments and improvement in resources. In addition to the replacement of much textbook stock, two mathematics classrooms now each have 15 computers installed, providing variety in lessons and facilities for other computer work. Departmental accommodation varies in quality, some rooms and furniture being shabby and in poor condition. Some very good and extensive wall displays of pupil's work on, for instance, fractals, number patterns, graphs, mappings and coordinates improve the working environment.
134. Schemes of work, policy statements, and improvement plans are detailed. The link between use of texts, topic packs and other resources is particularly clear for Years 7 to 9, though the carousel pattern of topics makes whole year group assessment difficult until end-of-year examinations are taken. Records of attainment are being systematically collated and assessment records made available to teachers, and monitoring of performance is an improving area. Department staff are well supported and valued and with their combined experience and enthusiasm standards should rise. The department is well placed to implement the improvements.

## SCIENCE

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

### Strengths

- Standards are improving at the end of Year 9 and at the end of Year 11.
- Good teaching, with particular strengths in the management of pupils, lesson planning and subject knowledge and understanding.
- Pupils have positive attitudes towards learning.
- Pupils' skills in practical work and in aspects of literacy are good.
- The quality of technical support is high.

### Areas for improvement

- Standards reached by the most competent pupils, particularly boys, in Year 10 and Year 11, are not high enough.
- The organisation of the timetable, and setting arrangements dictated by other subjects, constrain standards.
- Staff absence and turnover has been high and has disrupted continuity in pupils' learning.
- There is not enough monitoring of teaching, pupils' work, marking and homework to share good practice among teachers.
- There is not enough use of computers.

136. Pupils' attainment in science on entry in Year 7 is above average overall, but below average at the higher levels of performance. By the end of Year 9 in national tests in 2001, pupils, including those who are the most competent, performed at a level that was above the average. When compared with the performance of pupils in similar schools, the standard reached was also above average. Since the last inspection there has been no overall difference in the performances of boys and girls, however, in recent years boys have shown a continuing improvement, especially in 2001. Overall, standards in science in recent years have risen faster than the national trend. Standards reached in 2001 were comparable to those in English and better than those in mathematics.

137. GCSE results for the double award science examination in 2001 were significantly above the national average for the subject. About three pupils in five reached the higher grades (A\*-C), whilst nationally one in two reached the same grades. This was a large rise compared with the years since the last inspection when the (A\*-C) grades were consistently similar and closer to the national averages. However, compared with other subjects taken by the pupils in 2001, the full range of grades (A\*-G) in science were well below the school's average. In the double award science examination in 2001, all pupils were successful within the full range of grades. This was better than the national picture. At the highest grade (A\*) pupils' performance, particularly the boys, was well below the national figure and there is scope for improvement. Overall, since the last inspection the standards reached by girls and boys have been similar, but in 2001 the performance of girls was much better than that of the boys. The smaller number of pupils entered for the single award science GCSE in 2001 reached a level which was below the national average for the higher grades (A\*-C) but was in line with national figures for the full range of grades (A\*-G). The number of pupils following the single science course is declining at the same time as overall standards in science are rising.

138. Pupils' attainment is above average at all stages. Their achievement, including those with special educational needs, and the progress they make in learning from Year 7 to Year 11, is good. This results from a combination of factors that include good teaching, the use of individual pupil and subject targets and pupils' positive attitudes towards learning. Pupils' achievement in science is helped by their strong skills in the uses of literacy - especially oracy - and, as reported at the last inspection, their practical skills. The youngest pupils use and apply the principal of fair testing correctly, whilst pupils in Year 10 and Year 11 understand well the nature of scientific enquiry and are able to control variables and give appropriate explanations for the differences between cause and effect. Pupils' safe use and respect for materials and equipment is good. They

build upon and extend their use of manipulative skills. By the end of Year 11, for example, pupils use microscopes effectively to develop their observational skills, weigh accurately and measure temperature correctly. They understand the limitations of the equipment they use. Except for a few lower attainers, other pupils have good skills in numeracy which they transfer successfully to help extend their knowledge and understanding. Skills in drawing and interpreting graphs are good, and average and more able pupils independently carry out calculations involving relationships between two variables, for example density and velocity, correctly. However, without a numeracy policy for the school, teachers are not sure when the use of number in science matches the pupils' development in mathematics.

139. Good teaching methods help the youngest pupils, and older lowest attainers, to visualise demanding ideas in science. For example, in a Year 11 lesson for the lowest set, pupils were greatly helped to understand the rotation of the earth on its axis to form night, day and time zones by the help of a suitably modified model of the earth. The most able pupils in Year 9 to Year 11 have less difficulty in understanding scientific ideas. They translate concrete evidence to a theoretical level and make predictions and deductions from abstract ideas. Lower attainers in Year 9 find difficulties in understanding the relationship between elements, compounds and mixtures. In one lesson, examples were placed around the laboratory for observation. Skilful teaching drew together similarities and differences and, by the end of the lesson, pupils had made very good progress and were able to identify and name elements and compounds within mixtures. Pupils use scientific language appropriately and correctly. Year 7 pupils following a unit on human reproduction were quick to use the specific technical language in discussion with the class and teacher. Generally pupils show a good level of personal organisation, report writing and pride in the presentation of their work. However, in some classes notebooks reflect the lack of continuity resulting from the frequent change of teacher due to absence or promotion.
140. Overall teaching and learning are good and never less than satisfactory. About one in four lessons observed were very good or better. In these lessons, teachers showed originality in the methods they used and also a good understanding of the difficulties in learning faced by some pupils. Strengths in the teaching included effective lesson planning in which clearly defined objectives were shared with the pupils at the beginning of a lesson and used as points of reference throughout the lesson to monitor understanding and progress. This recently introduced strategy was proving successful in raising levels of achievement. Teachers had a secure knowledge and understanding of the subject content which they used to good effect when asking questions, giving explanations, answering responses and assessing pupils' progress in learning. Learning was purposeful because teachers' laboratory management was well assisted by the pupils' positive attitudes, which included interest, application and concentration. Individual targets set by teachers were better understood by Year 10 and Year 11 pupils to assist their learning. Pupils' work shows that pupils do not use computers widely as an additional tool for learning science. This appears to be due to the demand upon the school's facilities by all subjects and as a result further opportunities for extending learning are being lost.
141. Leadership is good overall. The effective management of the department is less successful because of the challenges posed by the nature of the split site and, since the last inspection, the changes in the staffing, the re-structuring of departmental responsibilities and an extraordinary number of staffing vacancies and absences. The management of issues related to staffing has been accomplished with great difficulty and all efforts have been explored to minimise the disruptive effects upon pupils' learning. The monitoring of the teaching and other important areas such as marking, homework and pupils' work have been neglected. Some success is shown in the improving standards throughout the school and these are being accomplished through

close teamwork and the enthusiasm of staff. The support given by experienced technicians has played a significant part in minimising the challenges that have faced the department. In spite of these impediments the department has successfully engaged in change to meet the requirements for technology college status. Liaison with primary contributory schools is developing and a thorough and well-conceived department development plan shows clearly the directions the department will move in the next few years providing that the present constraints are removed. Whilst the subject meets the statutory requirements, there are constraints arising from the timetabling and these are conflicting with the raising of standards further. Some pupils have excessive teaching of science on some days and there is an unbalanced curriculum for pupils following single award science courses.

142. The department has made good improvement since the last inspection. Standards are improving overall, and teaching and learning are still good. There remains, however, more to do on the use of information and communication technology as an aid to learning.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

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

### **Strengths**

- Teaching and learning are excellent in Years 10 and 11.
- Standards in GCSE examinations are significantly above the national average.
- The subject is very well led.
- Use of sketch books for research and development in Years 10 and 11 is excellent.

### **Areas for improvement**

- Information and communication technology is underused in Years 7 to 9.
- Insufficient use is made of working with clay for three-dimensional study.

143. The proportion of pupils at the age of 16 gaining higher grades A\*-C in GCSE examinations in 2001 was well above the national average. The trends of high attainment in recent years have been maintained in GCSE examinations. Girls' results were outstanding with over 90 per cent achieving A\*-C. Almost 50 per cent of pupils achieved A\* or A grades. Although boys perform less well than girls at the higher grades, their scores are still well above national averages.

144. Standards of work seen during the inspection were above average in Years 7 to 9 with no significant difference between boys and girls. Teacher assessments show attainment at the age of 14 to be above the national expectation, with most pupils achieving Level 5 or above at the end of the key stage. These standards are achieved as a result of good teaching with well-planned lessons which integrate theory and practical work well. Pupils' attitudes to learning are very positive. They are perceptive in direct observation and understand three-dimensional concepts. Work shows greater perceptual depth when pupils use first-hand observation as a basis for study. Pupils use visual information well to explore ideas, including images from different historical and cultural contexts. Both boys and girls in Years 7 to 9 with special educational needs achieve well, benefiting from much individual attention.

145. In a Year 9 lesson on the study of the human face, pupils showed the ability to arrange shapes well and had a good understanding of spatial layout; here good numeracy skills were being used to analyse basic proportions. The department is committed to improving standards of literacy and teachers make very good use of key words and annotation in sketch books. Little evidence was seen of the creative use of information and communication technology.

146. By the time pupils are 16, much of the work seen is well above the standard expected; pupils can develop and sustain a chosen theme in their work. They demonstrate personal interests, ideas and responses to important movements in art and design or particular artists. Excellent sketchbooks are used most effectively and technical language develops well. In a Year 10 lesson pupils were able to speak confidently about their work and demonstrated good knowledge and understanding of linear perspective and use of tone. Work from direct observational studies of man-made objects was being developed well. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are excellent. This is a direct result of the high expectations and enthusiasm that teachers bring to their work. Pupils thoroughly enjoy their lessons in art and design and are very eager to explain their work to classmates and visitors alike. There is a most effective working ethos and pupils do their best and apply themselves purposefully to their work.
147. The quality of teaching and learning is always good in Years 7 to 9, and mostly excellent in Years 10 and 11. The difference between the year groups is mostly explained by teachers using a greater range of teaching strategies with smaller group sizes in Years 10 and 11 lessons. Teachers use their excellent knowledge and expertise to very good effect and plan their lessons to meet individual requirements. The use of clear introductions to lessons and time spent reviewing and re-enforcing the work of the previous lesson enables pupils to build upon prior learning. Information and communication technology is used as a research tool, but its full potential as a learning aid has not yet been fully developed. Teachers make very good use of praise to encourage the participation of pupils of all abilities and good use of question and answer ensures that all pupils are actively involved. From direct observational study pupils demonstrated excellent skills in drawing, painting, mixed media and photography. In a Year 7 lesson on textural surfaces, the teacher showed the class a good example of the use of mixed media for interpreting the studies of natural forms as a starting point. The pupils fully understood the processes involved and that recording information can be in any media. In a Year 8 lesson pupils were working from direct observation when considering surface decoration for their architectural construction. Learning objectives were made very clear at the start of the lesson and pupils were able to use materials confidently and effectively to interpret different architectural styles. In a Year 11 lesson, where pupils were researching topics for the GCSE examination, excellent connections were made by the teacher between the investigation procedures at the scene of a crime and the gathering of information for examination work. A room was created and a video was shown of a small extract from a crime film. Critical and historical references were made and pupils' response was excellent. Well-structured homework is in place in Years 7 to 9 and it is used well in Years 10 and 11 to support project work. Well-constructed assessment activities make a significant contribution to the development and progress of pupils' work by identifying strengths and weaknesses.
148. An enthusiastic and dedicated teaching team is led by an inspirational and astute head of department. Teaching schemes and departmental policies are clear and provide very good guidance for staff. Departmental meetings are used well to share ideas and good practice. Teachers bring a broad and varied range of expertise to the subject, including photography. The head of department monitors effectively the work of the department through classroom observations and work sampling. Assessment is most effective and informs curriculum planning. Insufficient use is made of working with clay for three-dimensional study. The stocks of reference materials held within the department are good. Extra-curricular visits to galleries and museums have a marked effect upon the quality and range of pupils' work. Plans to reintroduce an artist-in-residence programme should further broaden the experiences of pupils. Improvements since the last inspection have been very good as a direct result of very good teaching and clear leadership within the department. Assessment procedures have been refined to ensure pupils have systematic opportunities to discuss their achievements and to set targets

for future development more effectively. Art history connections and research have moved forward in both key stages, but in particular Years 7 to 9. Year 7 work is now more structured and challenges pupils who now work from direct observation and no longer rely heavily on secondary sources. Teachers' planning ensures that pupils make progress at all stages.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Provision for design and technology is good.

### Strengths

- Teaching is good overall.
- GCSE results have been good.
- Leadership and management are good, with clear documentation outlining policies and practices for the subject and a detailed analysis of subject performance.
- Planning for future development in the subject is good.

### Areas for improvement.

- Not enough use is made of computers for computer control work in Years 7-9 and computer-aided design and manufacture at all stages.
- The quality of marking is not consistently high across all areas of the department where classes are taught by supply teachers.
- The provision of alternative courses for those in Years 10 and 11 who are unlikely to see their full GCSE courses through to completion is inadequate.

149. Standards of work in Year 9 are above the national average for girls and in line with the national average for boys as reflected in the recent teacher assessments. A good proportion of pupils achieve National Curriculum Level 6 which represents very good progress from Year 7 to Year 9 from a varied level of experience on entry. Pupils can use a range of hand and power equipment safely and confidently. Good and very good work is seen in all areas of the department, such as in a Year 7 resistant materials project where scale drawings and self-assessment are used to good effect to improve the quality of pupils' work. Good standards of practical work were shown by Year 7 and 8 pupils as they were able to cut, file and drill with accuracy in game board and clock projects. Good product development was seen in a pendant project, and pupils completed very thorough research in a desk tidy project in Year 9 where good use of colour and annotated drawings were used to develop ideas. Where the work is weaker it is mainly due to poorer line quality, limited range of research ideas, and weaker presentational skills, both graphical and written. There are spelling errors in work across the ability range. Practical work is usually of a good standard resulting from the exploration and problem solving approach adopted by the department.

150. In the 2001 GCSE examinations, results were well above average for girls and above average for boys. This shows an improvement over the 2000 results overall. The proportion of pupils who take the full examination in the school is, however, well below the national average. The short course results are below the national average for A\*-C and A\*-G grades and follows the trend in 2000. Indications are that performance is likely to improve in the short course and work seen is of a satisfactory standard overall.

151. Standards of work seen in Year 11 are above the national average overall. Good and very good work is seen in all areas. Achievement is good and often very good, as seen in a Year 11 textiles project where ergonomic and anthropometric considerations were investigated in a dress design for a special occasion. Good analysis and research into existing products was undertaken in a resistant materials project for cutlery storage, and card models were made accurately in a watch project in Year 10. These activities, and pupils' good design folders make good use of computers and effective use of



colour to improve presentation. Where the work is weaker it is mainly due to lack of depth in research, weak handwriting, work not complete or evaluations which are limited in expression. Practical work is usually of a good or very good standard.

152. Pupils with learning difficulties are well supported by the class teacher and assistants, when present, and those pupils with behavioural difficulties are well managed. All pupils integrate well. Higher attainers are not always fully challenged in some areas and lower attainers can find some design tasks difficult.
153. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, with a high proportion of satisfactory teaching to Years 7-9 and some very good teaching to Years 10 and 11. In the better lessons learning is increased and good progress made because of the good pace of the lessons, effective teaching strategies used, good planning and use of resources and good pupil management. Satisfactory lessons have many positive features but can lack real pace; pupils are not suitably challenged and pupil management is unsure, resulting in pupils being off task or not paying attention. Current staffing shortages have been well-managed by the head of department and are in the process of being partly resolved, but have broken the continuity of learning for some pupils. Overall standards, however, have not been adversely affected and pupils make progress in most lessons.
154. Pupil attitudes are usually good. They work well together and respond positively when suitably challenged. There are instances of inattention and inappropriate behaviour where pupils are slow to respond to teacher requests for attention or when asked to work in a particular way. Relationships are usually good overall and pupils work in the department out of school hours when staff give of their time generously.
155. Leadership and management are good. Documentation is well prepared and helpful to teachers. Monitoring of pupil progress and of teaching takes place but the quality of marking is not consistently good across all areas of the department. Assessment procedures are, however, good and pupils are aware of their national curriculum levels and target grades. While computer control is covered in theory lessons and in discrete information and communication technology lessons, not enough practical computer control work is undertaken in design and technology in Years 7-9 at present. Pupils do not make enough use of computer-aided design and manufacture to improve the quality of their work. Given the high proportion of pupils who do not take the full GCSE examination and below average results on the short course, the department needs to review the courses on offer in Years 10 and 11 to ensure that they meet the needs of all pupils.
156. Accommodation is satisfactory overall and good in food technology. Display of work is good and best use is made of some awkward work areas. The area is in need of general upgrading and replenishment of some tools and equipment is needed. There was no technician to help in the resistant materials area at the time of the inspection and this placed a significant burden on teachers in organising practical work. However, a technician is due to be appointed to replace the one who left shortly before the inspection.
157. Improvements since the last inspection have been good and include improvements in GCSE performance, a new food technology room, new schemes of work in Years 7-9, better facilities for computer-aided design and manufacture, and some improvement in resources designed for pupils of different attainment levels, although this last area still needs further attention.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

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

#### Strengths

- The good, and frequently very good, teaching in all year groups results in pupils developing good enquiry skills.
- Very good relationships mean that pupils are confident to ask their teachers questions and so make very good gains in their learning.
- Very good leadership by the new head of department who leads by example.

#### Areas for improvement

- Insufficient use is made of computers to support the teaching of geography.
- There are not enough resources to support the delivery of the new scheme of work being developed for Years 7–9.

158. GCSE results in 2001 were below the national average in terms of passes at grades A\*-C. This is worse than at the time of the last inspection when standards were in line with the national average. In the years 1999 and 2000 GCSE results were well above the national average. The dip in standards in 2001 was due to a staffing problem. This issue has now been addressed. Girls attained higher grades than boys did in 2001. Inspection evidence indicates attainment for the current Year 11 pupils is broadly in line with the national average.
159. By Year 9, the attainment of the majority of pupils is above the national age-related expectations. Their knowledge of physical processes, such as coastal erosion and deposition, is much better than at the time of the last inspection. They have well developed enquiry skills and are able to extract relevant information from a range of resources. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. Research activities were particularly effective in the Year 9 project work on an enquiry into the cause and effect of destruction of the tropical rainforest. Pupils in Year 9 can draw graphs to summarise statistical data on population growth. Their knowledge of Japan is above that expected of pupils of their age. Their development of their critical thinking and analytical skills through their geographical investigations is significantly better than at the time of the last inspection.
160. The majority of pupils in Year 11 attain standards in line with the national average. Pupils in Year 10 attain standards above what are expected for pupils of their age. Most Year 11 pupils produce good coursework, but a few disaffected pupils in this year group have fallen behind with their work. These pupils have been carefully targeted and there is a range of strategies to support them. Borderline grade C/D pupils are well supported. Year 10 pupils are better grounded in fieldwork methods, including the gathering and analysis of data to test hypotheses. They have a good knowledge of urban models. Their knowledge and understanding of glacial features and their skill in locating a truncated spur and a ribbon lake on a map are good.
161. Pupils have a very positive attitude to learning. Their very good behaviour in lessons contributes significantly to the very good gains they make in their knowledge and understanding. They work collaboratively when required and help one another, as was observed in a Year 8 lesson on the causes of flooding. They listen attentively, as in the Year 9 lesson when pupils watched a stimulating video on Japan and so gained a very good understanding about life in that country. Because of the emphasis on developing pupils' spiritual and moral development, pupils produce some very moving pieces of work. In a Year 9 project on the rainforests one pupil wrote, 'Only when the last tree died and the last river has been poisoned will we realise that we cannot eat money'.
162. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Very good teaching was seen frequently, and mainly in Years 8 and 9. Teachers' very good subject knowledge

enables pupils to make very good gains in their learning of facts and understanding of geographical concepts. The cracking pace of the teaching and the interesting range of resources motivate pupils to learn, as shown in the Year 7 lesson on different types of shoppers. The best teaching challenges pupils in their thinking, as seen in the Year 10 lesson on different types of settlement which resulted in an in-depth understanding on the part of pupils as to why different types of settlement developed in the way in which they did. The quality of teaching for pupils with special educational needs is good. The use of writing frames contributes significantly to pupils' confident development of writing skills. Teachers use the correct geographical terms to support the development of pupils listening and speaking skills. The only weakness in some teaching and learning is the lack of use of computers to develop pupils' research, writing, and data processing skills. Very good relationships empower pupils to ask questions of their teachers and so make very good gains in their learning. Standards of achievement across the school are good because of the demanding teaching.

163. The department is well managed by a new head of department. The priorities on the departmental development plan focus on making teaching and learning fun. The newly developed scheme of work for Years 7–9 is very good but the department does not yet have sufficient books and materials to implement the scheme fully. Good use is made of assessment to inform planning and to raise standards further. The new head of department has not yet had the opportunity to monitor teaching and learning and the school recognises the importance of enabling her to monitor the teaching of the subject and of sharing good practice across the department. Overall, however, there have been significant improvements in standards of attainment and in the quality of teaching and learning since the previous report.

## HISTORY

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

### Strengths

- Good quality teaching, based on stimulating activities and high expectations, leads to good learning.
- GCSE results are consistently well above the national average.
- Pupils achieve very well at both key stages in developing a good understanding of key concepts of the past and very good skills of research and writing.
- The department is very well led and considerable improvements have taken place since the last inspection.
- Pupils are very well motivated, enthusiastic about their work and have a very good relationship with their teachers.

### Areas for improvement

- Assessment results in Years 7 to 9 are not sufficiently well-used to work out the value added to pupils' attainment so that their progress can be more accurately monitored and responded to.
- Computers are not used systematically enough to enrich lessons and further develop history skills.
- Classroom observation is not used enough by teachers to share the good practice that exists in the department.

164. GCSE results in 2001 were well above the national average as indicated by the average points score and the proportion of pupils attaining A\*-C grades. All pupils passed. These high standards have been consistently maintained for the last three years and history has been one of the best performing subjects in the school. During this time, there has been no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. However, at the very highest grades of A\*-A in 2001 girls did better than boys and much

higher than girls nationally. Overall, this represents good achievement compared with pupils' attainment at the end of Year 9. It is largely due to close monitoring of students' progress, the strong student motivation and successfully building upon the sound skills of enquiry and source analysis developed by Year 9. This is an improvement compared with the last report.

165. Standards in work seen by the end of Year 9 are well above the national average. Students achieve very well in relation to their attainment on entry in Year 7, which was average in terms of their history skills. Boys perform as well as girls. This judgement broadly matches the proportion of students attaining National Curriculum Level 5 and above in teachers' assessments for 2001. Pupils also attained well above the national average at the higher grades of Level 6 and above, although girls did better than boys. There has been an upward trend of improvement in standards since the last inspection.
166. By the end of Year 9, pupils of all abilities have a good knowledge and understanding of key events and chronology. They have particularly good skills of enquiry and recording of evidence from different sources. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs, are helped to write by well-structured guidance, including starter sentences, and resources which match their learning needs, though this needs further development. Pupils develop very good skills of interpreting and analysing evidence and events. For instance, Year 8 pupils produced balanced arguments in explaining why Henry VIII broke with Rome and higher attainers could effectively investigate the controversy over the Gunpowder Plot. The most able pupils in Year 9 produced excellent analysis of the various causes of the First World War. Good skills of speaking and reading are well developed through frequent class discussion and reading aloud. Skills of research and writing at length in a well-structured way and in various forms are very well developed as there is a strong emphasis on these aspects of literacy development in the teaching. Year 9 pupils of all abilities enthusiastically produced detailed autobiographies of the lives of slaves. Many were excellent in the quality of historical detail and the fervent expression of feelings and values.
167. Standards in work seen in Years 10 and 11 are well above the national average. Pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of the key concepts and events under study. For instance, they compare accurately different periods in the history of medicine in terms of changes and continuity. Pupils have very good skills of selecting and recording evidence. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs are well supported with very well prepared recording sheets. More able pupils evaluate sources very well for usefulness and reliability. They write at length both fluently and analytically, with good supporting evidence, as in their coursework on Leamington Spa. This builds on the good skills of enquiry and organisation developed at Key Stage 3 and which are seen in pupils of all abilities.
168. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning are good. A high proportion of lessons for Years 7, 8 and 9 seen during the inspection were satisfactory; there have been temporary changes in staff teaching these year groups and, in this period of adjustment, the quality of teaching seen did not fully match the standards of work that pupils were producing. Lessons seen are best in Years 10 to 11, where they are often very good. In setting high expectations, teachers set varied and challenging tasks that involve pupils actively in enquiry work and problem solving. For instance, Year 11 pupils had to enquire from school timetables how girls were treated in school in Nazi Germany; Year 9 pupils actively discussed how the Treaty of Versailles effected different countries by enacting the roles of different nationalities. Consequently, pupils make good progress in acquiring secure knowledge and learning important new skills of enquiry, communications and organisation and interpretation of evidence. The well-qualified teachers plan lessons carefully to match the learning needs of all abilities, using the thorough schemes of work. Teachers generally manage time well, with a

good pace to the lesson and setting deadlines for tasks. However, time is not always provided at the end to assess pupils' understanding and to refer back to the lesson objectives. The pupils' enthusiasm for work, seen in nearly all lessons, is encouraged by the teachers' very warm relationship with them and by their good classroom management. Many choose to study history in Year 10 and in the sixth form. Pupils in Year 11 are aware of their predicted grades, current performance and how to improve. This is due to regular monitoring of work, the strong guidance given on coursework and the consistently thorough and helpful marking which is done at both key stages.

169. The subject is very well led by an enthusiastic head of department, who has provided a very clear educational direction for the department. There have been significant improvements since the last inspection. Resources have been much improved. Good strategies for developing literacy skills are being developed. There are now more materials available to match the need of lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs. Priorities for raising achievement strongly reflect those of the school. There is a much improved programme of information and communication technology, although it is not yet systematically implemented for whole teaching groups. The good assessment procedures use data well to set individual targets in Years 10 and 11 and monitor progress at both key stages. However, results are not yet adequately used in Years 7-9 to work out the value added to pupils' attainment and so decide how the curriculum or teaching might be changed. The use of classroom observation has not been fully developed to promote the sharing of the good practice that exists in the department.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Overall, provision for information and communications technology is **good**.

### Strengths

- There is very good support for pupils to work independently.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good.
- Very well planned lessons enable high attaining pupils to develop sophisticated skills.

### Areas for development

- Teaching does not always fully engage lower attainers.
- There are not consistently good opportunities for those pupils who do not choose to follow a taught information and communication technology course in Years 10 and 11 to develop their capability in using computers; their attainment in information and communication technology is not assessed and reported on as required.

170. In 2001, standards in teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were well above expectations. Indeed pupils reached a full grade higher than was expected nationally. These high standards have been sustained, with a small improvement over the last three years. Work seen during the inspection supported these assessments. Pupils in Year 7 attain standards in line with expectations. Lower attainers can collect data and save it to retrieve later. They can then organise and present ideas using information and communication technology. By the middle of Year 8 they are organising their presentations to have a powerful effect on their intended reader - choosing the style and content of a presentation on genetic modification to explain the arguments on both sides of the debate clearly, and expressing a convincing point of view. Higher attainers in Year 7 can plan a holiday using information researched from airline websites, and then transfer the data from a spreadsheet to a database to form part of a tourist guide. By the end of Year 9 some higher attaining pupils can create complex and detailed databases designed to meet very specific needs.

171. Standards in GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11 have remained well above the national average over the last four years, with a dip in 1998. Pupils in Year 11 are following an intermediate vocational course (GNVQ) this year - either the full award, or GNVQ Part One for those who have chosen a series of shorter courses. Work seen during the inspection indicates that standards are again above the national average.
172. In Years 10 and 11 lower attaining pupils are accumulating evidence which will be sufficient to merit a pass grade if they maintain current progress. Generally these pupils are developing skills in information and communication technology which are considerably better than their basic numeracy or literacy skills. They are not only demonstrating that they can create a presentation suitable for infant readers, or design a suite of office documents for a small business, but they are learning to work in teams and improving their written and spoken communication. The work of higher attainers is excellent. A presentation by three boys to explain the impact of volcanoes included complex moving images, and a well-researched commentary. The designers were proud of their polished creation, but had learned to evaluate it objectively so that they could revise it and improve it. Another presentation exploring 'The Godfather' built effectively on pupils' learning in media studies. Other work included the design for the information and communication technology equipment needed by a tandem cycling club. This not only prescribed the most appropriate hardware, but gave extremely detailed guidance on how the software could be customised so that on-screen it seemed to have been specifically written for the tandem club.
173. These standards represent very good achievement by pupils who are attaining in line with national expectations when they come to the school. This is because the teaching is very good overall. Relationships between staff and pupils and between pupils themselves are very positive, so the working atmosphere supports independent learning. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported, and both boys and girls show equal flair and enthusiasm. Teachers probe and question very effectively, leading pupils to come to their own understanding in ways that make the learning more secure. They are very clear about the standards which are needed for success in any activity, and they make this understanding very clear to pupils. But particularly they encourage pupils to experiment, to risk failure, and to be confident that they can succeed. Consequently higher attainers in particular are supported to be individual, creative and excited by their own work. They plan lessons very well so that pupils are absorbed, and most can work throughout the long lessons, constantly refining and developing their work. The whole curriculum within the taught information and communication technology lessons is very well planned. Not only do pupils develop information and communication technology skills, they also develop social, moral and cultural awareness, for example by stimulating their curiosity about parliament, and exploring their attitudes to bullying.
174. When so many pupils are reaching such high standards in national tests, it is important to support those who are less successful. Not enough is done to record and recognise the achievements of those who may not gain a pass grade. At the other extreme, some higher attainers in Year 9 have made so much progress that they now require additional challenges to keep them busy and motivated. Whilst class management is generally very good, the best practice is not replicated in every lesson, so that some groups are slower than they should be to settle to their work.
175. Not all pupils study a specific course in information and communication technology in Years 10 and 11, the provision is satisfactory, but lacks the very good elements that are available within the very well-planned GNVQ lessons. Opportunities to use information and communication technology, and to practise the skills which they have developed, are planned in most subject areas, but are not of a consistently good quality. Pupils' learning overall is therefore good in Years 10 and 11, but not as strong as it is over

Years 7-9. Teachers in other subjects often lack the confidence to use information and communication technology as a learning tool, or to base their lessons round unfamiliar technology. A training programme has been under way for nine months to help teachers develop appropriate skills. It is showing signs of success in history and modern foreign language lessons, and pupils are asked to word-process assignments and to conduct research on the Internet on a regular basis in a wide range of subjects. However, the school has not yet met its obligation to report to parents the achievements of pupils not taking an accredited course.

176. Management within the information and communication technology department has been very good, so that a strong and flexible team has achieved some very good improvement since the last inspection. Funds related to technology college status have enabled the school to support partner primary schools with joint ventures, training and technical support. The GNVQ course has been adopted to give pupils more freedom and responsibility as learners, and a start has been made on expanding the use of new technology, and information and communication technology skills development within other subject areas.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Overall, the provision for modern foreign languages is **very good**.

### Strengths

- GCSE results in French, German, Spanish and Russian are consistently well above average.
- Overall, teaching is very good, with a high incidence of well-managed oral work.
- Pupils' response is very good; they participate well and are confident.
- Pupils are offered a wide choice of languages.
- Pupils are supported well in the mixed-ability classes.

### Areas for improvement

- GCSE results in Italian are consistently below average.
- The proportion of pupils taking GCSE is slightly below the national average.
- There are shortages of classroom equipment on both sites.
- Accommodation remains unsatisfactory, until new buildings are completed.

177. In 2001, teachers' assessments of modern foreign languages indicated that the pupils' performance at the end of Year 9 was above the national average. The difference between the performance of boys and girls was narrower than is the case nationally. Teachers' assessments over the previous two years show a rising trend in pupils' performance at the end of Year 9. In 2001, GCSE results at grades A\*-C in French, German and Spanish were well above national averages. Pupils performed significantly better in languages than in almost all their other subjects. Over the last three years, results have improved in French, German and Spanish. In Russian, results have remained consistently high, but Russian is not currently offered at this level. In Italian, results in 2001 were below the national average. Pupils did not perform as well in Italian as in their other subjects. Italian results have dipped over the past three years.

178. Overall, boys do well in languages in examinations. The difference between the performance of boys and girls is narrower than is the case nationally. However, in 2001, only 65 per cent of pupils in Year 11 took GCSE examinations in languages. In national terms, this proportion is below the national average. Two small groups of lower attainers took Certificate of Language Learning courses in French and Spanish. Many performed well to achieve merits and distinctions.

179. In Year 7 pupils can study French, German or Spanish; in Years 8 and 9 they can study one or two languages from French, German, Italian or Spanish. Standards in the lessons and other work of current Year 9 pupils are above average. Pupils develop good listening and speaking skills with good accents and intonation. They mostly have good levels of confidence and are well prepared to listen carefully. They take part fully in chorus work, oral practice sessions and freer pair work activities. Pupils learn to read well and are often expected to read out loud. This activity is unusual, but demonstrates pupils' willingness to perform in front of others. Most pupils present their written work carefully and accurately. They tackle the past tense well and gain some fluency in writing simply about their past experiences, for example on holidays. The range of writing activities is relatively wide and includes some good word-processed poetry, travel brochures and work on, for example, French food, German towns and Spanish festivals.
180. Standards in the lessons and other work of Year 11 pupils are also above average, except in Italian where standards are below average. In French, German and Spanish, pupils widen their knowledge of vocabulary well and develop further their skills in all attainment targets. Higher attainers make the most progress in writing, in response to the demands of the GCSE coursework assignments. They write very well in detail and at length, often with flair and incorporating their own opinions and ideas about their past experiences and future plans. The most talented recall vocabulary quickly and re-use it well in expressing their views on other subjects. Middle attainers need more support and encouragement to reach their own good levels of attainment; their confidence generally remains high and they take full advantage of the very good amount of oral work they practise in every lesson. Lower attainers receive good guidance in examination skills and have every opportunity to join revision classes in all skills. In Italian, there is a broad range of linguistic competence among pupils in the class, which includes some Italian nationals. Higher attainers do not achieve their full potential in Italian, though, because expectations of them are not high enough, especially in oral work.
181. The quality of teaching is very good overall. As a result, pupils learn very well. Nearly half the lessons seen were either very good or excellent. The main features of the very good and excellent teaching are: a high level of understanding of how pupils learn languages, a rapid and stimulating pace of teaching, especially of oral work, and very good, and in some cases excellent, preparation and use of resources, such as overhead transparencies and the language laboratory. Almost all teachers have at least good accents in the languages they teach, and these good models are transmitted well to pupils, so that they develop good pronunciations and intonation. Teachers plan very well for the lessons, although they are very long for language teaching. They choose a wide variety of activities, generally covering all skills, so that pupils maintain their interest and participate well throughout the lesson. Most lessons begin with a concentrated oral revision session, with plenty of chorus work to include all levels of ability. Boys particularly enjoy this work and build up their confidence well. An outstanding feature of the subject is the way in which boys are involved in developing their own skills in oral work and, in consequence, their self-esteem. Because of the teachers' very high expectations of what pupils can do, pupils are stimulated to greater effort and to attainment above the average. Higher attainers and the gifted and talented are challenged very well and mostly perform well up to their capabilities in speaking as well as writing. The lower attainers, including some with special educational needs are, when necessary, given suitable work for their ability level. Teachers are very supportive of pupils who stay behind at the end of lessons wanting further guidance. Nonetheless, for a variety of reasons, a small number of pupils drop out of their GCSE course before the end of Year 11 despite considerable efforts made by teachers to encourage these pupils to continue. Teachers mark pupils' work well, but they do not give achievement grades; this practice would let pupils know more clearly how they are doing. In the



lessons observed, teachers did not ask pupils to do follow-up corrections after the careful marking; this activity could easily have been included in lessons. In the teaching of Italian in particular, there are some areas where improvement is needed: a greater understanding of the need for concentrated and well organised oral work, for higher expectations of pupils, and for a closer match between the materials used and the wide range of ability and needs of the pupils in the class.

182. The management of the department is very good; the head of department effectively leads the team of very hard-working teachers by example, in terms of both teaching and commitment. Good planning has ensured the continuation of a wide choice of languages for pupils. However, no pupils receive any extra support from foreign languages assistants. Responsibilities for improving assessment procedures and integrating information and communication technology more closely into schemes of work have been delegated well. There are shortages in classroom equipment, including televisions and replacement cassette recorders. The accommodation remains unsatisfactory until the new building is completed.
183. Despite these circumstances, improvement since the last inspection has been good. Standards at the end of Year 9 have risen and, overall, teaching is better. Nevertheless, some weaknesses persist in Italian, and some shortages in resources remain.

## MUSIC

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

### Strengths:

- The quality of teaching across the 11-16 age range is very good.
- The attainment of pupils in Years 10 and 11 is well above average.
- The department's results at GCSE are consistently above average.
- Pupils' learning across the 11-16 age range is good.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour in most lessons are good.

### Areas for improvement:

- Pupils do not encounter a broad enough range of musical styles, particularly those of other cultures.
- There is not a sufficient range of extra-curricular activities to provide for the needs and talents of all pupils.
- There are some weaknesses in resources in music technology.
- Too few children have the opportunities for instrumental tuition.

184. In 2001, GCSE results at Grades A\*-C. were above the national average as they have been for a number of years. Twelve pupils were entered for the examination but none of the three boys entered gained a Grade C or above.
185. Pupils' attainment and achievement by the end of Year 11 is very good, particularly in performing and composing. Children enter the school attaining average standards in music. At the end of Year 9 overall attainment is above average, particularly among those who have instrumental lessons. Achievement over years 7-9 is, therefore, good. However, progression is inconsistent with examples of standards achieved by some Year 8 pupils being higher than those in Year 9. Girls tend to achieve slightly higher standards than boys throughout the school.

186. Overall, the quality of teaching in lessons seen was very good. Teaching was very good in all Year 10 and 11 lessons observed and very good overall in Years 7-9. In the one instrumental lesson observed, teaching was satisfactory. Learning is very good across Years 10 and 11. Learning is good over Years 7, 8 and 9, but pupils are not as well motivated at this earlier stage, work at a less rapid pace, and do not have the degree of independence in their learning shown by those who opt for the subject later.
187. Teaching is very well planned. Lessons begin with a clear explanation of the kind of musical activities pupils are going to do and what they are expected to learn and achieve. Connections are made with previous learning and pupils' understanding of key ideas in music are reinforced through skilful questioning. Teachers' questioning is a particularly strong feature, particularly when it is used to encourage pupils to think more deeply about musical ideas and concepts. For example, in a Year 10 lesson, pupils prepared a short talk about their instruments and what they are capable of doing with them. Perceptive questioning by the teacher kept the presentations well-focused, made the pupils think deeply about what they were saying and enriched the learning of all pupils in the class. Similarly, in a Year 7 lesson, pupils were encouraged to consider ways in which symbols of all kinds can be used to represent musical sound and emotion going on to explore the strengths and limitations of different kinds of notation.
188. Teachers are also very good at being able to approach musical learning from a number of perspectives. In a Year 11 lesson, pupils' aural skills were developed through listening to musical intervals in isolation, then in the context of a piece of music finally writing out a piece of music they knew with the aid of a keyboard. A consequence of using a range of teaching approaches is that the needs of all pupils are provided for and all achieve. Homework is used creatively and effectively to reinforce music learning that has taken place in a lesson. In a Year 7 class, for example, pupils were asked to note down examples of music in quadruple time that they heard as they went about their daily lives and to bring these to the next lesson.
189. Teachers make great efforts to ensure that pupils with special educational needs are involved in lessons and that their contributions are valued. The department's insistence on mutual respect between pupils means that pupils listen to each others work attentively and comment sensitively on what they feel are its strengths and weaknesses. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are almost always at least good in music lessons and often very good.
190. There is a successful tradition of mounting an annual musical production in conjunction with the drama department. However other aspects of the department's extra-curricular work are underdeveloped. Groups such as the jazz band meet only irregularly, generally in the few weeks prior to a concert. There are few opportunities for pupils to develop outside of lessons the enthusiasm and talent they demonstrate within them. Nevertheless during the inspection week a small vocal group of Year 10 and 11 girls was observed in rehearsal. They produced a very good and stylish vocal sound. Diction was clear and the harmony singing was generally secure. The head of music demonstrated very good rehearsal technique. She focused clearly on those parts of the music where the pupils were experiencing difficulties and had clear strategies for dealing with these. Consequently, good progress was made.
191. The last inspection identified poor learning resources and accommodation, unsatisfactory attitudes by pupils and inconsistent teaching. Teaching and pupils' attitudes have improved greatly. Accommodation and resources have also improved but nevertheless are only just satisfactory. Some teaching rooms are too small and are poorly decorated. There is an adequate number of electronic keyboards but too few acoustic instruments and many of those that do exist are in a poor state of repair. Music technology resources are limited but the school is committed to enhancing this

aspect of the department's provision in the very near future. Sixty-nine pupils receive instrumental lessons within school. This is below the national average and the school and department need to develop this aspect of its provision

192. Management by the recently appointed head of department is very good. She has clearly identified gaps in the present scheme of work - particularly regarding pupils' opportunities to explore the music of other cultures - and has strategies for addressing these. She has managed the present difficult staffing position well, ensuring that pupils' musical learning and experience are maintained. In this she has been ably supported by high calibre supply teachers and a part-time member of staff. However, the lack of continuity in staffing has constrained learning to some extent, especially in Years 7-9. She has clear plans for developing the extra-curricular musical life of the school and the ways in which technology can be integrated into the music curriculum.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Overall the quality of provision for physical education is **good**.

### Strengths

- The standard of teaching is consistently good with very good features in many lessons.
- Pupil attitudes are always positive and show commitment to and interest in the work of the department.
- Leadership and management are very good.

### Areas for improvement

- The condition of specialist accommodation, including changing rooms, is barely satisfactory.
- Assessment procedures do not ensure that information on progress is shared often enough with pupils.

193. GCSE results in physical education in 2001 were well above the national average for A\*-C grades. Over the last 3 years there has been an upward trend to reach this current level and results have been above the national average each year. These levels are above the college's all-subject average and for many pupils, their grade in physical education is above their other subject grades.

194. Attainment on entry to the school in physical education is variable as is the pupils' experience in the subject. Overall it is generally below average especially in relation to physical fitness and coordination. By the end of Year 9, there has been clear improvement and overall levels of attainment are in line with national expectations. In some specific areas these standards are exceeded, for example in games skills and especially amongst boys. Achievement in this age range is good and standards of personal fitness are raised quickly during Years 7, 8 and 9 as a result of good teaching and a carefully planned programme of regular and challenging physical activity. The progress made over time in mixed gymnastics is particularly good. For example both boys and especially girls show improved control of their bodies in performing inventive sequences of movement. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well and gain measurably in self-confidence as a result of working in groups where they are well supported by other pupils.

195. By the end of Year 11 these standards have been well sustained to exceed the national average and many boys and girls play a range of games to a good standard. Most know much about the principles of physical fitness and can make effective use of training routines to improve and then sustain a good standard of personal fitness. This then provides a very sound base on which improve their own personal skills, for example, in

Year 11 girls' trampolining. Greater strength and agility contribute strongly to their increased skill in successfully demonstrating complex routines to a high standard. Both teams and individuals have become increasingly successful in the popular and wide-ranging programme of extra-curricular sports and games where they represent the college in local regional and national competitions.

196. Throughout the college, most pupils adopt a positive approach to all aspects of physical education. Standards of behaviour are particularly high and all have a clear understanding of what the teachers expect of them in terms of both behaviour and performance. Most are eager to do well and demonstrate through good standards of attendance and participation their keen interest in the subject. Standards of personal kit are not good with too many instances of pupils wearing inappropriate and ill-fitting leisure wear which could constitute a danger to others during physical activity in lessons.
197. Overall the quality of teaching is good and many lessons have some very good features. This ensures that learning is good and accounts for the improvement in standards over five years. The opportunities made for pupils to be involved in assessing performance in gymnastics, for example in Year 9, was very well managed and certainly improved the knowledge and understanding of most pupils. The ability of teachers to devise activities and practices that challenge pupils to improve, for example in Year 10 netball, is a clear indication of how well they know their specialisms. Most teachers work in an engaging and enthusiastic style that generates and sustains a similar degree of energy amongst the pupils, ensures that the pace of lessons is brisk and promotes cooperative and productive relationships.
198. Leadership and management are very good and are key strengths of the subject. The head of department sets high standards and teamwork is very well established. The department's policies and practice are well documented and these documents are used well to ensure high standards. Much has been achieved in ensuring that physical education makes best use of current technology in keeping detailed pupil records and in providing a very sound organisational framework. The information gathered in these processes is, however, not closely matched to the National Curriculum statements of attainment. Pupils, and their parents, do not then have a clear enough understanding of the progress they are making and targets for further improvement are not clear enough. The specialist accommodation for the subject is currently adequate but the condition of both the teaching and changing rooms is drab and uninspiring.
199. Since the last inspection, greater consistency in standards has been achieved. Almost all attain good standards of personal fitness and in games there are a good number whose playing standards are above average. GCSE results have improved with a consistent upward trend over the past three years and girls' standards in examinations have been raised. Teaching is now consistently good and this is the main factor behind all improvements. The current head of department has a very good understanding of the contemporary issues in leading physical education and the subject is well placed to make continuing improvement.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

This will be the subject of a later inspection arranged through the diocese under Section 23 of the Education Act

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

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

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

***GCE AS level courses***

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	4	75	62	75	15	3.8	1.5
Information and communication technology	1	0	74	0	13	0	1.8

***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
English language	30	100	91	40	30	6.4	5.3
Mathematics	26	88	87	52	43	6.3	5.8
Chemistry	9	89	90	44	43	6.0	5.9
Art and design	28	96	96	71	46	7.7	6.8
Design and technology	13	100	91	69	30	7.9	5.4
History	11	91	88	18	35	4.6	5.5
Physical education studies	6	100	92	17	25	5.0	5.1
Russian	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Information and communication technology	14	100	86	36	23	6.6	4.6
French	11	100	89	36	38	6.0	5.6

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

### MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The focus was on mathematics and physics, but chemistry and biology were also sampled. The 2001 A-level chemistry results were above the national average and those in biology were well above. Students' performance in biology was very good given their GCSE results and better than in chemistry where the standard reached was good. In the two Year 12 chemistry lessons observed, the teaching was at least good. In one, very good teaching resulted from a thorough understanding of the content and the good relationships between students and teacher. This led to very good progress in learning. In the Year 13 biology lesson observed, the teaching was good because the teacher was knowledgeable and skilled in practical techniques.

#### Mathematics

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

##### Strengths

- Standards are rising and the students achieve a good proportion of high grades.
- Good teaching by teachers who have a thorough subject knowledge.
- Good leadership and management has ensured that changes in course requirements have been fully met.

##### Areas for improvement

- There is not enough encouragement given to more passive students to contribute to lessons.
- Assessment and the monitoring of progress are underdeveloped.

200. GCE A-level results in 2001 were well above national averages, with half the candidates gaining A or B grades. The steady upward trend of recent years was maintained, yielding a small rise in the percentage of students gaining A-E grades. The very small number of students who took either A/S or the full GCE A-level further mathematics course achieved very good results (A grade) in 2001; similarly, standards in the current Year 13 are well above average. A good proportion of those who re-sat the GCSE examination in 2001 obtained their C grade, or better, targets.
201. Most students begin the GCE A-level mathematics course having obtained at least grade B at GCSE; they make good progress as do the few students who had only obtained GCSE grade C. Retention rates are very high.
202. In common with many schools, the 2001 revised A/S pure mathematics results were well below expectations, though compensated by results in other modules. Inspection evidence suggests substantial improvement, in line with predictions, for both boys and girls who had recently re-sat the pure mathematics paper.
203. Students respond well to tasks set, and their achievement is good. They respect and value the teaching and support provided; they also collaborate well. Scrutinised written work demonstrates clearly the good progress students make. Exercise books for each module of the course show well a wide range of topics covered, good, clear presentation and systematic analysis. Helpful marking raises the standards of those students who had not fully understood. Good learning by both male and female students, as borne out in results achieved and inspection evidence, is the direct result.

204. The overall quality of teaching is good and much is very good. Teachers have thorough knowledge of the subject and students receive sound diagrammatic explanations and clear analyses. Students are challenged to achieve highly, they receive quality support, and lower-attaining students receive extra individual help both in and beyond lessons. Oral responses in class are adequate, but tend to be dominated by certain students. Others are too passive, not though necessarily through lack of understanding, and they should be challenged more.
205. Students have a mature approach to their study; they listen attentively and many contribute well to lessons as, for example, in a Year 13 lesson on developing the binomial expansion where they built constructively upon previous knowledge. The challenge to consider bias in sampling techniques in a Year 12 statistics lesson was illustrated by many good examples, though students here volunteered few ideas themselves and needed to be drawn out more. Lessons have pace, and fast progress was made in a Year 13 lesson on parametric differentiation in spite of some gaps in understanding of earlier work being revealed.
206. Key skills are incorporated effectively into the methods section of mathematics courses. Mental numeracy is good, as is the use of calculators, essential in, for instance, work involving probability distributions. Some Year 12 students, using part of a numeracy computer package, were able to remedy shortcomings in their knowledge of long division and fractions.
207. The good teaching and learning result from work in the subject being well led and managed. Changes in course demands are carefully monitored, and provision is made to assist students who display any weaknesses in earlier work. Detailed monitoring of progress with clear target setting is in its early stages and is underdeveloped. Good relationships are valued and are strengths. Inspection evidence suggests that recent rising trends in standards attained by the end of Year 13 will be maintained.

## Physics

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

### Strengths

- Students' attainment exceeds the standards expected based on their GCSE grades.
- Teaching is good and sometimes very good.
- Students' attitudes to learning are very good.

### Areas for improvement

- The school has difficulty finding enough full-time, suitably qualified and permanent teachers of physics.
- There are insufficient departmental resources for information and communication technology.
- The number of students, particularly female students, following post-16 courses is low.

208. The GCE A-level examination results in 2001 showed a continuing pattern of improvement since the previous inspection and were above average. In 2001, the number of students obtaining the highest grades, A-B, was above the national average. One student in six was unsuccessful in obtaining a pass grade, A-E. In relation to their GCSE results, the students did better than expected.

209. Comparisons between the performances of male and female students is not possible because there has been one female only in each GCE A-level group since the previous inspection and there are none in the present Year 12 group. Recently, the number of students taking GCE A-level has fallen. This is mainly because staffing difficulties have

made the subject less attractive to potential students and a few students chose not to continue the A/S course to GCE A-level. Students' performance in GCE A-level physics in recent years is not significantly different from the performance in their other GCE A-level subjects. In the sciences in recent years, students' performance in physics is similar to their performance in chemistry but much lower than that in biology.

210. The standards of work of the current Year 13 students are above average. They are making good progress and achieving well in relation to predictions based on their GCSE and A/S results. Students' work in practical investigations and reports is of a high standard. This arises from the knowledge and skills of the teachers who have a high level of expertise in using equipment and are also rigorous in their demands of students to report faithfully their scientific findings. Good use is made of key skills in writing reports although skills in the use of information and communication technology are less prominent. This is because there are insufficient computers within the department and access to others means booking a suite that is in much demand from other subjects, or transporting laptop computers to the laboratory. Students use mathematical skills well, for example, when drawing and interpreting graphs, solving and transposing equations, and calculating complex formulae involving negative indices. In a lesson to investigate properties of electrical charge, students showed that their achievement in mathematics was above expectations when they derived and applied an inverse square formula to establish the force between two electrical charges.
211. Students taking A/S-level examinations in 2001 performed well. All students obtained pass grades A-E, however, there were very few higher grades A-B because students found the demands of post-16 work greater than anticipated. Two students completed their studies of the subject at this stage whilst the remainder moved on to Year 13. Students in the current Year 12 are achieving at a level that is higher than expected, considering their GCSE results. Positive attitudes, competence in transferring previous knowledge and understanding into new situations and strong mathematical skills contribute significantly to the higher than expected achievement and good progress being made. In a very good lesson, students made significant strides in learning because they had retained much of the work covered in GCSE on the relationships between distance, time, velocity and acceleration. Very good teaching enabled students to extend their knowledge and understanding of the relationships and use an appropriate computer program to develop associated ideas.
212. The quality of teaching is good. Some is very good. Strong features are the effectiveness in planning and the use of resources supported by experienced and efficient technicians. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and understanding and this is shown in their practical expertise, the thoroughness of their questioning to check students' comprehension and the explanations they give to students' questions. In a lesson in which students were planning and undertaking investigations, for example, the teacher used a wide range of skills when stimulating, questioning, criticising constructively and assessing students. There was rigour in the questioning and expectations were high. Students are well aware of the standards they are reaching and the potential they have and most are well motivated to achieve the realistic, yet ambitious, personal goals set by the teacher. In Year 13, a small but significant number of students are disrupting their continuity in learning through sporadic attendance. Teachers' marking, particularly of projects, is thorough, regular and constructive. The comments are used well by the students to monitor their progress in acquiring new skills, knowledge and understanding.
213. The leadership of the subject is good. The quality of education and standards remain high because the part-time head of department attends to important issues and there is good communication with the temporary teacher and the technicians. For example, a



new scheme of work that is more relevant to the students' needs has been introduced recently and is proving successful and assessment is closely monitored. The priorities for improving the subject are shown in a well-conceived science department development plan. Weaknesses in staffing and resources, however, constrain the success of the subject and create uncertainties for future development. The teaching is shared between part time and supply teachers who are well qualified, but not enough monitoring of their teaching or sharing of good practice occurs. The subject did not benefit from technology college funding to improve its access to high quality computer resources. Few references were made to post-16 physics in the previous inspection report. However, standards remain above national expectations, students' progress continues to be good and teaching appears to have improved. Developments in information and communication technology have taken place but there is still more to do. Overall, the improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

## ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

The focus of the inspection was on design and technology. No other subject taught in the school falls into this domain.

### Design and technology

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

#### Strengths

- Results are well above average and a high proportion of students gain A and B grades.
- Standards of work are high and students have a very good understanding of design practice.
- Teaching is very good.
- Leadership and management of the course are very good.

#### Areas for improvement

- Students do not use computers enough to improve their design and manufactured work.
- There are not enough visits or links with colleges and industry to broaden students' understanding of design and manufacturing processes.

214. Results in the 2001 GCE A-level product design course were well above average for students achieving A-B grades. All students are successful at A-E grades, again above the national average. These results show a good improvement especially at the higher grades, over recent results; most students do well on this course.

215. Attainment in lessons and work seen is above average at A/S and GCE A-level. Students make very good progress in Year 12 when considerable gain in knowledge and understanding is made as in an instant camera project where interesting subject matter was used to research and investigate camera designs. Good freehand sketching, use of colour, investigation of materials and use of modelling helped the students well in analysing the product being investigated. Analysis of strengths and weaknesses in materials used for a trophy project is also of a good standard. In Year 13 an interesting case study into the development of new materials in the design of golf clubs showed good appreciation of manufacturing techniques and of production methods, such as die-casting. Further projects looking at gardening devices for the elderly and a computer workstation for a limited space are also of a good standard. The work shows very good sketching of ideas, development against original criteria and excellent evaluation. Good use of information and communication technology is also prominent in the best work, including research from the Internet.

216. Male and female students achieve very well and make very good gains through Years 12 and 13. They have well-developed understanding of design processes and analytical skills are of a high order.
217. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Lessons are well planned to include whole group and individual teaching, which generate very good learning. This was seen in a Year 12 lesson where students were looking at different methods of construction linked to coursework projects. The students were able to have ‘hands-on’ experience together with effective demonstrations to reinforce understanding. A particularly rigorous Year 13 lesson involved students in increasing their learning and understanding about environmental issues relating to a packaging project. Here students expressed good responses to the effects on natural resources and to problems of disposal of household items in everyday use.
218. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department leads by example, expectations are high and students’ performance is monitored closely. The use of *Pro-Desk Top* and computer-aided design and manufacture are not developed sufficiently to further raise the quality of students’ work, and there are not enough links with colleges and industry to improve the students’ understanding of industrial processes. The absence of educational visits as a support to learning is a weakness.
219. Good improvements since the previous inspection include better examination performance, a greater balance of male and female students taking the subject, and increased resources including a casting area.

## **BUSINESS**

Although no subject was inspected fully in this domain a Year 12 AVCE (advanced vocational certificate of education) business class and a Year 12 A/S economics lesson were sampled. The business course is new to the school, and there are no previous results to report. In the business lesson seen, very well structured teaching and skilful management of assessment led the students to recognise what they needed to do to improve their results. In turn, the students’ key skills in communication and information and communication technology were excellently demonstrated as they produced some very good marketing presentations from thoroughly evaluated survey data.

In economics, A-level results have varied from well above to well below average in recent years. In the lesson observed, teaching and learning was satisfactory. Students demonstrated good study skills of note-taking throughout, and offered very perceptive contributions to class discussion because of their good awareness of world affairs, but they might have benefited from more opportunities to work independently.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

The inspection focus was on GCE A-level (A/S and A2) information and communication technology. Coverage of key skills in information and communication technology for all sixth-formers was also evaluated, as was the use of information and communication technology as a tool for effective teaching and learning throughout the sixth form.

### **Information and communication technology**

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

#### **Strengths**

- Standards of attainment are well above average and have improved substantially since the previous inspection.

- Students analyse problems well and devise very effective solutions.
- Physical resources are good.
- Teachers and technical staff provide a good service for the students.

#### Areas for improvement

- Students' understanding of some theoretical principles and of the later stages of the design process – testing, implementation, evaluation - is not deep enough.
- Appropriate work in key skills information and communication technology and the use of computers is not sufficiently well developed in all subjects.

220. Last year was the first in which the A/S course was commonly studied around the country; the school's results were high compared with the national figure. Half of the 32 candidates attained a grade A or B and all but one passed. GCE A-level results were also significantly above average, both for the proportions attaining the highest A/B grades and those attaining a pass grade. Since the previous inspection there has been significant overall improvement year-on-year.
221. Lesson evaluations, scrutiny of folder work and discussions with the students suggest that current attainment is higher than that of previous examinations. In particular, the students' skills of working as programmers with spreadsheet and database software are very good. They develop these skills as part of their coursework and see these projects as opportunities to solve real life problems, the appropriate starting point for work on the design process.
222. The students' folders and evidence from discussions with them show that their understanding of the design process has some shortcomings. They assess and analyse relevant business problems and build up feasible information and communication technology-based solutions. They are less clear about the later stages of the process: implementation, software testing and package evaluation and the cyclic nature of design processes. Students also write about applications and techniques without reference to previously-made notes or sample printouts they have produced. Without a clear understanding of what the stages of software development are, and the reasons for them, their learning of the subject's under-pinning theory and knowledge base does not fully match their very good practical skills. For instance, the processes of verification and validation were not widely understood; students could not always recall examples of the use of information and communication technology in certain areas of the 'real world' and not all were clear about the Internet. Others had only sketchy knowledge of data protection legislation.
223. Most students are stretched and achieve well, their levels of interest are often high, and they talk with animation about their work in and out of lessons. In many cases they do vast amounts of work at home.
224. The quality of teaching is good; it has improved since the previous inspection. All teachers have good or very good knowledge of the whole range of information and communication technology skills and theory as well as of the technology's uses in a great range of contexts, new developments, and how the examination boards think and work. They have very good relationships with the students, though the students do not always respond maturely - for instance by asking if they don't understand something, by waiting or going for help rather than calling out for it, by avoiding disturbing the teaching flow with irrelevant comments or 'jokes'. Teachers work hard in lessons – in particular, when the students are at their computers, keeping up good levels of concentration and pace of working. They interact very well with individuals and small groups, teasing out their understanding of their problem scenarios and solutions, developing their skills and helping them learn what the subject is all about. A common weakness in teaching that undermines, to a degree, the quality of learning is the

absence of regular introductory discussions in lessons. Also, a lesson-end résumé of what had been learned would make the lesson more interesting and challenging; would focus the students on their main tasks and would give teachers a clearer picture of each one's accomplishments.

225. One key skills lesson was evaluated as part of the information and communication technology module offered to all students within general studies. Reflecting the students' low views of key skills and the absence of the main class teacher, only three turned up, each one with skills that precluded any great need for the comparatively low level work that related to their development of information and communication technology - based presentations on aspects of a general studies topic. They all competently used *PowerPoint*, but none called on the software's full potential. None made a good match between features, such as fonts, type styles or animated pictures, and the topic or the audience concerned; and none accepted the invitation to add to their knowledge base by looking at some Internet sites. A lot of work has gone into the design of the key skills information and communication technology module, but there is insufficient evaluation of its benefit to all sixth-formers.
226. During inspection week only three information and communication technology-based sixth form lessons were seen in other subjects. Information and communication technology is fully embedded in physics and in business studies. There is also some good work in modern foreign languages and physical education.
227. Both key skills information and communication technology and its general use through the sixth form have received less attention than they need because of the substantial workload of the co-ordinator. The management of the GCE A and A/S-level courses is, however, good. The staff collaborates well, bringing a wealth of relevant experience and expertise; they work hard to help the students. The subject is very popular, and taken to AS or A level by over a third of students in the sixth form. Assessment, other than for coursework, is left too much to individual teachers. The information and communication technology room booking system cannot cope properly, but a student is writing a package to improve it.
228. Sixth form information and communication technology is very well resourced. Accommodation is well-appointed, but space between work stations is rather cramped. Anticipated new facilities will help in all respects.

## HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The focus of the inspection was on physical education. No other subject was sampled in this domain.

### Physical education

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

#### Strengths

- Overall teaching is very good, based on strong subject expertise.
- Students achieve well in physical education, especially when measured against other subjects.
- Very good use is made of students' own sporting knowledge and experience in developing understanding.

#### Areas for improvement

- All students do not have a clear enough understanding of what progress they are making.

229. Over the last three years, GCE A-level physical education results have been above the national average for the proportion of students gaining pass grades, A-E. In 2001, all students entered gained at least a pass grade at A/S level. A-level overall results were about the national average, though below it for A/B grades.

230. The levels reached by students in the sixth form represent good achievement based on the analysis the department makes of progress from the age of 14, through GCSE to the age of 18. Most students' best examination performance is in physical education when measured against other subjects. In lessons, their practical performance is particularly strong as indicated by above average levels of personal fitness and well-developed individual skills. Standards of knowledge and understanding are a little more variable. Most are able to convey their views most effectively in conversation or in class, written work is not so strong, though use of specialist terminology is usually accurate and appropriate. Almost all students are particularly strong in making most effective use of their own sporting knowledge and experience. This enables them to make positive, active contributions to their own learning and link theory to practice, so gaining a greater understanding of, for example, the physiological effects of exercise.

231. Teaching is very good overall. This clear strength is based on very good subject knowledge and good planning that ensures a high degree of challenge, which results in good learning. The teacher sets out the learning targets most clearly at the beginning of the lessons so that the students know what they need to do in order to improve. Theoretic detail is always very well linked to practical experience and this too ensures that students are well involved in their learning.

232. All students demonstrate a most positive and responsible attitude to their work. They value highly the contribution made by their teachers and demonstrate quite clearly an enthusiasm for the subject. Not all students are able to identify both their strengths and weaknesses equally well and there is a need for more information to be shared with some students more often. In both Years 12 and 13, students co-operate productively. They share their thoughts and ideas well, often working without close teacher supervision and so strengthen or modify their views on, for example, how best to measure the 'flexibility' component of personal fitness and then, what type of exercise programme might best produce improvement.

233. The department is well led and managed. Performance and progress are well tracked and effective use is now being made of analytical and statistical data in ensuring that sufficient emphasis is given to maintaining a good balance between developing the students' practical performance skills and improving and deepening their knowledge and understanding.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Teaching and learning was not sampled in this domain; students take units of health and social care as part of the Outlook course in Year 12.

## VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus of the inspection was art.

### Art

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

#### Strengths

- Teaching and learning are excellent; lessons are well planned with very good integration of theory and practical work.
- Teachers and students enjoy excellent relationships and students benefit from high levels of personal tuition and guidance.
- Assessment is thorough and the support given matches students' needs.
- Students share ideas freely and work very well together.

#### Areas for improvement

- Accommodation is inadequate for the wide demands of the courses.
- The absence of technical support undermines the teaching of such a range of media activities.

234. The most recent examination results were very high compared with the national average: 71 per cent of students entered for A2 gained grades A/B, with eleven students gaining A grades. The A/S results had over a third of students gaining A grades. A higher proportion of girls obtained more of the higher grades, but considering the A/S and A2 results overall, there was little difference between the performance of boys and girls. In relation to their GCSE grades, most did as well or better than expected. The A/S level examination results provide a good foundation for A2 study with the retention rate of students into the second year being very good. There were no issues regarding students from ethnic minorities.

235. The work of current students is very high. In Year 13, students are achieving well in relation to predictions based on their GCSE and A/S results. The quality of the work in students' sketchbooks and portfolios confirms these high standards. Students speak eloquently and with confidence about their work and demonstrate very good knowledge and understanding. The working environment is particularly stimulating with very high quality students' work on display. Excellent progress is evident, especially in painting and mixed media, where large-scale interpretation is exemplary. Student independence and maturity enable them to manage their own studies in completing coursework and working towards examinations. Art and design sketchbooks show excellent annotation and understanding of compositional principles and techniques needed for the development of coursework assignments. Students show in their preliminary sketches a very good understanding of design principles. In Year 12, interest and skill carry over well from GCSE work. This was evident in a lesson based on the study of the human

figure where excellent art history connections and ideas were discussed for sculptural development. Students were eager to discuss their coursework and success in the GCSE examination. These high standards are maintained and built on in the Year 13 A2 course and there is plenty of evidence from students' work that independent research skills are well developed. In a Year 13 lesson, students were able to present, disseminate and discuss how they arrived at their final outcomes. Excellent sharing of ideas and opinions on the influence of styles, genres and approaches to their own work and the work of other artists was evident. Progress was ensured by the challenging demands of the work and guidance offered by the teachers.

236. The quality of teaching is excellent. The teachers have very good subject knowledge and technical skill. All students speak well of the support provided by teachers. Students are informed of how work can be improved and theory and practical work is integrated most effectively. Teachers' expectations are always high and lessons have a very good pace and productivity. Project briefs are well designed and give clear focus to the students' work. This was evident in a Year 13 photography lesson where students were completing units of work for A/S and A2 coursework. The teacher gave appropriate attention to presentation skills and students' work was monitored thoroughly. Assessment criteria are well defined and deadlines for the completion of work are made very clear. Students are very clear how well they are doing and what they have to do to improve further. Visits to galleries and a shared commitment to out-of-school experiences, including life classes, are some of the factors contributing to the success of the department.
237. The sixth form courses run most effectively. The department is led with passion and managed very well. Teachers compare their experiences of the A/S and A2 units and share best practice. The absence of technical support undermines the teaching of such a range of media activities. The present accommodation is inadequate for courses with such a diversification of media choice and hence inhibits further potential expansion. The facilities and provision for work using clay are insufficient to meet the demands of a large department. Overall this is a most successful area of sixth form provision that is becoming increasingly popular.

## **HUMANITIES**

History was the focus of the inspection, but geography and psychology were also sampled. In geography, the number taking A/S and GCE A-level examinations in 2001 was too small to allow sound comparisons with national averages, but considering their prior attainment, the candidates attained good results. Current standards are in line with course expectations, and achievement in the two sampled lessons was very good because the teaching was both demanding and stimulating. Students made very good gains in synthesising geographical information and in their research skills. The 2001 GCE A-level results in psychology were significantly below average, although the proportions obtaining grades A/B were only just below average. In the evaluated lessons, good planning and varied activities led to a good pace of learning that, for example, let the students draw interesting correlations between childhood and adulthood experiences. The students' attitudes and interest are good, leading to lively discussions in class that give good rein to their well-developed thinking skills.

## History

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

### Strengths

- GCE A-level results have improved significantly and are above the national average.
- Students achieve well and often exceed their targets.
- Very good teaching encourages very good learning especially in giving the students the skills and confidence to work effectively by themselves.
- Students are very well motivated and work very well with each other and the teacher.
- The department is very well led and managed; this promotes high standards and the subject's growing popularity.

### Areas for improvement

- Skills of analysis and extended writing, constructing arguments which are well-supported by a variety of sources, are insufficiently developed among lower attainers.

238. In the GCE A-level examinations in 2001, standards were below the national average in A/B grades and in the average points scored. Those passing with A to E grades were the same as the national average. More than half of the eleven students entered achieved as expected and two achieved above expectations. This was not as high as in the previous two years, especially in 2000 when GCE A-level standards were well above average and the best in the school. The dip in standards was mostly due to the cohort of students being of lower attainment. There has been no significant difference in the attainment of males and females. A/S results for 2001 were above national results for 2000: all passed from a large entry of 25 and the proportion attaining grades A to B was above average. A fifth of students achieved better than expected, with most of the others meeting expectations. Retention rates are high with 80 per cent continuing onto the A2 course in Year 13.
239. Standards in work seen are above average. In Year 13, students are achieving well in relation to predictions based on their GCSE results. They have a good understanding of the main concepts of the periods under study. Promoted by the teachers' strong emphasis on enquiry and constructive independent work, students have developed good skills of note making and recording of relevant evidence from a number of sources. This was seen in a Year 13 lesson when students worked in pairs to prepare presentations on the effectiveness of Emperor Charles V as a ruler, using a variety of sources. Their work displayed much research and effort and good oral skills, though critical analysis was undeveloped in presentations by some lower attainers. Year 13 students show confidence and fluency in expressing their views, as when a lively discussion began in analysing the extent of Lady Jane Grey's threat to Mary Tudor. However, before this, there had been some reticence and passiveness about discussing in a lively way in pairs.
240. Higher attaining students have mature skills of analysing and evaluating key issues. They discuss complex ideas with considerable insight and write well-structured, analytical essays. Evidence is well chosen from various sources, which are skilfully evaluated for their reliability and usefulness. This was clearly seen in their very thorough personal studies. High expectations set by the teachers and their very thorough marking, which gives detailed guidance on improvement, promote high standards. Lower attaining students have also benefited from this help, though they sometimes find it difficult to analyse sources, make balanced judgements and write relevantly and accurately with well-supported arguments. Students are not always made fully aware of the range of interpretations on a subject, nor question sufficiently the reliability of sources, unless prompted.



241. Teaching overall is very good, consequently students learn well. Teachers use their very good knowledge of the subject to plan lessons which offer stimulating activities based on the students' own topics of enquiry. Charts, grids and spider diagrams are particularly well used to summarise the learning and to focus on key questions. Where teaching is most effective, there is a brisk pace to the lesson, time is used well in setting deadlines and providing quick-fire questioning to check understanding and to stretch students' thinking. Tasks frequently make challenging demands on their skills of analysis. Year 12 students were constantly engaged throughout the lesson by the teacher extracting their ideas, challenging their thinking and encouraging others to do so when comparing two challengers to the throne of Henry VII. Their findings were recorded on a grid and then critically evaluated by the whole class. There were clear gains in their knowledge and understanding, while their speaking and analytical skills were strongly reinforced.
242. Good learning is also promoted by the very good relationship with the students, based on the teachers' readiness to give time to monitoring and guiding the students' progress. This was indicated by the extra Sunday revision sessions to help prepare A/S students for their examination. Marking is done very thoroughly so that students know their weaknesses and how to improve. The advice given to guide their personal studies was particularly valuable and informative. Encouraged by this, students are very well motivated and work well independently. Their attitude to work is very good. They use time well and most are productive in their work. Students expressed strong appreciation for the support and guidance given by staff and their encouragement of independent study. They also acknowledged the benefits gained from the good supply of book resources and by the teachers arranging access to a local university library for research.
243. The very effective leadership and management of the subject also promote the good teaching and learning. In displaying good organisation and strong commitment to the subject, the head of department sets high expectations of standards and effort. Both students and staff respect this and respond well. Schemes of work are clear and challenging in their tasks. The wide range of resources provides the students with much stimulus and support for detailed, private study. The setting of specific targets for students after assessments provides well-focused direction for improvement, to which the students respond readily.

## **ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION**

The focus of the inspection was on English language, French and Russian. English literature, German, Spanish and Italian were also sampled. The 2001 GCE A-level English literature results were above average and they are likely to rise to well above average this year. In the lesson seen, standards were well above average; learning and teaching were both very good, leading to a very good understanding of the texts. The 2001 GCE A-level German results were below average and the students performed less well in this subject than in the others they took. In the Year 12 A/S lesson seen, teaching and learning were very good. The sole student worked at above average standards, expressing opinions and ideas well in giving a good oral presentation of healthy eating in Germany. Good, independent use of the Internet helped study. No students will sit the GCE A-level examination this year. All students gained at least a pass grade in the 2001 Spanish GCE A-level examinations, however, with only four candidates entered, national comparisons are unreliable. Teaching and learning were good in the one Year 12 sampled lesson. Demanding audio exercises in an effectively used language laboratory raised further the students' above average understanding. The teacher's great enthusiasm for the language and her judicious use of variations around the lesson's theme led to the good progress made. In 2001, the two students who took GCE A-level Italian failed to attain pass grades. In the Year 13 lesson seen, teaching and learning were unsatisfactory. The work was too challenging and progress made was below that expected.

## English language

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

### Strengths

- Students achieve well above average standards at A-level.
- Good teaching enables students to achieve well.
- Students' mature attitudes and their excellent relationships with teachers have a positive effect on their learning.

### Areas for improvement

- The analysis of examination results to set realistic targets for students and to ensure that they continue to achieve well is underdeveloped.
- There are not enough opportunities for students to take responsibility for their own learning through more independent research.

244. GCE A-level results in English language have improved each year since 1999, when they were in line with the national average. In 2001 results were well above average. All students gained passes and a better than average proportion gained the highest grades, A/B. More girls than boys took the examination but both boys and girls did equally well. Students achieved well in comparison with their performance in other GCE A-level subjects. Results in A/S examinations in 2001 were good. More than 50 students followed the course and nearly all gained passes, with more than a third gaining the highest grades. Once committed to the courses, nearly all students complete them. Each year a small number of students re-sits GCSE examinations in English. In 2001, most improved their GCSE grade and more than half achieved a grade C.

245. The standard of work of current Year 13 students is well above average. Students are building well on their success at A/S level and are achieving well in relation to their previous GCSE examination results. They contribute confidently to class discussion and have a firm command of Standard English when necessary. Most are able to use linguistic terminology correctly and with confidence. This enables them to analyse texts and express their views very succinctly. For example, in an analysis of newspaper language, students readily identified examples of language change and explained the use of 'cast off' as a phrasal verb and the headline, 'Damilola boy has previous convictions' as an example of pre-modification. Students organise their files well and are adept at note-taking during lessons. However, there are few examples of students finding information by themselves, either from reference books or from the Internet, in order to build on the information they receive from teachers. Students have recently completed research projects. They explore topics in which they are clearly interested, ranging from an analysis of the use of metaphor in sports reports, to the use of jargon by staff in a popular television programme. High attaining students explain their chosen methodology clearly and structure the discussion of their findings very well. Some average and lower attaining students make little reference to further reading in their bibliographies and this limits the extent to which they can analyse their findings or explain the context of their projects.

246. In Year 12, students are currently making good progress from their earlier GCSE level of work. Most students have already developed a good understanding of specialist vocabulary, which helps them to analyse texts more precisely. They produce some very good original writing, both creative and informational, which shows an awareness of readership and an ability to match style and content to purpose. Students use their developing skills of analysis well when commenting on their own writing. For example,

a student re-wrote a traditional fairy tale as a politically correct version and then clearly justified the way the changes suited the readership.

247. Students have very positive attitudes towards their studies. They are mature and confident and have excellent relationships with teachers. They appreciate the fact that teachers are prepared to give willingly of their time and to provide extra help for individuals when needed. This mutual respect between teachers and students makes a significant contribution to students' learning in all lessons.
248. The quality of teaching is good and enables students to learn well in all lessons. Teachers have a very secure knowledge of their subject. This allows them to extend students' skills of analysis further, especially through their constant use and re-enforcement of specialist vocabulary. They ensure that students have a clear framework and grasp of terminology with which to discuss and analyse texts. Teachers mark students' work regularly and provide very helpful comments. They show their high expectations of students by providing guidance for the further improvement of work that is already of a high standard. As a result, students know how well they are doing but also understand how they can gain even better grades. Teachers plan lessons well. They explain the purpose of lessons and usually review with students how well they have achieved their aims at the end of the lesson. In the best lessons, teachers use a variety of activities to involve and motivate students. However, the pace of some lessons becomes rather slow because of the frequent use of teacher-led, whole class discussion. Teachers miss opportunities to encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning. For example, there were no lessons during the inspection in which students were asked to prepare or present information for the rest of the class.
249. The English department's provision for the sixth form is well organised and led. Teachers work well as a team. The teaching of classes is shared but there is good communication between teachers, so that there is a good progression of topics and activities for students. Responsibilities for the development and evaluation of schemes of work are clearly allocated. The department is beginning to analyse GCSE results and performance in A/S and GCE A-level exams in order to identify how well students are achieving in English. However, this is not yet used to set target grades for students, to ensure that they continue to achieve as well as expected.

## French

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

### Strengths

- The quality of learning and of teaching is very good, so the students achieve very well.
- GCE A-level standards last year were above average; this year, they promise to be well above average.
- Because the teaching makes great demands on the students their understanding and speaking of French are very good.

### Areas for improvement

- Lessons do not end with recaps on what has been learned, as a means of assessing the students' progress.
- There is not enough sharing of very good methods among teachers.

250. The 2001 GCE A-level examination results were above the national average. The proportion obtaining the higher grades, A/B, were very close to the national average and all students obtained at least a pass grade. Since 1998, no student has failed and average point scores have been significantly above average until this year when they were above average, but not significantly so. The proportions obtaining the higher A/B

grades were annually well above average between 1998 and 2000, with boys, although fewer in number, doing particularly well. A/S results in 2001 were high compared with the national average, with 80 per cent of candidates obtaining an A/B pass and none below a C grade. These high standards show clearly in the work of the current Year 13.

251. Current standards are well above average and Year 13 students are achieving very well in relation to their GCSE and A/S results. In the lessons seen, the very good teaching was producing a similar quality of learning through closely structured work that challenged the students to think, use their already extensive vocabulary and well developed command of French grammar to produce often compelling arguments about, for example, the privations of post-war childhood. Scrutinised written work also shows very good achievement that should raise examination results back to well above average this year. One boy from an ethnic minority, studying French as his third language, produced particularly fluent work. Another boy was showing remarkably good progress from his pre-A-level standards. The students' command of both standard and colloquial French is excellent; all have good accents.
252. Students in Year 12 are also making very good progress, largely because the very good teaching challenges them and sets high expectations: They understand and, for the most part, speak very well. One boy was trying hard, but having transferred from another school, was some way behind the rest and an otherwise high attaining girl found difficulty in accepting the convention that French be the sole means of communication. Nonetheless, the students' full participation, for example in no holds barred debate on the pros and cons of the Euro and Europe showed some very good achievement. Another lesson on scruples demonstrated their ability to use the imperfect and conditional tenses very well.
253. Teaching overall is very good and learning matches this. The students are uniformly keen, interested and want to do well. Work experience in France that most have or are about to enjoy raises standards and proves a strong spur to motivation. The rapid pace of all lessons and the careful structuring of work that puts the students into challenging situations are the main features of teaching. Because the teacher organised stimulating group and paired activities, Year 13 students were, for example, able to reinforce their appreciation, knowledge and understanding of the prescribed literature. Interjecting appropriate slang expressions into their mini-presentations, the students made very good progress.
254. A Year 12 lesson was very successful because it combined demanding grammar work with imaginative comprehension exercises built around a recorded song that honed the students' listening skills very effectively and which they thoroughly enjoyed. In another lesson, the teacher's prompting, suggestion of suitable alternatives and good use of groupwork gave the students confidence; they sparked off each other and were sufficiently at ease to ask when they needed to and to practise rigorously thereafter. Learning is very good because the students are willing to correct each other; occasionally, teaching misses opportunities to develop this skill. Sometimes the work set lacks tight enough parameters when, even in Year 13, students wallow and allow the English idiom to predominate. In a lesson on modern slavery, for instance, it was only when they began to talk about different crimes, covered previously in a good homework, that their confident fluency returned. Homework forms an effective part of learning; the careful correction of written work helps the students to make their very good progress. Time is used very fully in lessons; there are no gaps, but the lesson end often comes before there has been time for the teacher to check the students' learning by recapitulating with them how they have done. This is a weakness. Students use information and communication technology well to complement their work and their current standards show how well they learn independently.

255. Supported by a well-qualified, committed staff, leadership and management are good. Professional discussions are commonplace. The effective use of a language laboratory helps to raise standards. Other accommodation leaves much to be desired. Further work could profitably be undertaken to establish even greater commonality of teaching methods to increase the competitive challenge, use of music, verse, drama and access to France, for example by employing foreign language assistants.

## Russian

The quality of provision in Russian is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- Students are very interested in the subject.
- Students have benefited greatly from a recent study visit to Russia.
- The scheme of work for the new A/S course is well planned.

### Areas for improvement

- Standards of work are below average.
- Students do not do enough homework and independent study, and do not make enough use of the Internet or the library for developing their key skills.
- Students do not have clear enough individual study and learning targets.

256. Russian is taken by a small group of students in Year 12 following the A/S course. The current group gained B grades or, in one case, a C grade at GCSE. Their previous attainment is, therefore, relatively modest. In 2001, there were no A/S or GCE A-level students. In 2000, three students gained A, B and D grades at GCE A-level. These high-attaining students performed as well as expected, in relation to their GCSE grades. However, the numbers of students are too small for secure generalisation about the quality of their attainment.
257. The standards of work of current students are below average. They show some knowledge of grammatical structure, but have not moved on sufficiently from their GCSE work into the more complex areas of tenses and the Russian case system. Students demonstrate some confidence in simple reading passages, but their vocabulary is limited and does not allow them to tackle more complex texts, except with a great deal of support from the teacher. For half the students, reading out loud presents considerable difficulties.
258. Much of the students' written work takes the form of grammatical exercises, often of areas expected at GCSE level. Day-to-day marking is good and comments are clear. However, students are not required to do follow-up corrections, nor any re-drafting of their work. There is too little indication that students learn from their mistakes. This is an area for improvement. There is also room for much more rigorous and systematic learning of basic grammar, and for more emphasis on the carefully organised practice of simple reading and listening skills for homework, and in independent study time.
259. Given the previous attainment of the students, teaching is satisfactory in that students are offered careful support. However, students' progress is slow overall and they do not have a clear enough idea of what is expected of them at this level. The teacher uses a range of methods and approaches to bring about learning, and demonstrates good subject knowledge in the conduct of oral work. Questions asked are clear, but the students' level of understanding and ability to recall previously met vocabulary is often too weak for them to make the progress expected. For example, in one lesson, by means of a simple Russian-English matching exercise, the teacher revised the vocabulary on drugs that the students had encountered in the previous lesson. An

extension task followed that was designed to consolidate students' knowledge. The students found this task too difficult, and the teacher had to reduce the pace of the lesson and give a great deal of support to students to enable them to complete the task at all.

260. In the second lesson seen, the teacher took a much more rigorous and defined approach to teaching and learning objectives. The teacher explained clearly what was expected of the students, and gave exact deadlines for the preparation and completion of an oral presentation, which is an essential part of the assessed work for the course. Requirements for independent study and work on the Internet were made crystal clear to students. Most students responded well to these raised expectations. Two students began serious study of articles on Tolstoy and Dostoevsky from the Internet, and one decided to write about aspects of the recent successful visit to St. Petersburg.
261. Students have done far too little work in private study for them to make the progress expected. In class most are attentive and generally work productively. However, only half the students have bothered to make consistent notes of new vocabulary. Most students join in well in guessing for meaning, but on occasion one student tends to take too prominent a role. Not all make the same amount of effort. Students have an inadequate understanding of what is required of them for success in examinations. They have paid little attention so far to reading about the history and literature of Russia, either in the library or on the Internet.
262. The management of the subject is beginning to focus sharply on the need to create short-term and long-term targets for both teaching and learning objectives, and to monitor them rigorously. The new scheme of work reflects the subject requirements effectively. A start has been made on requiring students to use the Internet themselves and to draw on a range of learning support materials. There is evidence that work can be improved and standards raised.