

INSPECTION REPORT

CROMPTON HOUSE SCHOOL

Shaw, Oldham

LEA area: Oldham

Unique reference number: 105740

Headteacher: Mr D Bowes

Reporting inspector: Mr J W Ashton
4492

Dates of inspection: 8th – 12th October 2001

Inspection number: 190706

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	11-18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Rochdale Road Shaw Oldham
Postcode:	OL2 7HS
Telephone number:	01706 847451
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr P Lomas
Date of previous inspection:	October 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities (sixth form)	Aspect responsibilities (sixth form)
4492	J Ashton	Registered inspector	Chemistry	
9882	A Rea	Lay inspector		Students` attitudes, values and personal development How well the school works in partnership with parents and students
10361	F Evans	Team inspector Co-ordinator of the inspection of the sixth form	English literature English combined	The school`s results and students` achievements How well students are taught Students` spiritual, moral, social and cultural development Leadership and management
1272	I Hocking	Team inspector	Mathematics	
6642	P Hill	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	How good the curricular and other opportunities offered to students are
30215	H Feasey	Team inspector	Geography	Resources
31603	P Wakefield	Team inspector	Biology	Assessment
15940	N Godfrey	Team inspector	Business education	
30794	G Murray	Team inspector	History	Advice, support and guidance
15487	J Bean	Team inspector	Music	
27082	G Henshall	Team inspector	German	Resources
2491	D Beaumont	Team inspector	Design and technology	Best value
12941	J Coleman	Team inspector	Physical education	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Crompton House School is a voluntary aided Church of England mixed comprehensive school catering for pupils aged 11 to 18. A Beacon School, since 1998, it is heavily over-subscribed in Years 7 to 11, and draws its pupils from a wide geographical area. The primary entry qualification to the main school is active membership of the Anglican faith, but there is open access to students of all faiths and cultures into the sixth form. There are currently 953 pupils in Years 7 to 11 and 249 students in the growing sixth form. Very few are from minority ethnic groups. There are no pupils for whom English is an additional language and none at an early stage of language acquisition. Three pupils have statements of special educational need and a further nine are on either stage 3 or 4 of the special needs Code of Practice. Fewer than five per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals. Standards on entry are well above the national average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a highly successful school with many excellent features. Pupils achieve well by sustaining well above average attainment at every key stage. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. The school is very well led and with considerable flair, demonstrating a strong Christian ethos in action. It provides very good value for the monies it receives.

What the school does well

- Pupils achieve well throughout the school and sustain well above average standards of attainment at the end of each key stage and in the sixth form.
- The quality of teaching is very good overall and some of it is excellent; teachers' command of their subjects is particularly secure.
- Leadership and management provided by key staff is very good, strongly focused on the continual improvement of teaching and learning and pupils' achievement.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development, their behaviour and relationships in the school are all excellent; attitudes are very positive indeed, and attendance is well above average.
- Analysis of the academic performance of each department, and the monitoring of pupils' individual progress, are very good.
- The school builds very well indeed on its Beacon School status.

What could be improved

- There is a severe shortage of teaching spaces of sufficient size and flexibility.
- Some health and safety issues need urgent attention.
- There is a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching in science.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in 1996, since when it has made very good improvement in almost all of the issues identified at that time. Improvements are also apparent: in the provision for pupils with special educational needs; the quality of teaching and learning; the range and variety of effective teaching and learning strategies; and in overall standards of attainment throughout the school. There are still some health and safety issues to address.

STANDARDS

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

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

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

At the end of Year 9, attainment in the national tests has been above average overall for at least the last four years, and also well above average compared to similar schools. Results in English are in the top five per cent of those in the country. (Similar schools in this respect are those with similar proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals.)

At the end of Year 11, results in terms of pupils' average point scores at GCSE in 2000 are well above average nationally, and well above average for similar schools. This has been consistently the case since at least 1996. The 2001 results are even better. Eighty one per cent of pupils achieved at least five A* to C grades, the schools best ever result. The school fell short by one percentage point of its target for A* to C grades in 2000, but exceeded its 2001 target by three percentage points. Results in virtually all subjects are significantly above the national average, by degrees ranging from +6.2 per cent in ICT to +37.7 per cent in combined sciences. Both boys and girls attain better at this school than they do on average nationally but averaged over the three years 1998 to 2000, for example, boys do better against their national peers than do girls against theirs.

In the sixth form, A-level results have been above average nationally since 1996 at least. The average point scores for students entered for at least two A-levels in 2000 was 22.3 which is well above the national average of 18.2. At A-level, male and female students' point scores were almost identical (22.5 and 22.1). Subjects which, in 2000, are able to demonstrate good achievement by their students compared with their previous GCSE results, include history, geography, government and politics, biology, physical education, economics and business studies, music, sociology, ICT and psychology.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very positive indeed throughout the school. Pupils and students are proud of their school and work hard to do well.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Excellent behaviour both in and outside of class ensures that the school is a very orderly and friendly community and that no time is wasted.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent relationships between all who work in the school. Pupils and students respond very well to opportunities to exercise responsibility.
Attendance	Well above average. Punctuality to lessons is very good.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall, with much that is excellent. This is a significant factor in the continued academic success of the pupils. There were no unsatisfactory lessons in the sixth form, and almost none in Years 7 to 11.

A considerable, and nearly universal, strength of the teaching is the teachers' very secure command of their subjects and the exceptionally good climate for learning engendered in their lessons. Notable features of the very best teaching include the very clear lesson objectives, productive pace, sky-high expectations, interesting material and, above all, its challenge and sparkle. The pupils know exactly what is required of them and by when. The teachers exude enthusiasm, and this inspires the pupils. Pupils are allowed a good degree of autonomy in some lessons. The work stretches all of them. They are not always all doing the same thing at the same time, but sometimes they are, when it is more effective to work that way.

There is good attention to promoting literacy and numeracy skills across the subjects.

In the smaller proportion of lessons where the teaching is satisfactory rather than better, the pace tends to be more pedestrian and there are fewer opportunities for pupils to be more actively involved in the lessons. The class is treated as if everyone in it is at the same stage of understanding and the quality of feedback to pupils is less helpful than it could be.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Broad, balanced and fully meeting statutory requirements in Years 7 to 11. A reasonably wide range of A and AS-levels but no vocational courses in the sixth form. A good range of extra-curricular activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Much improved since the last inspection.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Excellent. Provision for spiritual, social and moral development is excellent and provision for cultural development is strong and becoming stronger. All pupils take part in a daily act of collective worship.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very well. Pupils and students are very well supported and guided pastorally; assessment of their attainment and analysis of their performance is very good.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. Very positive and friendly leadership from the headteacher. Very clear vision for the future. Very capable senior team. Subject departments are well led.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors are knowledgeable, work hard and are very supportive of the school. They are beginning to become more involved in its day-to-day working through attachments to particular departments. They have ensured that almost all statutory requirements are met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. A wide range of data and review procedures ensures that, on the whole, the school evaluates its own performance very thoroughly.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The budget is carefully used for the benefit of the pupils and students. Some sixth form group sizes are small, leading to some large classes elsewhere.

The school applies well the principles of best value in its spending decisions.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<p>The large majority of parents feel that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school is well led and managed; • Their children are well taught and expected to work hard; • The behaviour in school is excellent, and their children being helped to become more mature and responsible; • They would be comfortable approaching the school with questions or a problem. 	<p>Small proportions of parents feel that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homework pressure is too high; • The school could work more closely with parents; • They could be better informed about how well their children are getting on.

The inspection findings support parents' positive views. Homework is a serious part of the school's strategy for maintaining high standards, and was seen to be used well. Parents are kept informed of their children's progress and the school works hard to involve its parents as much as possible, but this is not as easy as it could be; many parents live large distances from the school.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form of this large 11-18 comprehensive school has 249 students, which includes 32 students who have come from other schools and a small number (five) of ethnic minority students. It provides a wide range of academic subjects in the sixth form but no vocational courses. The proportion of students from Year 11 who continue into the sixth form varies from year to year – in 2001 it was 61 per cent. GCSE results at the end of Year 11 are well above average, and most students embark upon two-year programmes leading to GCE A-level via advanced supplementary level (AS). This is a school with a very distinct Christian ethos and high academic standards. The sixth form is open to students of other cultures and other faiths. It has no students at present with special educational needs.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form is successful and is financially almost self-sufficient. Students learn effectively and achieve well in most subjects. Both academically and pastorally, the sixth form serves its students very well. Teaching is very good overall and none is unsatisfactory. There is some very good teaching in English, mathematics, music, design and technology, German, information and communication technology (ICT), history, geography, art, government and politics, physics, psychology and sociology. Excellent teaching takes place in English, mathematics, chemistry, biology, psychology and business education. The main strengths and areas for improvement are:

Strengths

- Students achieve very good examination results overall, and in 2000 they did particularly well in biology, chemistry, English literature, German, geography, history, music, physical education, psychology, physics and sociology. Results were even better in 2001.
- Relationships between students and teachers are excellent and reflect very well the strong Christian ethos of the school. Students listen carefully to their teachers and to each other. Teachers value their students highly.
- Students have extremely positive attitudes to their work. Behaviour is excellent. They are mature, sensible and sensitive young people with a spirit of intellectual curiosity and an enthusiasm for learning.
- Teaching is very good overall and promotes high standards. Almost half of the lessons are either very good or excellent. Teachers have very good command of their subjects and use a variety of teaching and learning approaches, which enrich learning.
- Provision for the spiritual, moral and social development of students is excellent.
- Parents strongly support the school.
- The leadership and management of the sixth form are very good.

What could be improved

- Not all sixth form courses are equally effective at bringing the best out of students; some students achieve better in some courses than they do in others.

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	Very Good. Examination results match the national average. Student achievement is good. Teaching is very good. Students' learning is very good. Relationships between students and teachers are very good and often excellent.
Biology	Very Good. Standards are very high and well above national average. Average point scores have steadily increased over the last three years. Teaching is good overall with some excellent teaching. Teachers' subject knowledge is a strength.
Chemistry	Good. Examination results are well above average. Achievement is good in terms of added value. Teaching is good overall. Some teaching is excellent. Some could be better paced.
Design and technology	Good. Examination results for courses new in 2001 are high. Achievement is good in terms of the amount of progress that students make. Teachers have good subject knowledge and complementary skills in the subject.
Business education	Good. Examination results match the national average. Teaching is good and some is excellent. Teachers have a very good command of their subject.
Information and communication technology	Very Good. Examination results are above average. Teaching is good with a significant amount that is very good. Relationships are very good. Learning is good. Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good.
Physical education	Very Good. Examination results are well above average and learning is good. Achievement is good. Teaching is very good. Teachers have high expectations.
Music	Very Good. Examination results are high, though numbers of students are low. Teaching is very good. Sixth form music makes a very positive impact on the wider community and on the spiritual life of the school.
History	Very Good. Examination results are very high. Achievement is very good in terms of added value. Teaching is very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and high academic expectations to which the students respond. Relationships are very good.
Geography	Very Good. Results are above average in 2000 and look to be even better in 2001. Achievement is good in terms of the amount of progress that students make. Teaching and learning are very good. Students are managed extremely well and teachers have excellent knowledge of their subject.
English combined	Good. Examination results matched the national average in 2000. Standards are high and students are achieving well in class. Teaching is very good. Subject knowledge is very good. Independent and collaborative learning is a strength.
English literature	Very Good. Examination results are well above average. Standards are high. Teaching is very good and some is excellent. Independent and collaborative learning is a particular strength.
Modern foreign languages	Good. Examination results at advanced level fluctuate over the last three years. Small numbers distort the statistics. At AS-level attainment is high. Teaching is good. Teachers have detailed and up-to-date knowledge of their subjects.

A sample of lessons was observed in other subjects; English language, government and politics, physics, sociology, psychology, art, general studies and personal, social and health education. Teaching was never

less than satisfactory and included very good and excellent lessons in psychology, and very good lessons in government and politics, physics and art.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Provision for the support and guidance of students is highly effective. Very good information and advice are made available from induction into the sixth form until entrance to higher education. Very well developed systems are in place for monitoring and supporting students in their personal and academic progress.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Leadership and management of the sixth form are also highly effective. Sixth form tutors work as a very good team. They know their students well and are concerned for their wellbeing and academic progress. They monitor progress constantly, consistently and very effectively.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

<i>What students like about the sixth form</i>	<i>What they feel could be improved</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The clear and accurate information about courses in the sixth form; • The 'family' feel to the sixth form, which makes them feel welcome and valued; • Good teaching and high academic standards; • The staff are very approachable and always helpful; • The new headteacher is easy to communicate with; • They find the sixth form 'challenging, enriching, worthwhile and welcoming'. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They would like the Careers Advisor to be available in school more often; • The lack of sports facilities for the sixth form; • The signing out procedures take too long; • They feel that sometimes they could be treated as more responsible young adults.

The strengths identified by students are well founded. The Careers Advisor visits the school and is fully booked up. When students have two free periods at the end of the day they are allowed to go home but must sign out. Inspectors found that this can cause delays, which result in some students having to catch a later bus home. Students in Year 13 do feel that they could be treated more like responsible adults but inspectors found that they also say that they are very happy in the sixth form. Students are comfortable with the dress code. They are given responsibilities as prefects. Many students are involved in the extra curricular-life of the school, for example in the Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award Scheme, sport and in the choirs, orchestras and bands.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Pupils achieve well throughout the school and sustain well above average standards of attainment at the end of each key stage and in the sixth form.

1. From a starting point of well above the national average when they enter the school, pupils achieve well above national average standards of attainment by the end of their Year 9 National Curriculum tests, at GCSE and again at A-level.
2. By the end of Year 9, in 2000, pupils' average point scores in the national tests were well above average in all three core subjects, English, mathematics and science. Results in English are in the top five per cent of those in the country. The trend in the school's average national test scores over these last five years is an increase, which is broadly in line with the national trend but consistently about four points higher. This is equivalent to pupils being, on average, four terms ahead of pupils nationally at this age. When measured against similar schools, attainment at age 14 is also well above the national average in all three subjects. (Similar schools in this respect are those with similar proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals.)
3. Pupils also achieve well above average GCSE point scores overall. In 2000, this amounted to an average of 53.1 points against a national average of 41.5. The trend in the school's average GCSE points score over the past six years is above the national trend. In other words, overall GCSE results at Crompton House are improving faster than the average for other schools elsewhere. The school's performance is also well above average when compared with schools whose pupils performed as well at the end of Year 9. Results in virtually all subjects in 2000 are significantly above the national average, by degrees ranging from +6.2 per cent in ICT to +37.7 per cent in combined sciences.
4. Most students left the sixth form in 2000 with at least two GCE A-levels. Students achieved an average points score of 22.3, which is well above the national average of 17.8 points. Male and female students performed almost equally well overall. Results at A-level and in the new AS-level examinations in 2001 seem to show equally good results, although national comparison figures are not yet available. Forty five per cent of A-level results are at grades A and B, with female students slightly outperforming males at these higher grades. Only three per cent of the entries achieved no pass grade.
5. Pupils achieve well at Crompton House as a result of the largely very good teaching, with its high expectations, which instil into them very good attitudes towards their learning. Throughout the school, pupils make good progress in knowledge and understanding and in the development of essential skills. Intakes of pupils whose attainment levels are consistently well above the national average, year-on-year, end up attaining well above average results at the end of each key stage and at the end of their time at the school. This equates to good overall achievement (good 'added value') by pupils and by students in the sixth form, since the maintenance of well above average standards is hard work.

The quality of teaching is very good overall and some of it is excellent; teachers' command of their subjects is particularly secure.

6. The quality of teaching is very good overall, with much that is excellent. This is a significant factor in the continued academic success of the pupils. Of the 61 lessons seen in Years 7 to 11, five in every six lessons were at least good, one in four was very good, and one in every 12 was excellent. These proportions of good, very good and excellent teaching, are high. They are matched by equally good, and in some respects higher, proportions in the 63 lessons observed in the sixth form. Only one lesson was less than satisfactory, and that was in Year 10.

7. A good mixture of lessons across Years 7 to 11 were visited, as part of the `short` inspection of the main school provision. The major focus, however, was upon 13 of the sixth form courses. Teaching in most other sixth form courses, except religious studies, the result of a separate diocesan inspection, was sampled.
8. A considerable, and nearly universal, strength of the teaching is the teachers` very secure command of their subjects and the exceptionally good climate for learning engendered in their lessons. Notable features of the very best teaching include the very clear lesson objectives, productive pace, sky-high expectations, interesting material and, above all, its challenge and sparkle. The pupils know exactly what is required of them and by when. The teachers exude enthusiasm, and this inspires the pupils. Pupils are allowed a good degree of autonomy in some lessons. The work stretches all of them. They are not always all doing the same thing at the same time, but sometimes they are, when it is more effective to work that way. Teachers also have very good knowledge of test and examination requirements at all key stages. For example, in English the head of department has all the gifted and talented pupils together for one week to tackle work specifically targeted at the end of Year 9 higher level questions. It is partly due to this degree of focused preparation that English results at the end of Year 9 are in the top five per cent of those in the country.
9. In the small proportion of lessons where teaching is satisfactory overall, the teachers demonstrate their good subject knowledge and basic teaching skills but one or more of the following areas for development are also usually present. The pace tends to be more pedestrian and there are fewer opportunities for pupils to be more actively involved in the lessons. The class is too often treated as if everyone in it is at the same stage of understanding and the quality of feedback to pupils is less helpful than it could be.

Leadership and management provided by key staff is very good; strongly focused on the continual improvement of teaching and learning and pupils` achievement.

10. The school is very well led and managed. All but one of the 526 parents who completed the inspection questionnaire agreed. To provide every member of the school community with excellent educational opportunities, whilst fostering Christian values, is the school`s first aim. High standards of pupil attainment, good progress throughout the school and excellent relationships are the result.
11. The headteacher, just completing his second year in post, has made an excellent start in further revitalising an already successful school, with his mixture of infectious enthusiasm and hard-edged professional determination to make it even more successful. With the help of a strengthened senior team, which now includes strong female representation, he is continuously striving to improve the school's systems and to raise further everyone's horizons. The high morale and improving results bear out his continuing success. Members of this very capable senior team now have clearer briefs than they used to have. They are also more closely linked to departments in order to assure continual improvement in the quality of teaching and learning with a view to maintaining the very high standards of attainment that pupils and students achieve.
12. The leadership and management of subject areas, including that of all three of the core subjects English, mathematics and science is generally strong.
13. The governing body is becoming much more involved in the day-to-day work of the school, with a view to increasing governors` understanding of just how good the school is, and exactly what takes place in particular departments. Its documentation is well maintained, its procedures are secure and it meets almost all its legal requirements, including that of ensuring that all pupils receive a daily act of collective worship. The exceptions are the provision of religious education for all sixth formers, and ensuring that health and safety, including safety risk assessments, are fully secure.

Provision for pupils` spiritual, moral and social development, their behaviour and relationships in the school are all excellent; attitudes are very positive indeed, and attendance is well above average.

14. Provision for pupils` spiritual, moral and social development is exceptionally good. Throughout the school there is a clear moral code and understanding of what is right and wrong, and pupils understand the implications of their actions upon others. Pupils are presented with moral dilemmas in many lessons. For example, in a Year 12 geography lesson, students become very interested in the whole idea of social experimentation, questioning whether small children do know the difference between right and wrong. They are mature, sensible and intelligent young people who are at ease with adults and with each other. The relationships between students and staff reflect a real sense of trust. This is seen as much in the quality of the engagement between teacher and students in lessons as it is in the social interaction between them. Provision for pupils` spiritual development is very good. It permeates everything the school does, in a thoroughly unobtrusive way, but there are events, which stand out as notable highlights. One of these was the act of collective worship on the morning of the last day of the inspection. Three pairs of males, mixtures of staff and sixth form students, demonstrated to a crowded hall three different ways of teaching each other how to efficiently dress teddy bears in a nappy. This was done in a way that very effectively linked three different ways of teaching the word of God to the relative merits of three different ways of organising the learning of any specific activity in a classroom.
15. Pupils` attitudes to the school and to their work are very positive indeed and the school's ethos is one that encourages pupils and expects them to work hard, whilst treating them with respect and friendliness. Pupils are proud of their school and enjoy attending. They take their learning seriously and listen attentively both to their teachers and to other pupils.
16. Behaviour is exemplary in lessons and throughout the school. Even at peak times of movement through narrow corridors and between buildings, mutual courtesy and very sensible behaviour is the norm. For example, during wet breaks, younger pupils are free to stay inside the school or to go outside. Small groups of pupils were seen in the hall chatting sensibly to each other. Relationships with teachers on duty are friendly and relaxed. The crowded hubbub of lunchtimes in the dining rooms only works as well as it does because of the sensible, patient and good natured behaviour of all concerned. The exclusion rate is low, and is almost never permanent, caused usually by the occasional case of physical assault which the school reacts to very firmly. Parents are very pleased with the attitudes and behaviour in the school. Almost all of those who responded to the questionnaire say that their children like the school and that the behaviour in the school is good. The result is that pupils are very serious about their work and teachers are able to devote all of their energies to teaching their subjects well.
17. Attendance is well above average (95 per cent compared to the national figure of 91 per cent). Unauthorised absence is less than one tenth of the national figure. This regular attendance has a very positive impact on the rate of pupils` progress.
18. Relationships are excellent between all those who work in the school. The respect that pupils have for their teachers and other adults in the school is matched by the adults` respect for their pupils. This creates a very positive learning environment. Relationships between girls and boys are also excellent. There are numerous examples of them collaborating together very effectively in lessons.

Analysis of the academic performance of each department, and the monitoring of pupils` individual progress, are very good.

19. Some parents complained to the inspectors that they would like more regular details of their children's progress during each year, but said that when the school reports did arrive they were "the best examples of such reports they had seen." The school actually sends details of pupils` progress to parents twice

each year for parents of Years 7 to 9 and three times each year to parents in Years 10 to 13. This is more frequently than at many schools.

20. The school has a systematic approach to reviewing each department's test and examination results which has been in operation for two years. Heads of department submit to senior management a detailed commentary on test and examination results in their departments at the end of Years 9, 11, 12 and 13. In other words, after results in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3, and in the GCSE, new AS and the A-level examinations respectively. Reasons are put forward for particular trends. Notable successes or failures of individual pupils or groups of pupils are highlighted well. But of particular helpfulness in the monitoring and evaluation of progress from year to year are the value-added analyses which are then added to each review by a member of the senior management team. These analyses illustrate very well graphically, how individual pupil achievement compares with those same pupils' prior attainment.

The school builds very well indeed on its Beacon School status.

21. Crompton House has enjoyed Beacon School status for the past three years. Crompton House is a Coordinating Beacon School and this has provided considerable and very positive links with a large number of other Beacon schools. It is the cluster lead school for the North West of England, including Merseyside. During the inspection week the school successfully led a large and important regional meeting of Beacon Schools. It is within this framework that the school is developing a clear understanding of the most suitable direction it should take for the further development and progression of its links with other schools and colleges and with commerce and industry. Overall, there are very constructive relationships with partner institutions and very effective developments within the school itself. A number of key staff have made full use of the Beacon opportunities to speed developments in the areas of, for example, Internet web site building, the training and induction of new teachers and the introduction of a 'thinking skills in science' approach into Year 7. The school's promising links with a school with a multi-cultural intake are helping to counteract some of the dangers inherent in having an almost all white school population. They are helping to avoid what one parent in the parents' meeting with inspectors called, "the danger of our children being too cocooned at Crompton House."

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

There is a severe shortage of teaching spaces of sufficient size and flexibility.

22. Because of the great popularity of the school it has been over-subscribed in Years 7 to 11 for many years. Sixth form numbers have significantly increased recently. Consequently, pressure upon rooms has increased to the extent that it is becoming more than an inconvenience and is beginning to affect adversely standards and the quality of teaching. It certainly affects the use of some resources. For example, one of the ICT rooms has to be used as an 'ordinary' classroom for 16 periods each week, restricting the availability of its computers for other subject areas. Three dining rooms have also to be used for lessons, which therefore suffer a deal of disturbance during the setting out and clearing up periods. A number of rooms are too small for the size of classes which have to be timetabled in them, restricting movement and flexibility of learning in these lessons. The design and technology workshops and six of the science laboratories are used for virtually 100 per cent of the week, leaving no time for their maintenance or restocking. For 18 of the 40 periods each week, the school requires more than the nine laboratories it has, limiting drastically for some groups the amount and type of practical work that can be carried out. Teachers in a number of departments, including science, modern foreign languages, mathematics, history and business studies have far too peripatetic an existence; teaching in six or seven different rooms each week is typical. The difficulties of constantly moving resources from room to room necessarily restrict the range available for particular classes.

Some health and safety issues need urgent attention.

23. Following the disruption due to the school's central heating system having to be completely replaced, and the reviewing of senior management roles and responsibilities in the light of recent changes in the composition of the senior team, some health and safety issues need urgent attention. There are spaces in the sixth form area, a cosy rabbit warren of rooms, for instance, which lack instruction notices for what to do in the event of a fire alarm-and this in a building where recently there was a small fire. A fire door is boarded up in the same area, and elsewhere in the school another fire exit is blocked by a large plant holder. There are unmarked steps in a number of places where it is easy for people to jar their backs. The school has this and other matters in hand, and is presently making whole-school risk-assessment an urgent priority, with plans to involve external safety representatives as necessary.

There is a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching in science.

24. There is a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching in a department where the overall quality of teaching and learning is very strong. It is characterised by a lack of planning from the pupils' point of view, too slow a pace, and insufficient clarity of what pupils are expected to do and why. For instance, Year 10 pupils in a practical lesson on light achieved far less in a double period than they were capable of achieving, due to the low expectations of the teaching. In this lesson there was an over-reliance upon worksheets of dubious quality, and a failure to over-ride them by using them as an aid to teaching rather than as a recipe to be followed uncritically. The pupils were unclear about the purpose of the exercise they were carrying out and the lesson had no pulling together of the threads or consolidation section at the end. Learning was in consequence very limited and unsatisfactory overall.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

25. In order to improve the quality of education and raise standards even higher, the governors, headteacher and staff should:-

- (1) Take all steps necessary, as soon as funds allow, to increase the number of teaching spaces available.
(Paragraph 22)
- (2) Attend to the outstanding health and safety issues as a matter of urgency.
(Paragraph 23)
- (3) Improve the small amount of unsatisfactory teaching in science by:
(Paragraph 24)
 - increasing the effectiveness of the monitoring of teaching and learning in the department, with a view to disseminating its best practice more widely and, in particular, where relevant;
 - ensuring that lessons begin with clear learning objectives, shared with pupils and students, along with a review of progress made towards meeting these at the end of each lesson;
 - making allowances for the fact that different pupils work at different rates and respond to different teaching approaches;
 - increasing the pace of some lessons and the demands made of some pupils.

Sixth form

- (4) Take steps to improve some departments' effectiveness at bringing the best out of their students by:
 - Enabling them to monitor their teaching and learning, and general organisation, more systematically in order to identify and disseminate the most successful practice.
(Paragraphs 36, 69, 95)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	61
	Sixth form	63
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		34

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7-11							
Number	5	24	21	10	1	0	0
Percentage	8	39	34	16	0	0	0
Sixth form							
Number	8	22	25	8	0	0	0
Percentage	13	35	40	13	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	953	249
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	28	0

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	3	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	105	0

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	6
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	11

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	95.0
National comparative data	91.3

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2000	98	88	186

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	95	89	89
	Girls	87	79	71
	Total	182	168	160
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	98 (80)	90 (85)	86 (84)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	51 (36)	69 (61)	55 (46)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	84	92	96
	Girls	81	84	81
	Total	165	176	177
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	88 (90)	95 (92)	95 (95)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	54 (50)	73 (53)	64 (58)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	91	105	196

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	66	90	91
	Girls	83	104	104
	Total	149	194	195
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	76 (75)	99 (100)	99 (100)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6 (95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	53
	National	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)

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	52	41	93

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	22.5	22.1	22.3	N/a	N/a	N/a
National	17.7	18.6	18.2	2.6	2.9	2.7

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	7
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	1191
Any other minority ethnic group	2

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	6	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	74.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.13

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	11
Total aggregate hours worked per week	338

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	72.0
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	25.3
Key Stage 4	21.0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/01
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	£
Total income	3,346,648
Total expenditure	3,303,243
Expenditure per pupil	2,790
Balance brought forward from previous year	31,105
Balance carried forward to next year	74,509

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	13.8
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	17.1

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	2
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out

1179

Number of questionnaires returned

526

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	56	41	2	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	56	35	2	0	6
Behaviour in the school is good.	66	33	0	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	39	49	7	1	4
The teaching is good.	60	35	1	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	39	44	8	0	9
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	62	35	1	0	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	85	14	0	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	37	51	6	0	6
The school is well led and managed.	71	26	0	0	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	62	33	2	0	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	49	38	3	1	9

PART D: THE SIXTH FORM

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

26. The attainment of students who were entered in 2000 for two or more GCE A and AS-level examinations was well above the national average. This has been the case since at least 1996. The average points score for students taking at least two A-levels in 2000 was 22.3 against a national average for all maintained schools of 18.2 points. Male and female students matched each other in terms of average total point scores. However, in terms of the higher grades A and B, male students achieved 42 per cent A and B grades against a national average of 36 per cent for males. Female students matched the national average 38 per cent of A and B grades.
27. Retention rates vary significantly from subject to subject between Years 12 and 13. For example, in 2001 a relatively high proportion stayed on to the Year 13 A2 course in design and technology, but a large proportion (11 out of 26) of those taking chemistry at AS-level left the subject at the end of Year 12.
28. The school has a minimum entry expectation of average point scores (4.5 points for most subjects, 5.3 points for science and mathematics) for any subject being taken at AS-level. In general, therefore, the overall attainment of students at the start of Year 12 is at least above average. Attainment is well above average by the end of Year 13, but some subjects have higher success rates than others. The better A-level results are the product of good, very good and excellent teaching, which builds effectively on the above average attainment of students and challenges them to achieve well. An increasing number of students join the sixth form from other schools. Overall, the number of students in the sixth form is rising. Presently there are 249 students compared to 220 in 1999 and closer to 150 at the time of the last inspection. This includes a very small number of students from minority ethnic communities. The very good induction course to the sixth form provides students with relevant information on expectations and advice on study skills. In some subjects, there are additional subject-based induction courses, which successfully introduce students to the new course requirements as well as to the concepts, vocabulary and skills of particular subjects.
29. Well above average point scores were achieved at A-level in 2000 in biology, chemistry, English literature, geography, psychology, sociology and sports / physical education studies. Results in history were very high, in the top five per cent in the country. The average points score was above the national average in music and ICT. Point scores, which matched the national average, were achieved in art, economics, English language, combined English and mathematics. Results in general studies were below the national average, where one quarter of the students entered failed to achieve a grade A to E. Results in both French and German were below average, but with small numbers of students.
30. There are no national comparison figures available at the time of writing, but the school's results at A-level in 2001 show a similar pattern to the previous year but with some relative changes. Overall, almost half the entries achieved either grade A or B and far fewer students failed to achieve a grade E. General studies results are much improved and subjects with both high average points scores and high proportions of students achieving the higher grades A and B include biology, English, ICT, psychology, sociology, geography, history and music.
31. One system which is making it easier for the school to judge the relative progress of its students, and hence the relative performance of the various departments, is the school's very effective analysis, which compares student achievement to that predicted by averaging their points scores from the end of the previous key stage. GCSE performance is compared to pupils' average national test scores at the end of Year 9, and A-level performance to their average GCSE points scores at the end of Year 11. All subject departments are becoming increasingly confident in using this data and in analysing examination results

in detail year by year. The school has been using this system for some years and has successfully trained heads of department to use, interpret and analyse data.

32. Departments which, in consequence, are able to demonstrate good achievement by their students in 2000 include history, geography, government and politics, biology, physical education, economics and business studies, music, sociology, ICT and psychology. Departments where achievement is more erratic include English, mathematics, chemistry, physics, art and design, French, German, and general studies. In 2001 all the subjects listed as demonstrating good achievement continue to do so but are joined by English, ICT and German. General studies shows improved achievement and other subjects remain very much the same.
33. Students' oral and written skills are very good. Students listen carefully to their teachers and to each other. They do not interrupt a speaker but wait until the point is made before interjecting. This sensitivity to others and to what is being said shows an unusual maturity and certainly contributes to increases in knowledge and understanding. Students write well. They enter the sixth form with well above average levels of literacy on the whole. They write fluently, sensibly and accurately and have a good sense of audience and purpose. The work the school is doing on key skills builds well on these qualities. Orally, students are quite outstanding. Whether in formal or informal conversation, they are confident and assured speakers. In their oral presentations in English, and in other subjects, students speak clearly and knowledgeably about their subject, using the technical vocabulary of the subject accurately. For example, in music, students talk about styles of music with fluency. In biology and design and technology their written skills encompass notetaking and essay writing. This above average competence in basic learning skills contributes to the high standards that they achieve.
34. Students' application of number skills is clearly developed sufficiently well to be an effective tool across the curriculum. There is evidence of good acquisition of vital numerical and statistical skills in geography and other subjects. In business education, students can extrapolate data and make appropriate calculations, especially of percentages and graphs. There is good use of spreadsheets, equations and graphs in ICT and of bar and pie charts in design and technology. In physical education, students use equations competently in anatomy and physiology. Students have the requisite calculating skills in the sciences, and in French there is competent numeracy in the contexts of shopping and telling the time.
35. Students' ICT skills are benefiting considerably from the school's recent push to increase the availability of hardware to many more departments and to as many students as possible. The use of ICT as an everyday tool in lessons is becoming established. Good examples of its use were seen in English, mathematics, biology and to some extent in geography but in some subjects it is still restricted to, for example, word processing or accessing the Internet and is not yet used in a systematic and planned way in other subjects.
36. The monitoring of teaching and learning, with a view to disseminating the better practice in a department more widely both within that department and across the whole school, is an area where there is still some room for improvement. In some departments, there were lessons which, although satisfactory, were weaker than others in the same department which were very good or excellent. Identification of the reasons for such wide differences would go some way towards explaining some of the variations of subject performance from year to year and would benefit the school in its planning to maintain and improve standards.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

37. Sixth form students have very positive attitudes to the school. Their behaviour is excellent and they provide very good role models for the younger pupils in school, showing courtesy and respect to others.

Furthermore, they are well aware of their responsibility, as sixth formers, to set such an example. Attendance and punctuality are very good. Students take responsibility for reporting their own absences but appreciate that they will be supported, and their parents involved, if there are causes for concern. Relationships with form tutors, subject tutors and with each other are excellent. The students also form an integral part of the whole school community whilst valuing their own common rooms and study areas. The combination of very good teaching along with very good student attitudes, excellent relationships and high levels of attendance and punctuality enable students to do very well in the sixth form.

38. Attitudes to their lessons and to learning are very positive. Students show a keen interest in their work and enjoy the challenges set by their teachers. They are keen to contribute to discussions, respond well to questioning and are able to ask pertinent questions of their teachers and of each other. They have very good communication skills, being confident and articulate but also able to listen well to their teachers and to each other. In a German lesson, students were very positive about speaking only German to each other during the lesson. Students undertake presentations in many of their subjects, such as in the excellent and increasingly popular science for public understanding course. Year 12 students were seen preparing group presentations for the following week and most showed very good co-operative working and time management skills, even at this early stage of their course. Those students with less strongly developed skills are well supported in developing them, by their teachers.
39. Students take responsibility as prefects, positions for which they apply and are interviewed, and they play a major role in the school's successful charity fundraising activities. Using their initiative they respond quickly to requests to do things, both in their work and generally around school. For example, in a physics lesson students showed a great deal of initiative in their practical work, co-operating with each other, discussing the task and displaying lots of enthusiasm for what they were doing. They show independence and maturity in their work and in the way they behave.
40. The students in the sixth form were asked, as part of the inspection process, to give their views, through a questionnaire, about the quality of education they were receiving. The answers were generally very positive with students feeling they are well taught and are challenged and supported to do their best. Students are able to give their views formally through the sixth form council and informally through their form tutors and subject teachers. They also value the approachability of the head and deputy heads of the sixth form. Year 12 students value the independence they are given in the sixth form but a number of Year 13 students are beginning to feel that they are not treated as young adults and that their views are not really taken into account. Many students feel, however, that, in the words of one Year 13 student, "They have got the balance of supervision and care versus independence about right here".

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

41. The quality of teaching is very good in the sixth form. This contributes directly to the high standards that students achieve because it builds effectively on the above average attainment of the students on entry to the sixth form. A high proportion, almost one in three, of the lessons is very good and approximately one in eight is excellent. Very good and excellent teaching is seen across both year groups in a variety of subjects. Excellent teaching is found in English, mathematics, chemistry, biology, business education and psychology. Very good teaching takes place in English, mathematics, geography, physics, history, music, German, design and technology, physical education, sociology, psychology, general studies and ICT. There is no unsatisfactory teaching although there are areas for development in some lessons. This very good profile of teaching in the sixth form is a major strength of the school.
42. Teachers in all lessons inspected have very secure knowledge and understanding of their subjects. They plan successfully to make lessons interesting and enjoyable, and to involve students actively in their own learning. The work the school is doing on teaching and learning styles and the development of key skills is making a significant impact on the quality of teaching. In lessons in various subjects, students show

themselves to be very capable of making serious oral presentations in which they communicate the results of their research. Often students use overhead projectors and flip-charts or even the Powerpoint program to communicate more effectively. Teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of the new examination specifications which reflects thorough and detailed hard work in preparing for the new AS and A2 examinations. They carefully gear their teaching to the demands of the examination in order to enable students to get the highest marks possible. Teachers have high expectations of their students and this is reflected in lessons, not only in the quality of the communication between teacher and student but also in the way time is used so well. Lessons move along at a good pace and no time is wasted. Students and teachers clearly enjoy working together, and teaching and learning becomes a shared and enjoyable experience. It is this combination of subject knowledge, detailed planning, preparation and involvement of the students in learning that is the most significant factor in the very high standards students achieve.

43. Notable features of the excellent or very good lessons in, for example, English, mathematics and chemistry are the sheer pace and enthusiasm of the teaching. Students are so actively involved in their learning, so absorbed in making connections and absorbing new insights that there is a real 'buzz' in the classroom as learning really 'takes off'. In a Year 12 English literature lesson, for example, students worked so intensively, presenting and sharing their research on the two novels being studied, that the final presentation on 'Totalitarianism in the novels' sparked off a very lively discussion on 'culture'. In a mathematics class, Year 13 students became adept in converting Cartesian co-ordinates to Polar co-ordinates because they were inspired by the teacher's enthusiasm, his method of involving everyone in the dialogue and his very challenging questions. The excellent teaching in chemistry is notable for its judicious use of praise, warm relationships, effective use of humour to maintain progress and conscious striving to involve students actively in their own learning. Not a second is wasted, not a single student's attention wavers off task for the whole of a double period, they are so wrapped up in what they were doing. They also know why they are doing it as the overall pattern of the lesson is so clearly laid out at the beginning and so effectively reviewed at the end.
44. Teaching is such an undoubted strength of the sixth form that it certainly impacts directly on learning. However, in the small proportion of lessons where teaching is satisfactory, rather than good or better, it is usually because of one or more of the following areas for development. Teachers' subject knowledge, though secure, is not translated effectively enough into challenge and pace. The concentration is too much upon material to be covered rather than knowledge, understanding or skills to be learned. Often the teaching is aimed at a group in a way that assumes a particular group of students are completely homogeneous, with every student at the same stage of understanding. Sometimes the lesson falls short of being good because the teacher talks too much and organises students to be active, too little. The net effect is usually satisfactory overall but ought really to be better.

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

45. The school offers a wide range of academic courses at AS and A2-levels. These are in considerable demand as the growing population of students in the sixth form indicates. A significant number of courses run four groups in each of Years 12 and 13. The school meets the statutory requirements for collective worship although it fails to provide for a core entitlement of a course in religious education.
46. The sixth form curriculum is well balanced and meets the needs of the students. Good breadth of study is assured through the requirement that students study at least four courses at AS-level in Year 12, and continue with at least three to A2-level in Year 13. Most students' choices at AS cover a mixture of 'arts' and 'science' subjects. Further enrichment and extension is provided through a serious commitment to the development of key skills, plus courses in general studies and personal, social and health education. For example, students, working in groups in a personal, social and health education

(PSHE) lesson, preparing a talk for the rest of the class, consider many social, ethical and moral issues whilst also developing their confidence and presentation skills.

47. The vocational aspects of the curriculum are not represented in the overall sixth form curriculum structure. Currently there is little demand from students for this aspect of education, and the school has neither sufficient space nor staff expertise to offer many such courses. The current students' aspirations are mainly in the realms of academic higher education. Students who wish to follow a more vocational route are helped to find places in other post-16 colleges.
48. There are a number of strong areas of development, including growing links with another local secondary school and with the local college of further education. As the Co-ordinating Beacon School for the North West and Merseyside, Crompton House is forming very constructive relationships with a wide range of partner institutions.
49. There are strong links with the Oldham Connexions Service. A Careers Advisor visits the school on a regular basis and is always heavily in demand. The provision for Careers Education is very well supported by a well-stocked Careers Library. The school makes very good provision for students' private study. Quiet rooms are well used and are a pleasant and supportive environment. Students have exclusive access to a suite of networked computers close to the quiet rooms and the sixth form common room and this contributes very positively to the development of students' ICT skills.
50. The taught curriculum for sixth form students is enriched by a good variety of extra-curricular experiences. There are opportunities for students to be involved in school orchestras, various bands and the school choir, playing in local and national venues. Other opportunities include field trips, theatre visits, lectures and seminars. There is a very well organised and successful Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award Scheme, which involves staff and students. Students take full responsibility for organising an annual talent competition in the school. They support the theatre trips and film clubs organised by the English department. Very good specific business-oriented activities and visits enhance the provision for economics and business education.

STUDENTS' SPIRITUAL, MORAL, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

51. The provision for students' spiritual, moral and social development is excellent. The provision for their cultural development is good.
52. The school has a clear understanding of its nature and purpose as a Church of England school and this influences all that it seeks to be and do. The Christian ethos of the school is tangible but unobtrusive, a completely natural part of its day-to-day life. It is interwoven throughout the curriculum without dominating it. There is a greater awareness of the reality and importance of spirituality in this school, than in most other schools. The altar by the main door is a tasteful and telling symbol of where the school sees itself. This is reflected in the awareness of this aspect in the curriculum. Departmental handbooks concern themselves with it. In lessons, it is natural for a teacher to refer to Christianity in order to explain something. For instance, in a Year 13 English lesson on the poetry of William Blake, the teacher used the doctrine of the Trinity as a way into exploring the notion of 'mystery' in poetry. There is a daily act of collective worship in the assemblies and form periods. Prayers are said simply and attentively. In the final assembly, as the school gathered in silence to pray, the prayer summed up the thoughts of the assembly. Assemblies are well organised with themes and readings. Hymns are sung well, reflecting the strong musical tradition of the school. Clearly, prayer and worship are important in the life of the school.
53. The provision for moral and social development is excellent. The behaviour of the students in and around the school is excellent. They are mature, sensible and intelligent young people who are at ease with adults and with each other. The relationships between students and staff reflect a real sense of trust. This

is seen as much in the quality of the engagement between teacher and student in lessons as it is in the social interaction between them. Staff are very good role models for the students and the students are very good role models for other pupils. Moral and ethical issues are discussed naturally as they arise in class. The PSHE programme provides opportunities for discussion. For example, in a Year 13 lesson, students became involved in a realistic discussion about Afghanistan which developed into thinking about racism in society. Successful applicants for the position of prefects are given specific duties, for example to supervise the ICT suite. Sixth formers run the sixth form council. They help with the year group councils and take part in other activities in the lower school such as the paired reading schemes. They organise social activities, for example, the school talent show, and organise and supervise lower school discos. They are enthusiastic and successful fundraisers. Year 12 students are very enthusiastic about these duties. Some Year 13 students are more withdrawn because of the increased A-level work load. Popular extra activities include the Duke of Edinburgh and Young Enterprise Schemes.

54. Provision for cultural development is good. Students learn about their own culture through lessons and activities. They are very involved in the extra-curricular activities of the school, in music and in sport. There is a sixth form Christian Union group, which meets regularly. The school is improving the way it prepares students for life in a multi-cultural society. It has established good links with a multi cultural school in the authority. Sixth form students visit this school and work with the pupils. The school sees this as an important initiative, which will strengthen this aspect of provision.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

Assessment

55. The school has established a very comprehensive system for tracking student performance and target setting. This provides a valuable overview of students' performance, and data is also used to compare performance to national statistics. Target grades are shared with students. Heads of department measure students' performance in any form of assessment against these targets. The assessments include whole-school examinations, which occur at least twice yearly, AS examination results, class tests, assignments and homework. Targets can be re-assessed upwards if the evidence indicates that this is necessary. The sixth form staff, monitor the process to ensure they have an clear overview. Meetings of heads of department take place regularly to ensure a consistency of approach.
56. Regular reporting to parents takes place and students' progress is measured against the academic targets, which have been set for them. Students respond well to the system. If a student is identified as under-performing, an individual action plan is produced, to which the student is given the opportunity to make input. The action plan identifies the support that will be provided either by sixth form tutors or by subject specialist teachers.
57. The final examination performance of students is analysed by teachers, who produce performance graphs for the students they taught. Departments are expected to give valid reasons for any under-performing students. Heads of department discuss these findings with individual teachers to identify strategies for improvement. Senior managers thoroughly analyse all findings to identify any whole-school trends.
58. The system has contributed to raising standards by improving student expectation of their own performance, raising the expectation of subject staff and providing valuable information for parents.

Advice, support and guidance

59. The school provides highly effective guidance and support for students from the time of their induction until they leave the school, well prepared for the next stage of their education. A detailed and practical sixth form development plan makes clear that support programmes and procedures are constantly

evaluated and modified as circumstances change. For example, key skills elements have been well integrated in the PSHE programme. The plan also recognises that pupils struggling with the transition from GCSE to AS-level need extra tutorial support to build up their confidence.

60. Relationships between tutors and students are very good. Tutorial and subject staff know their students very well and give freely of their time outside classes. Students feel comfortable in talking to tutors about personal problems. They are also secure in the knowledge that they will know very quickly if they are not meeting the high academic standards tutors expect.
61. Pupils in Year 11 are carefully prepared for sixth form studies. At Key Stage 4 they are given an estimated GCSE average points score to work towards. They are interviewed for sixth form courses in the light of their academic progress and overall motivation. The procedure is structured but flexible. Applicants from other schools join pupils from the school for a formal induction day.
62. The school is highly academic, but at the same time very caring. Success in applications to higher education is a priority. Preparation begins early in Year 12. Students are given individual advice, help and encouragement at every stage. Deadlines are clear. Students do their own research on the available choice of courses and universities. They draft and finalise their personal statements on laptop computers provided in tutorial periods. The school has good links with the Oldham Connexions Service. The visiting Careers Advisor's time is regularly over-booked. The organisation of the interview list and of the well-stocked careers library is undertaken by the careers prefects. The on-going development of resources in this area is part of the sixth form development plan to improve post-A-level preparation.
63. The school provides an excellent environment for academic and social development. It values each student's achievement. It is producing socially poised and academically confident young people. Sixth formers are aware of their position as role models. They value their privileges and most of them believe that their opinions count. The school does not rest on its laurels but is constantly looking for ways to improve this aspect of sixth form provision.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

Leadership and management

64. Leadership and management of the sixth form are very good. The head of sixth form and the sixth form tutors are an effective and enthusiastic team. There is a clear focus on the academic guidance and monitoring of all students. This is supported by the very good assessment and monitoring systems that the school has developed. These enable the sixth form tutor team to track progress and to resolve any problems quickly. Students are kept well informed of their progress on a regular basis. The system works very well because it relates to students' attainment over time and to their predicted grades at AS and A2, which are based on their GCSE average points score.
65. The tutor team work very well as personal tutors to students. Students have confidence in them and know that their tutors are there to help them. Additional guidance is offered to students seeking particular careers, for example in medicine or for those students who seek a place at Oxford or Cambridge universities. This very thorough approach is to be seen in the extensive induction programme for pupils at age 16 and in the way in which students entering the sixth form from other schools are made welcome. Recruitment and retention are not a problem. Numbers are rising in the sixth form.
66. One of the deputy heads of sixth form, co-ordinates with tutors the key skills project in the sixth form, ensuring that the key skills components are delivered through the personal, social and health education syllabus. In these PSHE lessons, students are very thoroughly prepared by their form tutors for

completing their entry forms for university. This is done very well so that students understand clearly what is required of them.

67. Students are consulted regularly. Tutors maintain good informal contacts with students and there is a formal channel of communication through the sixth form council. For instance, the students completed an internal questionnaire before the school knew it was to be inspected. Students exercise responsibility as prefects and in their fundraising for charities. They are good role models for younger pupils in the school because they are sensible and mature young people.
68. The head of the sixth form and the associated deputies and tutors have clear and distinct responsibilities and between them they manage the sixth form very well. They have developed very good managerial skills in using information and data very effectively. They monitor progress and they provide advice and guidance to their students. They have, according to the students, "got the balance right" between helping students and, when required, getting them to work a little harder. Relationships between sixth form staff and students are excellent and this contributes to the feeling of 'family' that students comment on as a strength of the sixth form.
69. The departments inspected are all well led and managed. Planning and organisation are strengths and the quality of many departmental development plans is good. Knowledge of the demands of the new AS and A2 specifications is very good and reflects thorough preparation for the new examinations. Teamwork is a strength in departments and there is some sharing of good practice, for example in business education and design and technology, but not all departments are equally effective in ensuring the dissemination of the better practice across their department. Chemistry, for example, is an area where the quality of teaching and learning practice varies too widely and effective steps are yet to be taken to bring the satisfactory up to the level of the best.
70. The governing body is knowledgeable, experienced and very supportive. It works effectively, especially through the work of its committees. Recently it has taken steps to become more involved in the workings of individual departments on a first-hand basis. This is likely to improve greatly governors' knowledge of the strengths and areas for development of the school. Governors completely fulfil their statutory responsibilities except for the provision of core religious education in Years 12 and 13, and also in respect of assuring that thorough whole school risk assessments are carried out and the findings implemented.
71. The school makes very good use of its strategic resources. In the last year the proportion of the total finance available to support the sixth form has been reduced and the sixth is becoming more self-financing. The student teacher ratio and average group size are effective and in line with the average for similar schools. The class contact ratio for teachers, is more generous than that found nationally. This is a clear strategic decision taken by the governors and headteacher in order to sustain the high standards achieved by students in both the sixth form and the main school. Time has been created for staff to plan lessons, to monitor progress against targets, to monitor the quality of teaching and learning and to participate in staff development activities. These strategies are very successful in practice.
72. Development planning has become the key instrument for financial decision making. The development of new courses and associated funding must be clearly set out and costed. Funding for resources has been split into maintenance and development headings. Maintenance costs for sixth form courses are based on student numbers. Development costs have to be bid for through departmental plans. The approach is successful in ensuring that priorities can be clearly seen and all staff understand how the resources available are being used.
73. The school has been very successful in bidding for additional funding for capital and professional projects. Beacon School status has brought additional funding. It is through this additional funding that the school has the flexibility to support its own strategic developments as well as working with other schools and agencies to share good practice.

74. The school has fully adopted the principles of best value in day-to-day resourcing, in the maintenance of the buildings and for capital projects. There are excellent arrangements for monitoring budgets within the school and the most recent audit report had only a small number of technical recommendations. These have been fully implemented.

Resources

75. The quality and range of resources in the sixth form are good. Staffing is very good. There are sufficient well-qualified teachers in all subject areas, whose very secure subject knowledge is a considerable strength. Induction of new staff and opportunities for professional development are very good. The quality and number of non-teaching support staff are good.

76. The quality of the accommodation varies. In some subject areas it is excellent, but it is insufficient in others. The considerable refurbishment that has been done and the more recent buildings enhance the site and offer more teaching spaces but accommodation remains insufficient in some subject areas.

77. Learning resources are good in most subjects and they are used well. There are some deficiencies in, for example, business education and design and technology. Provision for ICT is very good in the school. The availability of laptop computers for individual pupils through the schools' innovative leasing scheme is making new technology more widely available.

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

In the inspection, 13 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 A-level courses completed in 2000 [latest year for which national comparisons are available].

GCE A-level courses 2000

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A to E		% gaining grades A and B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	11	91	89	36	45	5.6	6.0
Biology	24	100	88	63	34	7.3	5.3
Chemistry	17	100	89	71	42	7.9	5.9
Physics	3	100	88	67	41	8.0	5.7
Economics	24	100	88	25	36	5.3	5.4
ICT	17	100	85	24	23	5.1	4.6
Sports / PE studies	19	100	91	32	25	6.1	5.0
Art and design	5	100	96	40	45	6.4	6.4
Music	4	100	93	75	35	8.5	5.7
Geography	38	95	92	63	37	7.1	5.7
History	15	100	89	67	34	8.0	5.4
Psychology	27	96	88	48	35	6.3	5.3
Sociology	10	100	88	60	37	7.2	5.7
Gov and politics	9	100	N/a	56	N/a	7.3	N/a
English language	13	85	90	23	29	4.8	5.2
English literature	16	100	96	44	36	6.9	5.9
English combined	8	88	92	25	31	5.3	5.4
French	3	100	91	-	39	4.0	5.7
German	3	100	92	67	41	7.3	5.9
General studies	91	76	85	21	28	3.9	4.9

GCE AS-level courses 2001. The first year of the Year 12 entries but with no national comparison figures available as yet.

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A to E		% gaining grades A and B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	19	79	n/a-	32	-n/a	4.0	-n/a
Biology	42	95		40	-	6.0	-
Chemistry	25	84		36	-	4.8	-
Physics	18	83	-	17	-	4.3	-
Bus studies	34	82		24	-	4.5	-
DT Prod Des	7	100	-	43	-	5.7	
ICT	26	77	-	38	-	5.0	-
Sports / PE studies	22	95	-	18	-	5.4	-
Art and design	12	100	-	50	-	6.5	-
Music	2	100	-	50	-	7.0	-
Geography	55	95	-	40	-	6.0	-
History	19	89	-	37	-	5.2	-
Psychology	61	92	-	49	-	6.4	-
Sociology	24	96	-	54	-	6.8	-
Religious studies	5	100	-	80	-	8.0	
Gov and politics	10	90	-	60	-	7.2	
English language	7	100	-	57	-	7.4	-
English combined	37	100	-	81	-	8.4	-
English literature	9	100	-	22	-	4.7	-
French	5	100	-	40	-	6.8	-
German	13	100	-	46	-	6.3	-

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

Mathematics, biology and chemistry were all inspected, and work in physics was sampled. In the two physics lessons observed the quality of teaching and learning were good and very good respectively.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Teaching quality is very good in most lessons. Teachers have good subject knowledge and engage students fully in learning.
- Students' learning is very good. They learn both to collaborate and to work independently, as a result of which they achieve well.
- Relationships between students and teachers are very good and often excellent.
- Students' attitudes to learning are excellent.
- Leadership and management of the subject are very good.

Areas for improvement

- Development of a formal and systematic system for monitoring teaching in order to share and extend the very good practice that exists.
- The provision of software in order to make greater use of computers.

Standards and achievement

78. Standards of attainment in A-level GCE examinations match the national figures in terms of average points scores. In the Year 2000 examinations, 36 per cent of the candidates obtained grade A compared to 26 per cent in all schools. Ninety per cent of students achieved within the A to E grade range, compared to 89 per cent nationally. The trend over recent years (1998 to 2000) has been variable, due to differences in cohorts of students, but the average number of grades A and B has matched the national picture. Male and female students do equally well.

79. At this relatively early stage of the academic year the standard of work seen in lessons and in students' written work indicates a higher standard than the examination results suggest. The work reflects the standards required for the higher examination grades and indicates that the achievement of the vast majority of students is good, considering that the starting point into the sixth form for some students is GCSE grade B. Students in Year 12 are able to recognise and solve quadratic equations through formal methods and with the aid of graphics calculators. However, a small number of Year 12 students have some insecurity in the essential algebraic manipulation skills that are required at this level. Students of Further Mathematics in Year 13 are adept at converting Cartesian co-ordinates to Polar co-ordinates and can match curves to the appropriate equations.

Quality of education

80. Teaching is very good overall. Its quality ranges from good to excellent and has improved since the last inspection. Teachers are highly committed to and work hard for their students. Three particular strengths feature prominently in lessons: the good subject command of the teachers, the way teachers involve students through interactive teaching, and the very good, and often excellent, relationships between teachers and students. The combination of these factors and students' excellent attitudes to study ensure

that lessons are conducted at a challenging pace and build both systematically and well on students' prior learning.

81. Additionally, teachers listen particularly well to students and clearly value their responses, thus promoting confidence and enjoyment. The high incidence of dialogue between students and teachers also contributes to the development of students' high level of skill in oral communication. In the best lessons, for example a lesson involving Year 13 students in the study of Polar co-ordinates, the teacher's enthusiasm for mathematics is transmitted to the students and results in highly effective problem solving. The teachers' good command of mathematics enables them to formulate questions which promote learning with understanding. They use any incorrect student responses sensitively and productively. The use of ICT, apart from some very good use of graphics calculators, was not evident.
82. Teachers fully involve the students in their learning by the regular practice of inviting them to demonstrate and explain their solutions to their peers. Students consistently apply themselves to their work with a high level of sustained concentration. They make very good gains in their acquisition of knowledge, skills and understanding. Students have excellent attitudes to study in terms of motivation, co-operation and confidence. As a result, they demonstrate with equal strength their ability to work both collaboratively and independently, as appropriate. A good feature of learning is that students maintain comprehensive notes to suit their individual learning needs.

Leadership and management

83. The leadership and management of the department are very good. The head of department, ably assisted by the second in department, provides a very clear sense of purpose and direction and sets a very good role model for her colleagues. She has engendered a climate of mutual support and teamwork and has been instrumental in developing an interactive style of teaching. The departmental action plan identifies appropriate priorities and is an effective tool for raising standards. Accommodation and resources are adequate. However, the department acknowledges the need for further software in order to make greater use of computers, for example in teaching aspects of statistics. There is a good match of teachers to the requirements of the various modules in the A2 and AS-level mathematics courses. The department's fruitful links with an Institute of Higher Education enable staff to be in contact with up-to-date educational philosophy and practice that ultimately impacts positively on teaching and learning.

BIOLOGY

Provision in biology is **very good**.

Strengths

- Standards are consistently well above average and achievement is very good.
- Students have a good level of knowledge and understanding of the concepts being taught, along with an ability to apply existing knowledge to new problems.
- Teaching is good; the best of it is excellent, especially teachers' subject knowledge and pupil/teacher relationships, which create a very positive climate for learning.
- Students have very positive attitudes and are keen to do well.
- The subject is well led and managed.

Areas for improvement

- The quality of marking is not consistent across the department.
- There is insufficient specialist accommodation.

Standards and achievement

84. GCE A-level results in 2000 are well above average. All students who took the examination gained a pass grade and the proportion gaining the highest grades, A and B, was well above average. Few who started the course did not continue to the end. Average points scores have steadily increased over the last three years and results indicate that this trend has continued in 2001. The introduction of the new AS examination has led to a large increase in the number of pupils studying biology in the sixth form. There are not yet any national comparative figures for AS examinations taken by pupils at the end of Year 12 in 2001, but results compare favourably with other subjects. The retention rate into Year 13 is higher than that for either physics or chemistry. The school's own analysis shows that considerable value is added to students' achievement during the time they study biology.
85. The standard of work of students currently studying biology in the sixth form is above average overall. There is a wide range of achievement reflecting the minimum starting point of a GCSE grade C, whilst other students start the course with higher grades, but the standard of work seen is never less than satisfactory. Year 12 students are only a little way into their course but they already demonstrate a good grasp of the detail of cell structure plus an understanding of the processes of diffusion and osmosis, and can relate this to the passage of substances through plasma membranes.
86. Students in Year 13 have good levels of knowledge, a good understanding of the concepts being taught plus an ability to apply existing knowledge to new problems presented to them. For example, students are able to produce chromatograms of plant extracts, calculate R_f values and use this data to identify the photosynthetic pigments in the plants. They apply their existing knowledge of photosynthesis and light wavelengths to develop a clear understanding of the importance of the absorption and action spectra of photosynthetic pigments in eukaryotic organisms. The quality of students' written work is variable but generally reflects the standard of work seen in class. There is a good range of work, including independent work such as lesson notes, presentation, preparation and essays. There is also evidence that students use ICT in their work, although this is mainly confined to the use of word processing to produce revision notes or assignments.

Quality of education

87. Teaching is good overall and ranges from satisfactory to excellent. Its principal features are the good subject command of the teachers, planning that identifies clear learning objectives, which are shared with students, use of a wide range of teaching methods and very good relationships between teachers and students. Students have positive attitudes, are keen to do well and work with a high level of sustained concentration. This combination of factors ensures that most lessons have a good pace and students steadily acquire knowledge and understanding of the subject. For example, in a Year 12 lesson, students worked in small groups to brainstorm factors affecting diffusion and osmosis. The teacher then used questioning to create a climate where students were challenged, encouraged to think and exchange ideas in order to develop their knowledge and understanding of the role of these processes in cell membrane function.
88. Homework is set on a regular basis and is used effectively to extend and reinforce learning. Teachers generally use questioning well, to test students' knowledge, challenge thinking and extend understanding. Teachers make use of a wide range of activities and resources but, despite having a clear understanding of their students' individual attainment, they do not always take account of the wide range of attainment of the students within each group. Class activities and homework tasks do not always match the needs of all students, and lessons are often pitched at just one level. On occasion, this can lead to students having difficulties and being in need of more support, but also to higher attaining students not being given

sufficient intellectual challenge. Planning fails to take sufficient account of this wide range of attainment within groups

89. The department has a good marking policy, which highlights the importance of the use of marking to inform learning and to set targets for improvement. Overall, marking and assessment is of a high quality. Teachers mostly correct inaccuracies, add supplementary questions to develop understanding and provide students with clear ideas as to how they can improve. However, there are a few isolated examples where marking lacks this rigour.

Leadership and management

90. Work in the subject is well led and managed. There is a clear commitment to build on what has already been achieved, with a focus on doing the best for students and continuing to improve their performance. The day-to-day management of the subject is at present shared by two experienced members of the department, with the head of science maintaining an overview until the head of biology returns from maternity leave. Sixth form biology teachers meet on a regular basis to discuss progress. The head of science has a good grasp of the issues and a clear vision of the way forward. Clear targets are set for all students and good use is made of the excellent value added statistical data provided. Monitoring of teaching, planning and students' work does take place, but less frequently than is ideal to ensure a consistency of approach and standards. The scheme of work is a working document, but it lacks sufficient reference to strategies and activities to support the wide range of student attainment in classes. Resources are adequate but there are some accommodation issues. There is a shortage of laboratory accommodation, partly due to the increase in student numbers because of the introduction of the AS examinations.

CHEMISTRY

The quality of provision is **good**.

Strengths

- Student achievement is good overall, and attainment was well above average, in 2000.
- Most of the teaching is good; the best of it is excellent; students are kept thoroughly on task by knowledgeable, demanding and interesting teaching.
- Students are keen and attentive on the whole, and relationships are very good.
- Most aspects of leadership and organisation are good.
- Development planning is focused upon the right things.

Areas for improvement

- The retention rate into Year 13, which is relatively low.
- Monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning, with the aim of disseminating the better practice throughout the department.
- Schemes of work, though developing well, are not detailed enough.

Standards and achievement

91. GCE A-level results vary from year to year. In 2000 they were well above the national average. Students' average points score was 7.9 against a national figure of 5.9, and the proportion of grades A and B was 71 per cent of the entry against a national figure of 42 per cent. Results for 2001 look to be less good, although there are no national figures available as yet to confirm this. Most students who completed the course in 2000 demonstrated a good degree of added value, in that they achieved higher grades than was predicted from their GCSE results. The reverse is true in 2001. A healthy mixture of male and female students studies chemistry in the sixth form but males usually outperform females.

92. The standard of work seen during the inspection is good and much of it is above average. Students in Year 12 are only a few weeks into the course but most are achieving well, as expected from students who are largely being well taught. One group shows very good knowledge and understanding of the structure of simple molecules. They are able to explain well why some bond angles in molecules are lower than might be expected. Students in the other Year 12 group are secure in their ability to calculate the concentration of an acid after titrating it against a standard solution whose concentration they did know. One or two students, however, are shaky on some very basic knowledge, for instance, the formulae for sodium hydroxide and sodium sulphate. Year 13 students, reduced in numbers by 11 out of 26 from last year's AS classes, are also achieving well, partly due to the small group sizes of nine and six respectively and the more individual attention they receive. They are making good progress in their understanding of transition metal chemistry, comfortable even with the formulae and structure of very complex ions.

Quality of education

93. Teaching is good overall and ranges from satisfactory to excellent. The teachers have very secure knowledge and understanding of their subject, although they vary in the degree to which they bring it alive. The satisfactory teaching is competent and dependable but the demands upon some students are less than they could cope with, too much of the material being pitched at the pace of the slowest. The good teaching in the department has additional strengths: judicious use of praise, warm relationships, effective use of humour to maintain progress and a conscious striving to involve students actively in their learning. The excellent teaching has all of the above but with additional pace; not a second is wasted. It also has the capacity to enthuse and inspire; not a single student's attention wavered off task for the whole of a double period about the shapes of molecules, they were so wrapped up in what they were doing. Ambitious practical work was conducted in one lesson in a laboratory where movement was difficult. Imaginative use was made of simple equipment such as string and balloons. Learning was rapid and very secure. A potentially dull topic was brought dramatically to life. The students themselves were part of the demonstration as they twisted themselves into various three-dimensional shapes of molecules. The homework afterwards was both simple and demanding (to construct a tetrahedron from one sheet of A4 sized paper) and yet very relevant to the topic.

94. Students in chemistry are keen and attentive on the whole, and relationships are very good. They have mature and positive attitudes towards the subject and react very well to the better teaching, remaining patient, on the whole, when the pace of teaching is too slow. They are becoming increasingly independent in their learning, make their own notes as a matter of routine and are quick to ask questions when they are unclear about something.

Leadership and management

95. The science department is well led and managed on the whole. The new examination specifications are being effectively implemented and well annotated as they are worked through for the first time. They do not yet contain as much helpful detail as they might. Laboratory accommodation is of variable quality, but the best of it is very good indeed due to its imaginative modern design and the useful space between the octagon shaped benching. There are fewer laboratories than the department needs. Too many science classes have to be taught in classrooms which has an impact on the types of activities that can be done. The range and condition of available learning resources is good. Technical support is well qualified, very organised and helpful. Development planning is detailed and helpful, focusing in general on the right areas for development. However, monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning, with the aim of disseminating the better practice throughout the department, is an area for further development.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

Two new courses in this curriculum area were inspected: GCE AS and A-levels in Design and Technology: Product Design. In 2001 the A-level course results refer to Design and Technology as a generic syllabus for the subject.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

The quality of provision is **good**.

Strengths

- Standards of work are high; students have a good grasp of design concepts.
- Results in 2001, the first year of this new course, were above average at A-level, with a high proportion of A and B grades.
- Students achieve very well through good course planning and assessment procedures, linked to clear targeting.
- The growing and developing teaching team, whose members have good subject knowledge and skills.
- Leadership and management of the courses and of the department are very good.

Areas for improvement

- The clarity of setting and assessing learning objectives in lessons.
- The pace in lessons, to engage students fully in the key learning tasks.
- Development of assignments which require students to apply their growing knowledge about materials and their use in different design situations.
- Units of work in which computer-aided design and manufacture (CAD/CAM) are fundamental to the design solution.

Standards and achievement

96. Standards in the 2001 A-level generic course in design and technology are high. Results are well above the average achieved nationally in 2000. All students achieved a grade D or better and 50 per cent gained A and B grades. Males achieved more highly than females but both groups achieved higher than average points scores. At AS-level in 2001, students achieved grades ranging from high to average. All gained at least a pass and 30 per cent gained A and B grades, although in this group there was some under-achievement. Retention rates are good.
97. Attainment in lessons is good in Year 13 and developing well in Year 12, where students are still adjusting to the more demanding level of work beyond GCSE level. Carefully planned course content and assignments ensure that work is pitched at A-level that enables students to attain the higher grades. Good learning materials support students effectively in aiming for high standards. Nevertheless, there is some variation in the quality of project work. There is a lack of application and commitment by some students, who are not yet reaching their maximum potential. The use of ICT is sound, but it is limited by the current provision and limited access to equipment. Students have to rely upon their own home computers for word processing used in design folders. There are currently no facilities in school for computer aided design and manufacture (CAD/CAM). Drawing and freehand sketching skills are relatively weak.

Quality of education

98. Teaching is good overall. The quality ranges from satisfactory to very good and has improved considerably since the last inspection. In the most successful lessons, pace is the most important factor in enhancing learning. For example, in one lesson students were asked to produce five design ideas, with scissors and card in 15 minutes, using the Memphis concept. Very good ideas emerged which led to a high level discussion on their relative merits and practicability. There is a new teaching team with complementary skills and a real enthusiasm for the subject. They have very good subject knowledge and are growing in confidence. They set very real challenges for students and themselves. Teachers expect students to work hard. Students are able to learn quickly because the new courses have been carefully analysed and broken down into manageable and effective teaching units with associated assessment criteria. Progress is carefully monitored.
99. Although teaching units are well planned there are relative weaknesses in setting clear learning objectives for individual lessons, and sharing these with the students. The emphasis is on 'what we are going to do' rather than 'what we are going to learn through the activity'. In lessons which are, nevertheless, graded well, one limitation is the slowing of the pace. At times the teacher allows the students to detract from the intended pace by entering into connected, but not crucial, discussion around the topic.

Leadership and management

100. Leadership and management of the courses and the department are very good. The head of department leads by example, and by monitoring the teaching and students' performance systematically. In two years there has been a total transformation of documentation and policies. The development of target setting and assessment strategies, which are geared to achieving value-added grades, are very good. There is an emphasis on team working and sharing responsibility and this is beginning to work very successfully. Development planning is good. It correctly identifies the need for additional resources, including books and better accommodation, especially in the very weak area of computer aided design and manufacture.

BUSINESS EDUCATION

The provision in Business Education is **good**.

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is good; teachers have a secure knowledge of the subject and lessons are carefully planned.
- Students are making good progress in their knowledge and understanding of business.
- Leadership and management are very good; there is a clear vision and high expectations.

Areas for improvement

- Students have insufficient access to computers; there is only one classroom dedicated to business education, and insufficient funding to provide books and videos for reference purposes.

Standards and achievement

101. GCE A-level results in 2000 matched the national average. Every student entered achieved at least grade E and one in four achieved the higher grades A and B. Most students exceeded their target grade,

based upon their average points scores at GCSE. Results in 1999 and the most recent results, for 2001, look to be comparable to those for 2000, especially with respect to the added value the department is providing for its students. A healthy mixture of male and female students chooses business education in the sixth form, and males usually outperform females, though not in 2000.

102. In the past two years there has been a significant increase in the number of students studying business education. At present there are 34 students in Year 12 and 24 students in Year 13. The standards reached by the current students, particularly in Year 13, as seen in lessons and in their written work, are above average. When account is taken of students' GCSE grades at the start of the course, this represents good achievement for the majority of students. In Year 12, students are making good progress in understanding the central ideas of the subject, including those ideas relating to the economic environment in which business operates. Students' Year 13 portfolios are well organised, providing evidence of good research skills and some analytical ability when dealing with hypothetical situations in business. In all lessons there was evidence of students engaged in discussions on a range of issues which demonstrated well-developed skills in promoting and supporting ideas and opinions. Students in both years are generally adept in planning their own work when researching and completing assignments.

Quality of education

103. Overall the quality of teaching is good; occasionally it is excellent. Teachers have a secure knowledge and understanding of the subject, and foster interest and understanding in the students through carefully planned lessons. Relationships between the teachers and the students are excellent, promoting high levels of mutual respect and understanding. Lessons are invariably designed around current events in the business world. Examples include a proposed leisure development in a local town, the collapse of Railtrack, problems associated with small business enterprises, and the effect of the quality of customer services on sales in large retail organisations. Teaching strategies are carefully orchestrated to promote knowledge and understanding through whole-class and small group activities. Teacher expectations are high, making the work challenging and allowing students to experience the complex nature of business. For example, a lesson with Year 13 students dealt with the various stakeholders in a particular business enterprise. It raised questions relating to the needs of internal and external stakeholders, supply and demand, and business ethics affecting supply chains. The quality of education is well supported through extra-curricular activities, such as the Young Enterprise Scheme, mentored by staff from the Trading Standards Agency and the HSBC Bank. As a consequence of the variety of learning experiences the coaching and development of key skills is well established.

Leadership and management

104. The leadership and management of the department are very good. The head of department has a clear vision of how to relate the present and future development of the subject to each other. The teachers work as an effective team, sharing ideas and monitoring all aspects of each other's work. Schemes of work are detailed and effective. Student assessment is well used to influence the planning of lessons. Students have a clear understanding of their progress and attainment. The department has a range of effective strategies and policies published in a department handbook and reinforced through the department development plan. The objectives in the development plan are comprehensive and reflect aspects of the school development plan. Shortage of resources is limiting standards and quality. At present there is only one room dedicated to business education with two full time teachers. Both teachers are teaching in up to seven different classrooms each week, with all the disruption to continuity of learning that this produces.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

The quality of provision in ICT is **very good**.

Strengths

- Examination results are above average and students achieve well.
- The quality of teaching is good; teachers have a good personal command of their subject; relationships are very good.
- Students' learning is good; they respond well to teachers and lesson content.
- Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- Accommodation and resources are very good.

Areas for Improvement

- Although there are areas for continued development there are none which constitute a significant area for improvement.

Standards of achievement

105. Standards of attainment at A-level are above the national average and have been consistently so over recent years. In 2000, almost one quarter achieved the higher grades A and B. Most students achieved higher grades than their average GCSE points scores would have predicted. This is in line with the trend over past years. The A-level results for 2001 show an improvement on those for 2000, although there are no national figures to compare with yet.

106. Many Year 12 and 13 students demonstrate considerable confidence and skill in the use of ICT. Students working on the design and analysis section of the course specification are clearly able to demonstrate in-depth understanding of relational databases, their purpose and structure. For example, one student has designed, and is developing, an application using a relational database to track and record pupils' attendance and other individual data. Students confidently and accurately write and develop macros to look up and input data. Students' portfolios show a high level of knowledge and understanding of the subject and are very well presented. The quality of the solutions is high and in all portfolios the evaluation is clear and well structured, showing that students have been critical of their work and are able to identify areas for improvement. There is no difference between the quality of the work done by male and female students and, even at this early stage of the term, Year 12 students are able to demonstrate that their knowledge and understanding of the subject are developing well.

Quality of education

107. Teaching is good overall, with a significant amount of very good teaching. Lessons are well planned. Teachers have good levels of knowledge, understanding and technical expertise, which are evident in all lessons and contribute to the confidence students have in them. Relationships between teachers and students are very good and this considerably enhances pupils' learning and the overall quality of lessons. Teachers' willingness to listen and value students' comments and points of view is a strong feature of the very good relationships. Teachers have high expectations of what students can do. They are aware of the high level of personal expertise of a significant number of students and take steps to build upon it. Advice and direction for individual students is positive and supportive, valuing what has been achieved and providing clear direction for further development. Teachers ensure that individual students know where they are in relation to the course specification and provide good clear targets for improvement. This is another considerable strength.

Leadership and management

108. Subject leadership and management are very good. The head of department is very well organised, and forward thinking. He is very well supported by other members of the department and by the school's senior management. ICT development is a key component of the overall school development planning, and the vision and determination of the senior team and ICT co-ordinator are ensuring that it is a dynamic and exciting aspect of this planning. Monitoring and evaluation of coverage of the examination specification and standards of students' work are very good and an integral part of the ICT co-ordinator's role. This contributes very significantly to the standards that students attain and to their overall progress and achievement. The resources and accommodation for ICT are very good. Purpose-built rooms are well equipped with up-to-date machines running high quality software. The school places considerable emphasis on up-dating provision and ensuring that students have the best possible access to ICT.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION.

The quality of provision in physical education is **very good**.

Strengths

- Attainment is well above average and has been for the last two years.
- Students achieve well; they have a good range of skills as their writing demonstrates.
- Students have positive attitudes towards their work and are keen to do well.
- Teaching is very good; expectations are high and tasks planned are challenging; very good use is made of individual teacher expertise.

Areas for improvement

- There are no planned curriculum opportunities in physical education as a core element for all students;
- Retention rates into Year 13 are relatively low.

Standards and achievement.

109. GCE A-level results in 2000 are well above the national average. Every student entered achieved at least grade D. Male and female students achieved comparable results. Most students achieved better than had been predicted from their average GCSE points scores.

110. Inspection evidence shows that students currently in Years 12 and 13 are also producing work which is of above average standard. Evidence from observations and practical assessments shows a good range of skills in different activities, and students who are able to use in practical applications their knowledge and understanding of theory, through movement analysis and evaluation. Within anatomy and physiology, however, some students in Year 13 found the Sliding Filament Theory difficult to grasp, although they all demonstrated a good command of the technical vocabulary, which they were able to apply accurately. All students in Year 12 have made good progress since they started the course and they are achieving well. This is demonstrated in exercise physiology, for instance, where they quickly grasp the principles of over-training and burn-out.

Quality of education.

111. Overall, the teaching is very good. At its most effective, teaching has high expectations and a good pace to lessons, which in turn, result in good learning. Teachers make the lesson objectives clear to students so that they know what they are to learn. A good range of challenging activities supports these.

Good use is made of resources, such as a video about the historical development of sport. Through carefully pitched questions, sensitive discussion techniques and a good balance of physical and theoretical tasks, the teaching consolidates, extends and verifies what students know and understand. Teachers are able to adapt their approaches to take account of students' preferred learning styles and the different demands of practical and theory components of the course. Very good use is made of teachers' individual skills. This enables all students to learn effectively.

112. Students have a mature attitude to their work and are enthusiastic about physical education. Most are able to express themselves clearly in discussions, for example, on the social and political impact of Thomas Arnold and Muscular Christianity. They all participate in the Community Sports Leader Award as part of the course. This enables them to develop their organisational and coaching skills, often through links with local primary schools, and contributes positively to both citizenship and their personal development.

Leadership and management

113. The department is well led and managed with effective deployment of staff to promote maximum student achievement. However, the department's documentation does not adequately reflect the high teacher expectations or commitment to raising standards. It lacks sufficient organisation and structure as an effective management tool. Continuous professional development priorities over the last two years have focused on the development of the new AS and A-level specifications, reflected well in the departmental development plan. Sustained student achievement indicates that this has had a very positive impact.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Music was inspected and one lesson in art was sampled. The quality of teaching and learning in the art lesson was very good.

MUSIC

Provision for music is **very good**.

Strengths

- A-level examination results are very good and above the national average.
- Performance is very good, and in some cases exceptional.
- Teaching is very good.
- Lessons are well structured.
- Sixth form music makes a positive impact on the wider community and the spiritual life of the school.

Areas for improvement

- Practice rooms are small and need soundproofing;

Standards and achievement

114. Since the previous inspection GCE A-level examination results have been consistently very good. All students who have taken the examinations have gained pass grades and the proportion of students gaining the highest grades A and B is significantly higher than the national average. In 2000, all four students entered achieved at least grade C, and three of them achieved higher grades than were predicted from their average GCSE points score.

115. The standards of work of students currently studying music in Year 12 are good. Those students who have just joined the course are achieving well. Standards in instrumental performance are very good. All students show knowledge of technical language and can apply it to listening, appraising, performing and composing. In the lesson observed students were able to discuss musical devices used for creating tension and release in film music and, based on their previous knowledge, were able to make informed judgements about the effectiveness. Students' compositions reflect their understanding of a variety of musical styles, use of harmony and elements of music.
116. In Year 13 students achieve very well. Standards in performance are consistently good and some are exceptional. Students are able to articulate, with increasing confidence, their opinions about the music they study, using appropriate musical terminology to appraise the music. Students are able to transfer and apply the knowledge gained through performing and composing into listening and analysis. They are able to respond to a wide variety of music. Standards in composition are very good and some students compose technically demanding pieces, which they perform with sensitivity and confidence.

Teaching and learning

117. The quality of teaching is very good. All teachers are well qualified and enthusiastic. They use their own skills to demonstrate and encourage students. They have high expectations and set achievable, individual targets and realistic deadlines. The school's recital evening is arranged in line with assessment deadlines. Monitoring of students' work is ongoing and is used to inform planning in order to enhance individual performance and development. Lessons have clear aims and provide students with good strategies for success in composition and aural work. Students are enthusiastic and attentive, working productively and responding to the supportive teaching. All sixth form students demonstrate competence in ICT, which they use in composition.
118. A significant number of sixth form students who are not studying A-level are members of the school choir and band, and perform regularly in the locality and the region. During 2001, the senior choir and orchestra, in conjunction with Wardle High School and visiting musicians, gave a public performance of 'The King Shall Rejoice'. This is an A-level set work. Such activities make a very positive contribution to the spiritual life of the school. The vast majority of students who study music in the sixth form continue their music education in higher education.

Leadership and management

119. The department is very well managed to ensure good use of the resources available. Over 200 pupils and students take part in the school choirs and orchestras. The two main teaching areas are well organised and equipped and in addition a music studio is used for rehearsing the school orchestra. The practice areas used for instrumental teaching are small and not sound proofed. During an A-level lesson observed this was very noticeable. Plans for improving the practice areas are in the school's development plan.

HUMANITIES

The main focus of the inspection was on the provision for history and geography, but lessons in government and politics, psychology and sociology were sampled. The teaching and learning in the government and politics, psychology and sociology lessons were never less than good, and were usually very good and excellent.

HISTORY

Provision in history is **very good**.

Strengths

- Teaching is good or very good; it is clear and confident; teachers have very good subject knowledge.
- Standards of attainment are well above the national average.
- Relationships are good; teachers and students share an enthusiasm for the subject; teachers have high expectations and students respond well to the academic demands made of them.

Areas for improvement

- Some students are passive and need encouragement to use their initiative.
- Occasionally too much is expected of students.
- More frequent access to ICT is required.

Standards and achievement

120. Standards at GCE A-level are usually high. In 2000, results were well above the national average. Every student entered gained at least grade D, and six in ten achieved the higher grades A and B. The results for this subject were in the top five per cent in the country. Almost all the candidates achieved higher grades than had been predicted from their average GCSE points scores. In 2001, all candidates gained A to E grades. Most attained results above their expected level of achievement. High attaining students join the course and either sustain or improve on their already high standards.

121. Lesson observation and scrutiny of samples of work confirm that standards remain high and that achievement is good or very good. Students in Year 12 are a short way into their course and some are finding the transition to AS Level work difficult. Most, however, are already well informed about the topics studied so far. Students working on Peter the Great's foreign policy use their independent reading to develop points made by the teacher. They are able to explain why the tsar needed access to the Black Sea. Some comments are vivid. They refer to his obsessive desire to build a navy and consider whether that and other obsessions indicate a personality defect. They understand why, at this time, westernisation meant modernisation. One student gave a confident presentation about the Grand Embassy, using an overhead projector and well-produced word-processed handouts for the class. This and similar presentations contribute to the development of the key skills of communicating and listening. Another group, struggling with the concept of absolutism, was able to explain the place of Versailles in Louis XIV's system of government. They used historical terminology, for example, 'lettres de cachet' and 'lits de justice' accurately. At this stage, students find the specialist topic books they are expected to use difficult.

122. Year 13 students are academically confident and very knowledgeable. A group working on the American Revolution is able to analyse the deteriorating relationship between Britain and her colonies in the light of the Stamp Act. They assume the roles of named colonists and explain what political stance they are adopting and why. Another group, studying the place of black Africans in 19th and 20th century America enjoy discussing the importance of the individual in history as opposed to the Marxist theory of historical development. These students list, with appreciation, the skills, which they believe their study of history has taught them / to analyse, to communicate, to plan their work and to question everything they are told.

Quality of Education

123. Good progress is being made due to good teaching. In the lessons observed teaching ranged from satisfactory to very good. In the best lessons teaching is clear and direct. Complex situations and issues are clarified without being over simplified. Students understand the objective of the lesson, whether it is

to analyse a complex issue or to learn the technique of tackling an examination question. Learning is made relevant. Students appreciate how knowledge of the past illuminates the present. Lessons are teacher led but not teacher directed. A class may be provided with brief notes but students are expected to add their own and to cross-reference. Teachers have very good subject knowledge. Sometimes they do not offer it but use it to supplement information drawn from the class by skilful questioning. The approach is academic. Students are expected to consider abstract concepts, for example, absolutism. They are encouraged to think independently and their opinions are respected.

124. Students enjoy the course. Numbers have fluctuated but currently recruitment is healthy. Boys outnumber girls. In 2001, two thirds of the students who studied AS-level continued to A-level. Some continue to degree level. Students co-operate well and share their research. Some in Year 12 are still finding their feet and are reluctant to take the initiative. Most are fully involved in lessons and their enjoyment of debate and controversy is patent. They are pleased to do well. The atmosphere in classes is very pleasant. Relationships between students and tutors are good. Tutors are generous with their time. They organise A-level revision classes in the Easter holiday. They supervise personal studies in lunch hours and after school. They provide extra tuition for Scholarship Level and Oxbridge candidates. They organise group visits to academic lectures. The departmental procedures for target setting, monitoring and assessment concur with school policies. All are effectively and efficiently implemented. Marking is accurate and constructive. ICT is used whenever practicable.

Leadership and management

125. The department is very well led and well managed. Planning and organisation are meticulous. The departmental development plan is clearly laid out and achievable. Well-qualified staff work well together as a team. The history department is highly academic, forward looking, progressive and committed to raising the standard of all students in their care. Students appreciate being treated as intellectual equals.

GEOGRAPHY

The quality of provision in geography is **very good**.

Strengths

- Student achievement is very good; standards are above, and sometimes well above, national averages.
- Teaching in the sixth form is consistently very good.
- The leadership and management of the department are very good.
- There is very good support and guidance for all students.
- Students behave very well in lessons, showing good attitudes to their work.
- Geography is a popular option in the sixth form; the number of students choosing to study the subject has increased considerably since the last inspection.

Areas for improvement

- There are too few opportunities for using ICT in lessons.
- There is no formal monitoring or evaluation of the quality of teaching throughout the department, although plans for this are in place.
- Departmental planning needs to take every opportunity to emphasise the links between separate modules of work, in order to ensure that students are aware of the interrelated nature of the subject.

Standards and achievement

126. The GCE A-level examination results in 2000 are well above the national average and are particularly high for girls. Most students obtained at least a pass grade E and the proportion gaining the highest grades of A and B was well above the national average. Results for the past three years have been consistently above the national average, although there was a slight drop in the proportion of the highest grades in 2001. These latest results show no significant difference in the performance of girls compared with boys. In the new AS examinations taken at the end of Year 12 in 2001, nearly all students were awarded a pass grade and a large proportion achieved the highest grades of A and B. Most of these students have continued their studies into Year 13. These results represent a very good improvement since the last inspection. Results at the end of the course indicate very good achievement for most students when compared with their GCSE performance.
127. The standard of work seen during the inspection, in lessons and in written work is above average. Geography appeals to students with a wide range of prior attainment and has gained in popularity, particularly in the last three years. Students in Year 12, although only in the first few weeks of the course, are already competent in recording clear, well-organised notes. They generally have a good recall of previous work and, with the help of very good teaching, are able to build on this rapidly. They understand how theoretical models of population growth can both help and hinder investigations into actual examples of population change. Most students can use statistics to illustrate patterns and trends, for example in explaining the changes that occur along the length of a river from source to mouth. Higher attaining students are already able to make sophisticated connections between some of these variables. Students rapidly absorb the necessary specialist vocabulary that helps them to produce extended writing of A-level standard. Many find it difficult to write accurately and at length, however, and they benefit from specific strategies devised by the department to help them to organise and present their work.
128. In Year 13, students show very good application to their work and are generally very pleased with the level of support and guidance they receive from their teachers. They produce detailed notes, essays and practical exercises, which incorporate a wide range of statistical techniques. Opportunities for residential fieldwork in both Years 12 and 13 do much to increase students' enjoyment and understanding of the subject, giving them first hand experience of related aspects of different environments. Analysis of their files reveals increasing powers of independent work. Work seen in lessons was above, and sometimes well above, national expectations. In a lesson on natural hazards, students displayed very good recall of previous learning, on plate tectonics, which they then applied successfully to new and more complex situations. A striking feature of these lessons is the oral contribution made by both females and males. In a lesson on aspects of development in a National Park, they conducted a mature debate on the impact on local residents, of changes to the road network, adopting different viewpoints with conviction and putting forward persuasive arguments.

Quality of education

129. Teaching and learning are consistently very good. The many successful features of the lessons include the planning and preparation of extremely clear resources, the high expectations that teachers have of their students and the very good relationships that exist within and outside the classroom. The presence of these factors helps students to make significant advances in their confidence and learning. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and lessons move on at a rapid pace, helped by the occasional use of ICT. In a very good lesson in Year 13, the use of a Powerpoint display which incorporated maps and three-dimensional diagrams enabled students to make very rapid progress in their learning on volcanic and earthquake activity.
130. A very well established system of thorough marking and assessment, together with individual predictions of final grades and targets for improvement, mean that students know the standard of their

work in relation to examination requirements and what they need to do in order to reach higher levels. Teachers readily provide a great deal of individual help. This is particularly valuable for those who either did not study geography for GCSE or who were not awarded a high grade at the end of Year 11. Consolidation of their basic geographical understanding in Year 12 often helps them to achieve well by the end of the course.

Leadership and management

131. The department is very well led and managed by an experienced teacher who has a clear vision for the future of the subject and a desire for continuous improvement in the quality of education that is offered. Professional development, specialist knowledge and the sharing of good practice within the department is celebrated and encouraged. A detailed, strategic development plan is in place and is constantly reviewed and updated. As yet there is no formal monitoring and evaluation of teaching, but plans for this are in place. Although all members of the department are competent users of ICT, there is insufficient planned use of computer technology to enhance students' learning. The new AS and A2 specifications for the subject have been carefully planned with detailed schemes of work. Continuous monitoring of these schemes, with an emphasis on the connections between the separate modules of work, is essential to ensure that students appreciate the inter-relationships between all aspects of the subject.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

Lessons in English language and literature combined, English literature and German were inspected. Those for French and for English language were sampled. In English language the teaching was good or very good. In French teaching ranged from satisfactory to good.

ENGLISH COMBINED

The quality of provision is **good**.

Strengths

- Standards are high and students achieve well in class.
- Teaching is very good; teachers have very secure subject knowledge.
- Independent and collaborative learning is a strength, which contributes to the high standards students achieve in class.
- There are excellent working relationships between students and teachers.
- The subject is very well led.

Areas for improvement

- More consistent success in national examinations.

Standards and achievement

132. The number of students varies from year to year. The GCE A-level results for 2000 match the national average. No student achieved a grade A but two achieved a grade B. All students achieved a pass in the range A to E. Average points scores were 5.25 against a national average of 5.38. Males performed slightly better than females. The results for 2001, although not yet validated against national figures, are very significantly improved. Three quarters of the students entered for the GCE A-level

examination achieved grades A or B, and the large majority of students achieved higher grades than those predicted from their average points scores at GCSE.

133. The standard of work seen is very good and reflects the improvement in achievement notable in the 2001 results. The subject is popular with students from various academic disciplines, and numbers are increasing. The very well organised Year 12 induction course introduces students to the concepts and technical vocabulary of the subject. Even at this early stage in Year 12, students are showing above average levels of attainment. For example, a group of Year 12 students made very good presentations in which they analysed various examples of speeches for literary and linguistic techniques. All students had a very good command of their subject and spoke with confidence and clarity. Their sure grasp of linguistic analysis helped them to identify precisely how the aim and purpose of a speech affect structure, vocabulary and phraseology. In this lesson all students showed a high level of ICT skills, including one presentation where Powerpoint was used very well. Year 13 students are very competent in their use of linguistic terminology to analyse and understand theatricality and dramatic intensity in a scene from 'Othello'.
134. Students' achievement improved dramatically in 2001 and this is confirmed by the standards seen in current classwork because students develop very good subject knowledge and are involved in learning. They enjoy the structured and purposeful activities, which involve individual or group research. They are confident in presenting their findings in oral presentations and show a good understanding of how speech is structured in order to achieve a particular purpose. Students, who are drawn from a wide range of disciplines, enjoy the subject not only because they see clear links with GCSE work, but also because they find the challenge of the subject stimulating and enjoyable.

Quality of education

135. Teaching is very good, and ranges from good to excellent. Teachers have very secure subject knowledge. They also have a very secure grasp of the particular demands of the new specifications. Lessons are well planned with clear learning objectives. Teachers use learning approaches which involve students in working together and, so, learning from each other. This instils confidence and promotes high standards in the subject. The excellent relationships between teachers and students create enjoyable and stimulating learning. Lessons move along at a fairly fast pace and no time is wasted. Teaching is challenging, demanding and aimed very carefully at the demands of the new examination. It is this combination of very good teaching and interesting and challenging approaches to learning that contributes to the high standards that students are achieving. As with the other AS and A2 courses offered by the English department, there is a real enthusiasm for learning.

Leadership and management

136. The subject is very well led by the head of department. There is a clear vision and direction for the development of both the subject and the department. Very secure subject knowledge and a thorough understanding of the new specifications underpin the successful teaching. Teachers are enthusiastic, and learning becomes an enjoyable and collaborative effort between teacher and student. Assessment, monitoring and target setting are very good. Very good use is made of the schools' annual value added analysis of AS and A-level results. The English department has recovered from the staffing problems of recent years and is working as an energetic and enthusiastic team, determined to involve students in learning and to raise standards further.

ENGLISH LITERATURE

The quality of provision is **very good**.

Strengths

- Standards are high.
- Teaching is very good. Some lessons are excellent. Teachers have very secure subject knowledge.
- Independent and collaborative learning is a strength, which contributes to the high standards that students achieve.
- There are excellent working relationships between students and teachers.
- Students achieve well because they are very well taught and they enjoy learning.
- The subject is very well led.

Areas for improvement

- Although there are areas for continued development there are none which constitute a significant area for improvement.

Standards and achievement

137. GCE A-level results are usually above average. In 2000 they were well above national averages. The students' average points score was 6.9 against a national figure of 5.9. The proportion of students achieving grades A and B was 44 per cent against a national figure of 36 per cent. More females than males tend to study English literature and both perform better than females and males do nationally. The results for 2001, although not yet validated against national figures, are even better. A greater proportion of students, 71 per cent, gained grades A and B. The number of students choosing the subject varies but is increasing. All students usually exceed or match predictions. In the coursework component of A2, students achieve high marks. Attendance is very good.

138. The standard of work seen is very good. Students in Year 12 show very good understanding of aspects of the novels 'The Handmaid's Tale' and 'Brave New World'. They share their research and insights with each other. Students in Year 13 show above average knowledge and understanding of character in 'Othello'. They are at their best when confidently reading, analysing and commenting on the text.

139. Students' listening and speaking skills are above average. They reflect thoughtfully and are articulate. In one outstanding lesson, a Year 13 student led the seminar discussion very well indeed. Students' written work is of a high standard. It is very well organised and reflects the demands of the new specifications. Students write with fluency and flair. This, together with teaching that is targeted to the demands of the examination specifications, directly contributes to the high standards students achieve in coursework.

Quality of education

140. Teaching is very good. Three English literature lessons were observed. Two were excellent and one was good. Teachers have very secure subject knowledge. They are enthusiastic about their subject. This is shown in the quality of their responses when exploring texts or asking relevant questions, which prompt further thought. In the two excellent lessons, the teacher used a variety of demanding learning approaches, which involved students actively in learning. This reflects the school's work on developing thinking skills and makes a significant contribution to the high standards students achieve. Students really enjoy this approach because it generates an infectious enthusiasm for learning. "I really love this subject," said one Year 12 student, "I can't get enough of it."
141. Teachers have a very good understanding of the demands of the specifications and this is reflected in their teaching. Marking is very good and reflects the course criteria. Comments are supportive and diagnostic. They show students how they can improve their work. Students are therefore able to see how they are progressing.
142. Teachers make very good use of the annual value added analysis of student performance produced by the school. Lessons are planned to involve students actively in the learning process, which contributes directly to the high standards in the subject. Teaching builds effectively on the students' high attainment, maintains high standards by stimulating intellectual curiosity and promotes very effective and very enjoyable learning. Relationships are excellent. Students enjoy learning because they value their teachers and know that they are valued in turn. This creates a very positive environment in the classroom, which enriches learning.

Leadership and management

143. The subject is very well led. There is a clear vision and direction for the development of the subject and the department. Very secure subject knowledge and a thorough understanding of the new specifications underpin the successful teaching. Teachers are enthusiastic and learning becomes an enjoyable and collaborative effort between teacher and student. Assessment, monitoring and target setting are very good. Very good use is made of the schools' annual value added analysis of AS and A2 results.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

The quality of provision in modern foreign languages is **good**.

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is good, especially teachers' detailed, up-to-date knowledge of the languages.
- Standards are improving, helped by an increase in recruitment.

Areas for improvement

- The more formal integration of ICT to enhance the modern foreign languages curriculum.
- The provision of a base, with access to audio-recording and playing equipment, to encourage self-study.

Standards and achievements

144. Between 1998 and 2000 standards of achievement at A-level in both French and German have fluctuated widely. Small groups in French have produced results significantly above the national average in 1999, and below average in 1998 and 2000. Standards have been ostensibly higher in

German, where groups are slightly larger. However, differences in attainment potential of students, where numbers are small, make comparisons with national figures unreliable. Results for 2001 represent an overall improvement in standards, but no national figures are yet available for comparison. Achievements at AS-level by the present Year 13 are evenly balanced between grades A to D in both languages and represent potentially high standards. As few boys take up French or German in the sixth form no accurate judgement of their performance in relation to that of girls is possible.

145. The standard of work seen in lessons, and in written work, is above average in Year 13 and accurately reflects the students' capabilities. For example, in German, the standard of grammatical accuracy is high, especially in the use of past tenses and modal constructions. Oral communication in both languages is generally fluent: over half the students handle the complications of syntax efficiently, whereas others experience some difficulty with word order. Listening skills are particularly well tuned. In one lesson students were required to hear the opinions of young Swiss people towards smoking and drinking, and needed to interpret strong regional accents. In Year 12, standards are in line with expectations at the beginning of the sixth form course, taking into account the students' previous attainment at GCSE (grades A* to C). In speaking, students are accurately and actively using language, which was only passive knowledge in GCSE. Greater grammatical insight and awareness of language patterns are supporting and enabling good progress.

Quality of education

146. The teaching of modern foreign languages is good overall. Teachers have a profound knowledge of the subjects and sustain the target language throughout the lesson, rarely breaking the continuity to use English in order to check understanding. They ensure that every student contributes to class dialogue, where confusion or error is sympathetically resolved. Year 12 students react positively to the teachers' high expectations, and show a determination to communicate accurately and effectively, and in Year 13 the sophisticated and challenging work in both languages stretches students to the limit of their capabilities. From the outset, teachers encourage appreciation of language patterns, word 'families' and grammatical features to enhance interpretation skills, and to encourage lateral thinking as an important part of examination technique. In a Year 12 French gap-filling exercise, the teacher invited students to look for grammatical clues, before attempting to place the words correctly. For example, the gap immediately after a noun may be filled by an adjective: in French the adjective also agrees, thus immediately reducing the number of potential answers. A similar reliance on advanced literacy skills was evident in a Year 13 French lesson, where students were required to match up new items of vocabulary with their English translation in a short, but complex text. Drawing on previous knowledge of synonyms, word families and word derivation patterns, they completed the challenging task successfully. Lessons are well paced and well planned with a variety of activities to sustain motivation. In a Year 12 German lesson, practising and consolidating constructions with modal verbs was conducted in an absorbing and interesting way. Students are positive in their approach to the subjects, readily accept responsibility for taking notes, maintain their files in good order and show good research skills. Homework is appropriate and regularly set, internal marking is frequent and consistent, using the scheme with which students are familiar. Feedback is effective in suggesting ways to improve performance.
147. Numbers in modern foreign languages in the sixth form have generally been small, but recruitment in 2000 and 2001 has been greater with the advent of AS-level specifications, especially in German. Retention into Year 13 has been good. There is, however, a lack of opportunity for enhancement of the curriculum through ICT. The department does not at present have the access to central facilities, nor its own resources, to make good this deficiency. Neither does it have a base which could offer self-study facilities to sixth form students, with access to audio-recording and -playing equipment. At present the sixth form curriculum is delivered in different areas of the school, mainly in non-specialist rooms.

Leadership and management

148. The department is well led and has a strong team spirit and clear educational direction. The development plan shows awareness of issues for improvement, particularly the attainment of boys at GCSE, which might affect recruitment into the sixth form. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching is undertaken as part of performance management but mutual observation within the department is not yet in place. As the department is heavily involved in the mentoring of trainee teachers, there is ample opportunity to exchange ideas and discuss good practice.