

## INSPECTION REPORT

### **BURTON BOROUGH SCHOOL**

Newport, Shropshire

LEA area: Telford and Wrekin

Unique reference number: 123574

Headteacher: Mr Peter Boulter

Reporting inspector: Michael Merchant  
27368

Dates of inspection: 27 – 31 May 2002

Inspection number: 190775

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Modern (non – selective)

School category: Community

Age range of students: 11 to 16 years

Gender of students: Mixed

School address: Audley Avenue  
Newport  
Shropshire

Postcode: TF10 7DS

Telephone number: 01952 417555

Fax number: 01952 417552

Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs S E P Fowler

Date of previous inspection: November 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
27368	M Merchant	<i>Registered inspector</i>		What sort of school is it? The school's results and students' achievements; How well is the school led and managed?
11041	M Moore	<i>Lay inspector</i>		Students' attitudes values and personal development; How well does the school care for its students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
20243	D Benstock	<i>Team inspector</i>	Science.	
15051	L Kaufman	<i>Team inspector</i>	Design and technology.	
30198	R Chick	<i>Team inspector</i>	Physical education; Equal opportunities.	
2919	P Armitage	<i>Team inspector</i>	Mathematics.	
30282	S Richardson	<i>Team inspector</i>	Modern foreign languages; English as an additional language.	
10000	D Wasp	<i>Team inspector</i>	Religious education.	
10297	D Cox	<i>Team inspector</i>	Information and computer technology.	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students?
30518	M Johnson	<i>Team inspector</i>	Art and Design.	
23324	S Greenland	<i>Team Inspector</i>	Geography.	
24127	J Kidd	<i>Team inspector</i>	History.	How well are students taught?
12844	M Saunders	<i>Team inspector</i>	English; Drama.	
23308	J Morrell	<i>Team inspector</i>	Music.	
14943	N Peagam	<i>Team Inspector</i>	Special education needs.	

The inspection contractor was:

*Westminster Education Consultants  
Old Garden House  
The Lanterns  
Bridge Lane  
London  
SW11 3AD*

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Burton Borough School is an average sized high school of 1037 boys and girls aged 11 to 16 who have not been selected for grammar school. It serves the market town of Newport and the surrounding rural area, and has grown steadily since its last inspection in 1996. A very small number of students (11) are from minority ethnic groups. A few students (15) have English as an additional language, but none are in the early stages of language acquisition. The proportion of students on the special educational needs register is average, but the numbers who have statements of special needs is above average. The majority need help with moderate learning, emotional, behavioural and speech or communication difficulties. The proportion of students qualifying for free school meals is below average. As a result of the local education authority's selection procedures, the school receives few students who attained highly at primary school. The profile of students' attainment on entry to the school is below average. It varies greatly from year to year, but has improved as the school has grown.

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

Burton Borough is a very good school with many strengths that far outweigh its very few areas for improvement. At the heart of its effectiveness is its very good leadership, which fosters very good teaching and sustains pupils' very good progress. The cost of running this very effective school is similar to most schools across the country. Coupled with above average standards and very good progress, this means that the school provides very good value for money.

### **WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL**

- Teaching and learning: teaching is very good. Well-focused teaching is promoting enthusiastic and well-motivated students. It ensures very effective learning at a productive rate, leading to above average standards.
- Leadership: the school is very well led and managed, and very effectively governed. Under the head teacher's excellent leadership, there is a very real and shared commitment to school improvement.
- Care: the school cares very well for its students. Relationships are very good, and attitudes very positive. Students' social development is excellent.
- Special education needs: provision for students with special needs is very good and they make very good progress.
- Assessment: there is very good use of assessment information to plan the next steps in learning and to identify students who are in danger of underachieving.
- Links with parents: the school works very well with parents. There is a genuine partnership between the school and home that contributes very well to students' good progress.

## WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- Attainment: attainment in GCSE examinations.
- Curriculum: the school does not meet statutory requirements for the teaching of information and communication technology. The breadth of the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 to include more vocational courses.
- Accommodation and resources: better facilities for physical education, drama, science and more teaching rooms. Better information and communication technology facilities and learning resources in all subjects.

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made very good improvement since the previous inspection. The previous report highlighted five major issues for improvement, all of which have been wholly resolved. The school is using information very well to inform planning. Tutor time is very well used. Students' spiritual development is now satisfactory. Much has been done to ensure good practice is shared amongst teachers. Statutory requirements relating to physical education are now met. There is now far more good and very good teaching. Very little teaching is unsatisfactory (two lessons). Leadership and management continue to be very good, and the head teacher is providing excellent leadership.

## STANDARDS

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

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

Key	
<i>well above average</i>	A
<i>above average</i>	B
<i>average</i>	C
<i>below average</i>	D
<i>well below average</i>	E

Year 9: English, mathematics and science were all above average in 2001 and there is an upward trend. Standards have improved in all three subjects, though they improved faster in mathematics and science than in English. There was little difference in the attainment of boys and girls.

GCSEs: in 2001, 99 per cent of students gained at least one grade in the A\* - G range. Forty-five per cent of students gained five or more grades in the A\* - C range. The results show an improving trend and are above the average for all schools and similar schools nationally. The school met its realistic targets, and challenging targets are set for several years ahead. In 2001, results in geography and history were well above the average of similar schools. They were above average in English, mathematics, science, art and design, design technology and French. They were below average in information and communication technology and music. Students gained better grades in geography, history, science and music than they did in most of their other subjects.



Standards seen: work seen during the inspection in Years 7 to 9 was above average in English, mathematics, science, art and design, design and technology geography and history. It was average in information and communication technology, modern foreign languages, music, physical education and religious education. In Years 10 and 11, standards are well above average in design and technology and history, and above average in English, mathematics, science, art and design, geography and information and communication technology. Standards are broadly average in modern foreign languages, music, physical education and religious education.

Achievement: students' progress is well above average in English, science, art and design, design and technology, geography and history. It is above average in mathematics, information and communication technology, modern foreign languages, music, physical education and religious education. Students make very good progress overall as they move from Year 7 to Year 11.

## STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good: students are proud of their school. They respect their teachers and appreciate the importance of working hard to attain good grades at GCSE. Their very good attitude to learning is demonstrated by the way that they arrive early at lessons and their involvement in a very wide range of activities.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good: students are very well mannered. As at the time of the last inspection, the school remains happy, harmonious and orderly.
Personal development and relationships	Very good: students readily support one another. They become mature young adults at an early age and frequently engage in an exceptional level of academic discussion. The large majority of students are very responsible and their relationships with others are very good. Students appreciate the good relationships they have with teachers and with each other.
Attendance	Good: attendance is above the national average and improving.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of students:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11
Quality of teaching	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 has improved since the last inspection: 98 per cent of lessons are now satisfactory or better, 85 per cent are good or better and 42 per cent very good. Teaching was excellent in nine lessons seen, spread across French, geography, history mathematics, music, personal, social and health education, and religious education. The proportion of very good teaching is slightly better in Years 7 and 10 and is reflected in the quality of learning. Teaching is particularly effective in art and design, design and technology, English, geography, history, music, physical education, religious education and science. It was good in over 80 per cent of lessons seen, and good overall in information and communication technology, mathematics and modern foreign languages. The very

small proportion of less than satisfactory teaching (two lessons) was seen in information and communication technology and mathematics. The school meets the needs of all its students very well. Teaching of literacy skills across the range of subjects is good overall, while the teaching of numeracy is satisfactory.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory: the curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is broad and balanced. In Years 10 and 11, the curriculum is too narrow and there are too few vocational courses. The school does not meet the National Curriculum statutory requirements in information and communication technology for all students in Years 10 and 11 and for in information and communication technology across the curriculum.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Very good: students with special educational needs are very well supported. Sensitivity and thoughtfulness on the part of staff help to build students' confidence. A careful match of work in class to their specific needs ensures they make very good progress. Individual education plans are of very good quality.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	Very good: the small proportion of students who speak English as an additional language are totally fluent in English and make the same good progress as other students.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good: the school makes excellent provision for students' social development and very good provision for moral and cultural development. Provision for their spiritual development is satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its students	Very good: the quality of pastoral care is very good and a clear strength of the school. Effective arrangements are in place for handling issues of child protection. Staff are caring, committed and know their students very well.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good: the excellent leadership provided by the headteacher ensures that this is a school with a total absence of complacency. As a result, students make very good progress and standards are rising. He receives excellent support from a highly effective deputy headteacher and a talented leadership team. The quality of middle managers is very good.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good: the governors play a strong part in leading the school forward. They have a very good knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses. However, statutory requirements for information and communication technology are not met for all students in Years 10 and 11.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good: the leadership team monitors teaching through a comprehensive programme of classroom observations. Each subject is kept under constant review so that strengths are recognised and any weaknesses are quickly identified and tackled. The monitoring of teaching by heads of departments is not consistent.
The strategic use of resources	Very good: all spending, including that in individual departments, is clearly linked to the school's priorities through a careful match of whole school needs and financial planning. The school applies the principles of best value very well.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students' progress through the school.</li> <li>• The quality of teaching.</li> <li>• The approachability of the school.</li> <li>• The school's high expectations.</li> <li>• Leadership and management.</li> <li>• The range of out-of-class activities.</li> <li>• The personal development of students.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The amount and planning of homework.</li> <li>• More and better information about students' progress.</li> <li>• The school should do more to work more closely with parents.</li> </ul>

Inspectors strongly endorse all the positive comments made by parents. They judge homework across subjects to be broadly appropriate, both in its quality and in its amount. Information provided to parents is very good, and there is a very good partnership between the school and the large majority of parents.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

*Attainment refers to the standards that students achieve compared to national averages. Standards are also compared to results obtained in similar schools, that is those with a similar entitlement of free school meals. Achievement refers to the progress that students make in terms of where they started when they entered the school, or when they started their GCSE courses. Thus good achievement means that students do well and make better than expected progress. It does not necessarily mean that standards are above average.*

1. Students enter the school with broadly average levels of attainment as measured by the average points scored in tests taken at the age of 11. However, because of selection in Telford and Wrekin, some 30 per cent of the higher attaining students go to grammar schools. This means that very few of the students who come to Burton Borough have attained the higher levels in these tests. The school, therefore, does not have the full ability range when students enter in Year 7 and so prior attainment is below average. The prior attainment of the boys who took GCSE examinations in 2001 was well below average. However, the school has attracted significant numbers of students who choose to come to Burton Borough even though they have passed the selection tests for the grammar school. Consequently, standards on entry have improved, although they vary greatly from year to year. The present Year 7 students have higher levels of prior attainment than those who entered the school in 1996 (i.e. those students who took their GCSE in 2001).

*End of Year 9: Students are expected to reach at least National Curriculum Level 5 in English, mathematics and science in the national tests taken at the end of Year 9. Level 6 and above are referred to as "higher levels". In 2001, the national percentage of students reaching Level 5 and above (with Level 6 and above shown in brackets) was 82 per cent (44 per cent) in English, 70 per cent (35 per cent) in mathematics and 78 per cent (26 per cent) in science. Average points scores are also calculated. Level 5 is worth 33 points. A student achieving Level 5 in all three subjects would therefore have an average points score of 33, which was also the national average points score in 2001.*

2. The overall trend over the last five years has been upwards, and test results are improving at a rate faster than that of other schools nationally. Attainment is better in mathematics and science because skillful teaching in Years 7 to 9 gives students the skills they need to be successful in the national tests. Attainment in English, particularly that of boys, is held back by the below average literacy skills they have when they enter school. However, students make good progress in all three core subjects because of consistently good and often very good teaching. There is little difference between the percentage of boys and girls reaching the expected levels because the school has worked hard to devise ways of motivating boys to learn more effectively.

3. It is important to note the below average standards overall that students, particularly boys, have when they arrive at Burton Borough. A comparison of students' average points score at the end of primary school with results they attained at the end of Year 9 shows that progress in English, mathematics and science is very good. Taking all three core subjects together, their achievement is very good. Over three years, the school is therefore teaching the students far more knowledge, understanding and skills than might be expected. Students with special needs do better than expected because of the very good support they

receive from the special needs department. The faster rate of progress of boys in all three core subjects is because of the very effective teaching, which is very well directed at enabling boys to acquire confidently and quickly the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in the national tests at age 14.

Standards seen in other subjects during the inspection in Years 7 to 9 are:

Above average	Art and design, design and technology, geography, history.
Average	Information and communication technology, modern languages, music, physical education, religious education.

Progress and achievement in other subjects in Years 7 to 9 are:

Well above average	Art and design, design and technology, geography, history.
Above average	Information and communication technology, modern languages, music, physical education, religious education.

4. Good teaching is the norm in those subjects where students attain well and make good progress. The excellent leadership of the headteacher has a strong influence on standards. The visible and calming presence of the head teacher around the school, his classroom observations of teaching and his support for colleagues facing challenges have had the effect of spurring on all teachers to give of their best.

5. The school does not monitor attainment by using the ethnic backgrounds of their families, nor of the small number with English as an additional language (EAL). Direct observation of their work shows that the attainment and progress of these students is similar to that of other students at the school.

End of Year 11: *In 2001 nationally, 48 per cent of students attained five or more grades A\* - C, 91 per cent attained five or more grades A\* - G and 96 per cent attained one or more grades A\* - G. The average total points score was 39 (calculated by 8 points for A\*, 7 for A, etc).*

6. The table below summarises the attainment of students in the 2001 GCSE examinations compared to:

All schools similar modern schools

Proportion attaining five or more grades A* - C	Average	Average
Proportion attaining five or more grades A* - G	Well above	Well above
Proportion attaining one or more grades A* - C	Well above	Well above
Average points score	Average	Average

7. These results are a little lower than in 2000, but they reflect the particularly low attainment on entry to the school of those students who left in 2001, and are not consistent with the overall trend over the last five years. This also explains the very wide difference in attainment between boys and girls at GCSE in 2001: 63 per cent of girls attained five or more A\* - C grades whilst only 34 per cent of boys did. It is notable that the attainment of boys in this year group when they entered the school was well below average whilst that of girls was below average.

8. The rate of improvement, as measured over the last four years, is above that of other schools nationally. The school met its realistic target of 41 per cent of students attaining five or more grades A\* - C, and 95 per cent of students attaining five or more grades A\* - G. The school's predictions for its results in the 2002 examinations are based on very reliable information on the students' attainment to date. They indicate that the proportion of students gaining the higher grades will be well above average. Comparing students' average points score at the end of Year 9 with what they attained at the end of Year 11 suggests that, between 1999 and 2001, most students achieved at least that which could be reasonably expected and many girls greatly exceeded their predicted grades. Progress overall, from Year 7 to Year 11, is, therefore, very good.

9. In English 47 per cent of all students attained grade C and above, which is below the national average for all and similar schools. This is a decline over results in 2000 and reflects below average levels of attainment of these students when they entered school in 1996. However, girls do much better, with 67 per cent attaining grade C and above. In 2000 and 2001, nearly all students (99.5 per cent) attained grade G and above. All students in Year 11 take English literature, and the percentage attaining grades in the A\* - C range is consistently above the average of similar schools. Students achieve well in comparison with their attainment at age 14, but they make very good progress in relation to their standards when they entered the school. This is as a result of particularly well planned and stimulating teaching.

10. Mathematics results are below average and well below average for similar schools (particularly for boys in 2001). They have steadily improved, for both boys and girls, over the last four years with the exception of 2001, which saw a reversal of this trend. This contributed to the relative decline in the overall point scores at GCSE. Achievement in mathematics is good by Year 11 in relation to students' prior attainment when they entered the school. Progress from Year 9 to Year 11 is good.

11. In science, although the average point score exceeded the national average, the proportion of students gaining A\* - C was below average. This is a decline compared to the previous four years, and is because of poor attitudes of boys in particular in that year. Through well-focussed and imaginative teaching, all students gained at least grade G, and the proportion gaining the higher grades A\* and A was above national average. Performance in science was better than in English or mathematics. Girls' attainment was much higher than that of boys, highlighting the underperformance of boys last year. In relation to their below average levels of attainment when they entered the school (the prior attainment of boys was well below average), both boys and girls made very good progress from Year 7 to 11.

12. Consistently good and very good teaching, coupled with strong and effective subject leadership, has driven up standards in these three subjects over the last four years. All the signs are that the decline in attainment in 2001 was specific to that particular cohort and reflected the below average levels of attainment (well below for the boys) that this group had when they entered the school. The wide difference in attainment between boys and girls reflects in part the differences in prior attainment of these two groups and in part the fact that the schools' strategies to improve boys' progress had not had sufficient time to impact on their results.

13. In art and design, geography and history, GCSE results in 2001 were above average for all schools. This was because of consistently very good teaching that stimulated and challenged these youngsters to do their best. This is true also for design and technology and music, where very large numbers of students are entered for the GCSE examinations. Here, very good and often excellent teaching is expertly geared to the needs of these students so that all achieve very well. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT),

modern foreign languages, physical education and religious education reach those expected nationally. Again, given the below average prior attainment of students, this is good achievement brought about by consistently good, carefully planned teaching. In physical education, standards are being held back by a severe lack of space to carry out indoor sports. Attainment in religious education is depressed because not all students follow a course in the subject into Year 11.

14. The school analyses its results carefully to highlight any significant difference between boys and girls or teaching groups, but not by ethnic groups. Direct observation of work, however, shows that the very few ethnic minority students do just as well as others, and sometimes better.

Standards seen during the inspection in Years 10 and 11 are:

Well above average	Design and technology, history.
Above average	Art and design, geography, ICT.
Average	Modern foreign languages, music, physical education, religious education.

Progress and achievement in Years 10 and 11 are:

Well above average	Design and technology, history, music.
Above average	Art and design, geography, ICT, modern foreign languages, physical education, religious education.

15. Standards in literacy are average overall and have had a significant impact on all other subjects. When they join the school, many students lack a sophisticated vocabulary and use too much colloquial language in formal speaking. The school's literacy strategy is effective in promoting more precise use of language across all subjects. Students make good contributions to question and answer sessions, and many are adept at giving a sustained response. Listening skills are good because they are nurtured in most subjects and the school is determined to instill respect for others. As a result, students understand the importance of listening to each other so that, by the end of Year 9, they willingly share their views without being prompted. High-attaining GCSE students communicate their ideas clearly. On entry to the school, very few students read above their age. Improving reading remains a high priority, and good use is made of key words in all subjects. In English, design and technology, geography, history and special educational needs (SEN), key words are used particularly well to reinforce students' understanding and to extend their vocabulary. In this way, students are beginning to acquire the vocabulary they need to work independently on texts. Learning resource centre staff teach library skills, including information retrieval from the Internet, to Year 7 students as part of the school's provision for reading development. Many students have average writing skills. In a few subjects, the opportunities for extended writing remain limited, and marking of students' work does not always help to support the development of writing.

16. Students enter the school with below average standards of numeracy. The Key Stage 3 strategy is being successfully introduced, but is patchy because the school has no policy for numeracy across the curriculum. Departments such as history, English and physical education now make good use of numeracy to support their work; for example graphs and tables in English, analysis of trade figures in history and the use of statistics in physical education. In addition, use of mathematics is developed in science, design technology and geography.

17. Standards in ICT are average. The use of ICT in other subjects is satisfactory but

variable, due to the difficulty some subjects have in gaining access to the ICT rooms. For instance, in design and technology, students use software to design circuits, and are now beginning use computer-aided design (CAD) packages to enhance their design work. In English, history and geography and modern foreign languages students use the Internet to carry out research topics. Most students make good use of word processing and the PowerPoint software application to enhance their work. Good use is made of e-mail. In mathematics, too little use is made of ICT.

18. Inspectors strongly endorse the commendation of the local education authority that provision for students with EAL is very good. Such students are very well integrated into the school and make very good progress in all subjects. A senior member of staff has direct responsibility for their welfare and academic progress. Good procedures are in place for the initial external assessment of their needs. Their individual progress is meticulously monitored and evaluated, with very good two-way communication between teaching departments, senior staff and external agencies. These students are given very good support. There are close links between home and school. Students know where to go if they need help and, in addition, they all meet with the designated member of staff once a month at morning break for coffee in a venue that is friendly and welcoming. Educational and recreational visits are occasionally arranged for them as a group. The library holds a very good selection of multi-cultural material.

19. All students are well integrated into the school, including those students with physical disabilities, special educational needs (SEN), and the few students from differing minority ethnic groups. The recent appointment of a committed inclusion co-ordinator is successfully addressing the needs of a small but significant number of students who are less motivated by traditional academic subjects or are experiencing behaviour or special problems. Her work and that of her two valued behaviour support assistants, is greatly appreciated by the school community. The opportunity for some of these young people to take part in alternative complementary education initiatives, often supported by the local education authority (LEA), has kept them in the education system and, in many cases, allowed them to sit their GCSE examinations.

20. Students with SEN achieve at least as well as other students and sometimes better when supported in class. They achieve very well when withdrawn for individual or group specialist support in literacy. Students who arrive with significant literacy difficulties make very good progress in improving their reading and spelling, and are enabled to apply these skills to learn successfully in other lessons. Students who arrive in the school in Year 7 with below the expected level of attainment in English for their age (Level 4) generally make gains that bring them to that level by the end of Year 9. Most go on to achieve passes in GCSE, usually achieving higher levels than predicted in a range of subjects. Other students with a range of emotional, social or physical difficulties achieve well as a result of careful attention to their needs.

### **Students' attitudes, values and personal development:**

- Students' attitudes to school are very good.
- Behaviour is very good.
- Students' personal development and relationships are very good.
- Attendance is good and is above the national average.



21. Students display very good attitudes to the school and their work, and make significant academic and pastoral progress as a result. Students interviewed during the inspection week confirmed that they enjoyed coming to school, that staff were very supportive of them and help them to learn well. This was confirmed by the inspection findings.

22. In the majority of lessons observed, students displayed very good behaviour and showed a great interest and involvement in the activities. For example, in an excellent Year 8 personal, health and social education (PHSE) lesson, students sensibly discussed the various foods that contributed to healthy eating. They made mature contributions to the lesson, and worked well as part of a team to form judgements. In a very successful Year 7 music lesson, students worked well and displayed mature and sensible behaviour in practice rooms, even though they were unsupervised. In the large majority of lessons seen, students co-operated very well with staff. This enhanced their learning and they made good progress as a result.

23. Students mostly listen very attentively to teachers and work enthusiastically to obtain good marks and achievement awards. They have a healthy respect for the feelings, beliefs and values of others. They know and understand that people have beliefs other than their own. They recognise the virtue of tolerance and understanding. The school motto, 'We expect excellence' permeates both the classroom and leisure activities.

24. The school is successful in integrating students with SEN into school life. Their behaviour and attitudes are usually very good when they are supported in mainstream classes or when withdrawn for instruction. They are very supportive of one another and encourage each other to contribute when they are withdrawn for learning support.

25. The school's aims are, 'To develop skills of expression such that young people leave school able to express their thoughts and emotions easily and precisely, allowing them to fulfil effective roles in society'. These aims are well understood by staff and students. In the main, students' display appropriate behaviour to ensure that the school's aims are met.

26. Students' behaviour is very good at lunchtime and break. Lunchtime is enjoyed as a pleasant social occasion. Although the dining hall and corridors are very cramped, students use them sensibly without jostling or interfering with others.

27. Students' show good respect for their own property, other people's and the school's. Library books, textbooks, computers and musical instruments are treated with care and respect. The school has no graffiti and only a small amount of litter. During interviews, students of all year groups confirmed their pride in their school and their commitment to ensure it stays in good order.

28. The school has very effective procedures for dealing with isolated incidents of bullying. When incidents occur, staff deal with them promptly and efficiently. Sometimes a small number of students display silly or challenging behaviour, such as inattention or noisiness in lessons. In these instances, students work at a slow pace, move off task and do not display enthusiasm. This occurs mainly when teaching is not sufficiently focused and is not targeted to students needs. The recent appointment of the inclusion co-ordinator and the introduction of the behaviour support programme have had a positive impact on the progress made by some students with SEN and other students with behaviour and pastoral difficulties.

29. Relationships between staff and students are very harmonious. Students in Years 7 to 10, interviewed during the inspection week, confirm that the school provides a happy and secure learning environment and they feel comfortable and safe within it. Students are given a good level of responsibility. Year 11 students help in the community and work in schools,

hospitals and nursing homes. They also support staff in lessons with Key Stage 3 students. Year 9 students are appointed as a personal mentor for Year 7 students and guide them through the first few weeks of school. The whole school competes in the Burton Borough Challenge, which provides seven modules of achievements leading to a Gold, Silver or Bronze Award. This excellent initiative, which has been highly commended by Education Extra, awards certificates to students in a large number of categories, based on different learning and interpersonal skills; for example, for taking part in community activities, for learning a new skill, or for mentoring younger students.

30. During the week of the inspection, Year 7 students were helping out at lunchtimes in a local infants school as part of the Challenge. Above all, relationships throughout the campus are very positive, thereby creating a safe and harmonious atmosphere for all. Opportunities for social development are provided in most subjects. There is a strong emphasis on group work and student participation in lessons, most notably in English, geography, history, ICT, modern foreign languages, music and physical education. The school has an effective Senior Student system and arrangements are in hand for senior students to be trained as prefects. This is good practice. Students from all year groups are involved in fundraising activities, and their work is much appreciated by the community.

31. Attendance at 93 per cent is good and improving. The school's proactive approach has had a positive impact on attendance figures. The measures recently introduced include an electronic registration system, parents' 'attendance hotline' and the appointment of an attendance officer. Permanent exclusions at the school during the previous year were nil, and the school reports only a very small number of fixed-term exclusions.

32. Students value the support they receive and try hard to make effective use of it. They work hard in lessons and tuition sessions, extending this work willingly through homework and voluntary attendance at handwriting and other clubs. When they work together in groups withdrawn from lessons, they usually behave very well, co-operate with the teacher and support each other generously. The feedback they receive enables them to be aware of the extent of their own learning, and they take pleasure and pride in the improvement they make.

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

- Teaching is very good in all years.
- Learning is very good in all years.

33. The teaching profile has improved markedly since the last inspection, leading to standards of achievement that have risen year-on-year. Inspectors observed 134 lessons and found only two to be less than satisfactory. Over 98 per cent of lessons were satisfactory or better, with 85 per cent being good, very good or excellent. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen in Years 10 and 11, and 48 per cent were very good or excellent. Nine lessons were outstanding and were seen in design and technology, French, geography, history, mathematics, music, personal, social and health education (PHSE) and religious education. Teaching and learning are monitored very closely on a regular basis. Staff spend considerable time ensuring that teaching methods are matched to the different learning styles of all the students in their charge. The result is that the proportion of very good and excellent teaching is higher than in most schools, and very good teaching is found in all subjects and all years.

34. Teachers place great emphasis on meeting individual students' learning needs, and their overriding concern is to include everyone in what the various subjects have to offer. As a result, all youngsters, irrespective of their prior attainment, are provided with many opportunities to make progress. This, coupled with the fact that teachers know their students very well, means that the quality of teaching is very good overall and a major strength of the school.

35. Teachers have very secure knowledge of their subjects. They know just the right questions to ask and the right resources to use in order to provide realistic challenges for students of all attainment levels. Students with special education needs (SEN), who often find the work difficult, are, therefore, well catered for and included effectively in lessons. This good understanding of individual needs applies also to gifted and talented students, who are also exposed to teaching that challenges them to think more deeply about the subject matter. In an excellent Year 7 history lesson, for example, students of all attainment levels made outstanding progress in understanding the importance of the church in the middle ages because questions and resources were tailored to the needs of individual students. Furthermore, students made excellent progress in a Year 8 PHSE session, because the teacher displayed profound understanding of relevant health issues and was therefore able to ask probing questions, which extended students' thinking about the topic under discussion.

36. The teaching of basic skills is good overall, and teachers take advantage of a well co-ordinated literacy strategy. Key words are displayed in most rooms to support knowledge, understanding and use of relevant technical vocabulary. The teaching of numeracy through other subjects is satisfactory but less well developed, and practice across the school is inconsistent. Information and communication technology (ICT) provision is developing, but departments find access to computer suites difficult and the school is not yet meeting statutory requirements for the delivery of ICT across the curriculum.

37. A strong feature of much of the good, very good and excellent teaching is the teachers' very skilful choices of methods and careful planning. Such choices catch and retain students' interest, develop their confidence and offer them many opportunities to work in pairs and in groups. Students respond very positively and develop very mature attitudes to their studies. Moreover, they work very well with their classmates, behave impeccably, enjoy the challenge of the assignments and are not afraid to display very high levels of industry. In an excellent mathematics lesson, for example, students in Year 7 were desperate to contribute because they had found the use of patterns to simplify problems such an exciting experience.

38. Relationships between teachers and students are very good. Teachers demonstrate that they have the utmost regard for their students and, as a consequence, have the highest expectations of what they can do. Students of all attainment levels rise to the challenge, respond very well to this dignified treatment, treat their teachers with real respect and produce work in which they have immense pride. Behaviour is, therefore, very good and students thrive on the opportunities to become independent learners and also to learn from the knowledge and talents of their classmates. Even in groups where students can display minor misbehaviour, in English for example, teachers manage their charges very well, in a calm, balanced fashion, ensuring that lessons become very productive.

39. The use of resources is good. There are very good visual displays in most classrooms, which engage students' interest and which are often used to reinforce the learning content of lessons. Students benefit from the industry and skill of learning support

teachers. Good examples were seen where support teachers were able to stimulate students' ideas in music, target the needs of students experiencing difficulty in ICT, and ensure that all students had access to the objectives of the lessons in history.

40. Ongoing assessment is used well. There is very good practice in the monitoring of students' progress in English and design and technology. Marking is good in all subjects, and teachers offer extensive feedback to students on how well they are doing and on what is needed for further improvement. Students' knowledge of their own learning is, therefore, good. The majority are aware of the levels at which they are operating in Years 7, 8 and 9, and the targets which they are aiming for in GCSE examinations.

41. Homework is set regularly. It is used well to develop and extend students' thinking, to reinforce what has been covered in class and to prepare for what is to come next. In some subjects, such as Spanish, homework is used to help students complete the course in the limited time available.

42. Teaching in classes containing students with SEN is very good overall. It is particularly good when teachers provide support for literacy skills within the learning support centre. Teachers know the needs and learning characteristics of their students very well. They use a good range of strategies to ensure that lessons are highly motivating, with a very good variety of well-chosen activities to reinforce learning. Careful planning of individually targeted work, which draws very effectively on previous assessment, enables students to learn confidently and well. Informal assessment in lessons is consistently well used to give feedback to students. Interventions to support or challenge are sensitive and timely. The marking of students' work is regular, consistent and accurate. Corrections are identified and monitored. Recording of progress is good.

43. Subject teachers are well informed about individual special needs and make appropriate arrangements to accommodate and address them. At times, as in some English, mathematics and science lessons, 'team teaching' is successfully used to support students with literacy difficulties. Teachers develop good relationships with students and have a very positive approach to managing their classes, so that where students exhibit behavioural difficulties, these are usually dealt with well. The effective deployment and briefing of support assistants ensure that their contribution significantly enhances teaching. Their presence often provides additional benefits to students other than those identified for support. There is a good level of consistency between classes and across subjects in the extent to which special needs are met. The attention paid to the targets in these students' individual education plans ensures that they make very good progress.

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

- The quality and range of learning opportunities are satisfactory.
- The appropriate statutory curriculum is not fully in place.
- Provision for students' personal development is very good. Provision for students' social development is excellent.

44. The curriculum is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 and 11. In Years 7 to 9, the curriculum is broad and balanced. It includes all subjects of the National Curriculum, together with drama and religious education. The weaknesses in religious education and physical education, which were key issues in the previous report, have been dealt with successfully. In Years 10 and 11, students follow a common core curriculum that includes religious education and is supplemented by a choice of options. A number of new courses

have been introduced since the previous inspection, such as GNVQ information and communication technology (ICT), separate sciences and an extension studies programme. An alternative curriculum has been established for a small number of students for whom a full complement of subjects in Years 10 and 11 is not appropriate. These students study a reduced number of subjects and follow a course of 'study and research skills', with literacy input where appropriate. The school recognises the need to broaden the curriculum and develop vocational courses to meet the diverse needs of all students fully. The school does not meet the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum for ICT for all students in Years 10 and 11; although Year 10 follow a programme of ICT, those in Year 11 do not. Provision of ICT across the curriculum requires further development. Not all subjects regularly use ICT, the school does not keep a track of which subjects teach ICT and which do not, and none make a contribution to assessing students' capabilities in ICT.

45. The curriculum provision for students with SEN is very good. There are careful arrangements to ensure that these students receive their full National Curriculum entitlement, with effective procedures to ensure that this is not adversely affected as a result of withdrawal. There is an appropriate balance between in-class support and withdrawal. The curriculum offered to those with statements is well matched to their identified needs. Effective use is made of sets, where students are placed in teaching groups based on their prior attainment, to ensure that the work provided is well matched to pupils' needs. Teaching assistants give good support. Individual education plans (IEPs) are used very well to outline broad objectives for students as well as to set measurable individual targets to inform the planning of subject teachers. Support staff raise the self-esteem of students with SEN by showing appreciation for their successes, particularly in developing literacy skills.

46. The school houses a designated local education authority (LEA) special unit to provide for the special needs of up to 39 statemented students who have learning difficulties. These are mainly related to literacy skills, although often there are other attendant learning problems. These students are fully integrated into the school and receive most of their education with their peers in mainstream classes. The specific additional curriculum required to support their literacy needs is well planned. Assessment is very effectively used to ensure that teaching takes appropriate account of their prior learning and progress. The school makes good provision to ensure that students with a range of special needs are appropriately supported in externally accredited examinations, including negotiations to secure extra time or reading and scribing support.

47. There is now a well co-ordinated literacy strategy and the school's provision for teaching literacy skills is good. The widespread use of key words, displayed in most rooms, prompts the use of relevant subject vocabulary. Strategies for teaching numeracy are satisfactory. Practice across the school is inconsistent because the school has no policy for numeracy across the curriculum. However, a recent very good numeracy training day helped many departments to strengthen their numeracy work. The school's use of ICT to enhance learning in all areas of the curriculum is patchy, and is being held back by the difficulty that some subjects have in gaining access to the ICT rooms. Particularly good use of ICT is made in design and technology, English, modern foreign languages, history and science; but in all subjects (except science where students make use of laptops) the use of ICT is severely held back by difficulties in gaining access to the specialist computer rooms.

48. The equality of opportunity within the school is good. The school has an equal opportunities policy which addresses curriculum, pupil and staffing issues within the school. The policy is regularly reviewed by the governing body and the staff. Parents and pupils are

invited to comment on its content. A draft policy on racial equality supported the equal opportunities policy. It has been formulated by a working group in response to the Macpherson report. Both policies include monitoring procedures whereby all issues of equality can be reviewed and issues of inequality be addressed.

49. The school provides an excellent range of extra-curricular activities. In April 2002, the school received the Schools Extra Award for its outstanding extra-curricular provision. There is very good provision for sports, and the school's musical achievements are recognised within the local and national music circles. Many subjects provide additional clubs to support students with their studies, and this includes literacy schools during the school holidays. All physical education staff give freely of their time to provide extra-curricular sporting activities, and approximately two-thirds of students regularly participate.

50. Provision for students' personal, social and health education is good. The school has recently appointed a PHSE co-ordinator, who has compiled the scheme of work recently adopted by the school. The curriculum is well planned to include all the required aspects of health education, sex education and drugs awareness, as well as personal and communication skills. Modules include drug awareness, sex education, personal esteem, thinking skills, family conflicts, safety, careers and citizenship. Teaching of the programme is good. A team of specialist teachers delivers PHSE, which is timetabled so that each student receives a minimum of one hour of teaching per week. In addition, the subject is incorporated into form tutor time. Good attention is given to evaluating the various modules by means of feedback from students and staff. Students are asked to assess their own performance on completion of each module, and their work and achievements are included in target setting and assessment information.

51. Students in Years 7 to 9 are given the opportunity to take part in external citizenship activities through the excellent 'Burton Borough Challenge'. The challenge is incorporated extremely well into the PHSE programme. It encourages and recognises achievement and is an important part of the citizenship programme. It supports the development of mathematical and interpersonal skills. Students are extremely keen to obtain a gold, silver or bronze award. A large number of external speakers make a positive contribution to the PHSE programme, offering students very good learning opportunities. They include councillors, members of parliament, police, prison officers and playgroup workers. The PHSE programme is already having a positive effect on students' academic and pastoral achievements.

52. Careers education is very good. It systematically builds students' knowledge and skills through their time at the school by means of modules within the personal and social education curriculum. Integrated very effectively into the careers' programme is a two-week work experience placement for Year 10 students. Liaison with the careers service ensures that students have access to this outside advice at appropriate points, starting with Year 8 and then into Year 9 when they choose their subject options. This good advice continues throughout Years 10 and 11.

53. The school has very good links with the local community. Strong links with a wide range of employers and organisations underpin the very well planned Year 10 work experience placements. The school also makes good use of work placements to widen the experience of teachers.

54. Very good efforts are made to liaise with the primary schools from which most students come. English, mathematics and science have curriculum links with their colleagues in primary school. For instance, staff from Burton Borough have worked in partnership with primary school colleagues on a wide range of projects so that for Year 7 students entering

Burton Borough, the transition from primary school is seamless. Very good links are in place with local providers of further education to aid students in continuing their studies. This is well illustrated by looking at the destination of Year 11 students; four years ago most students on leaving Burton Borough continued their education in one institution, now they are served by 12.

55. Provision for the spiritual development of students is satisfactory. Significant improvements have been made to address the key issue highlighted in the previous report concerning the limited provision for spirituality in the school. The school now complies with the requirement for a daily act of collective worship. There is now a full programme of assemblies, based on weekly themes. Students participate fully in assemblies and the head of the religious education department visits tutor groups to conduct form assemblies. There is a lunchtime club for Year 7 students to reflect on wider issues. Year 8 students have been instrumental in providing a "Thought for the Day" for the whole school. The day's thought is intended to be followed up in form tutor times, and good examples of this were seen during the inspection. For example, a very good Year 7 tutor period was observed in which students discussed the theme of 'caring for others' in a mature and thoughtful way. Nevertheless, the intention is not consistently followed up in all classes, and some form tutor time is still used mainly for social and administrative purposes. Since the previous inspection, departments have incorporated policy statements on personal development in their handbooks, and a notice board on the topic is prominently displayed. Within the curriculum, the spiritual development of students is fostered very well in religious education, where issues of wider significance and spiritual growth are discussed fully in all years. Opportunities for reflection on wider issues are also prominent in art, design and technology, English and history. In other subjects, however, this important aspect of school life is less well developed.

56. The provision for moral development is very good. There is a very strong sense of shared purpose throughout the school, and emphasis is placed on the development of a moral community that respects all its members. A clear code of conduct, drawn up in consultation with students, helps them to distinguish right from wrong. Older students and teachers provide very good role models for younger students. Charity events are organised by the students themselves, in support of organisations such as the NSPCC and a church in Kenya. Some also devote time to working in senior citizens' homes and charity shops. The school has been commended nationally through the Healthy Schools initiative for its work in a number of areas, including anti-bullying strategies. There is a very effective awards and merits system to celebrate achievement in all areas of school life. The PSHE programme deals well with many moral issues, such as prejudice, use of drugs and sex education. Within subject areas, moral issues are debated in science, for instance in discussions on genetically modified food. Moral growth is also sustained well in art, English, geography, physical education and religious education.

57. The provision for social education is excellent. There is a thriving school council that provides a very effective channel of communication between staff and students. This is supplemented by a student review group, which meets regularly to discuss other school issues, such as homework and learning strategies. Older students act as mentors for younger students when they enter the school, and there are many other opportunities for students to take responsibility through a wealth of lunchtime and after-school activities. Year 10 students act as very welcoming hosts in the reception area. Students with English as an additional language (EAL) meet regularly together. Students are also involved in links with the local community through the very successful Saturday music centre and family learning days. The Burton Borough Challenge provides copious opportunities for social growth.

58. There is very good provision for the cultural development of students. There is an impressive array of visits, exchanges and other activities to widen the horizons of students, including an art trip to Amsterdam, a humanities visit to France, modern foreign languages trips to France and Germany, and field trips in geography. Other opportunities for cultural development are provided through the many clubs and activities, particularly in sport and music. Cultural awareness is fostered in many subjects including art, English, history modern foreign languages and music. There are also opportunities for students to celebrate the cultural diversity of Britain in art, English geography, history, and music, and that of the wider world in religious education, with a very strong emphasis on multi-faith issues. Understanding of multicultural skills and crafts is used to inspire students' design projects in textile technology.

59. Overall, the school makes very good provision for the personal development of all its students, and has addressed successfully the issues raised in the previous report on lack of provision for spiritual growth. The provision for social development is a particular strength in the school, and there is a very strong sense of community throughout the campus.

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

- Procedures to support students' academic and personal development are very good.
- There are good procedures for child protection and for ensuring students' welfare.
- The use of assessment information to help teachers plan the next steps in learning is very good.

60. The school has effective child protection procedures. The recently appointed child protection officer has received appropriate training and carries out his duties conscientiously. The school is shortly to appoint and train an additional female child protection officer, and is to arrange full training for all members of staff. Liaison with the social services department is good. Records of students on the child protection register and 'looked after' students are meticulously kept.

61. The school has made very good arrangements for the administering of first aid. The school has a first aid room, and a large number of staff have received appropriate up-to-date training. Good records of accidents are kept. The school has made a policy decision not to administer medicines.

62. Omissions in the previous report regarding the monitoring of risk assessment have now been rectified. The school has recently appointed a health and safety officer to be responsible for monitoring risk assessments through the school, but a full health and safety audit has not been carried out since 2000. This is a weakness that the school needs to address as a matter of urgency.

63. Students at the school come from varying backgrounds. Some present challenging problems, but all staff work very well together to offer a very high level of care and support to all students. As a result, students learn well and with confidence. All staff know their students well and value them, providing them with good educational and pastoral support. The pastoral system at the school is reinforced by the very good relationships between staff and students. The system whereby form tutors develop strong links with their own tutor group, and some follow them up through the school, is well appreciated by students. As a result, students are well known by tutors, who relate to them easily and provide good role models. The mentoring system works extremely well. Staff regularly discuss students' difficulties and achievements with them and set them targets.



64. Form tutors are line-managed by heads of year, and liaison is very good. Together they work very hard to offer assistance to all students and help to guide them. Meetings are held on a regular basis to discuss and monitor students' progress, and difficulties are diagnosed and recognised before they become unmanageable. Students are then given whatever support and advice they need.

65. The school has very good arrangements for promoting and supporting students' personal development. The external counsellor comes into school on a regular basis to help students with emotional difficulties, and this work is much appreciated. The personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme, together with a large number of extra-curricular activities in sport, music and culture, ensures that the personal development of students is well promoted.

66. There are very good procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and eliminating oppressive behaviour. The school has an ethos of good behaviour. Its strong pastoral support, adult example and the PHSE programme ensure that very good behaviour is the rule rather than the exception. The support given by all staff to students has a very positive effect on their achievement.

67. The system of rewards and sanctions is clearly understood by students, who respond well to the assertive discipline policy. Sanctions are applied appropriately and sparingly, and are very effective in reducing fixed term exclusions and eradicating permanent exclusions. Students who misbehave are excluded from the timetable for a fixed period of time and do their work in isolation outside the school office. They rarely re-offend. The behaviour policy is very well understood by staff and is applied consistently. During the inspection week, students' behaviour was exemplary. They learned well, remained on task and were keen to show members of the inspection team around their school and demonstrate their pride in it.

68. Students interviewed during the inspection week confirmed that incidents of bullying or oppressive behaviour are rare, but that they are dealt with effectively by staff when they occur. They were very keen to praise all staff for their very positive support and guidance.

69. The school has very good procedures for the monitoring and improving of attendance. The SIMMS electronic optical marking system is used to provide up-to-date records of attendance for all staff. The school has recently appointed a full-time attendance officer who liaises well with heads of year and form tutors regarding attendance matters and contact parents on the first day of absence. The school has installed a dedicated 'attendance hotline' to enable parents to contact the school on a 24-hour basis if they wish to report their child's absence. The education welfare officer visits the school on a weekly basis and carries out home visits if necessary. School attendance is above the national average, and is improving as a result of its effective measures.

70. The school sees assessment as an essential and integral part of the learning process and its use of assessment is very good. Assessment is used to diagnose and identify students' individual strengths and weaknesses, and to evaluate the success of teaching. Assessment results inform parents about their children's progress and help individuals to improve. Students are assessed shortly after their arrival at the school in Year 7, using a mixture of cognitive ability (CATS) scores and results of national tests taken in Year 6. These tests provide a comprehensive overview of achievements by different groups of students and identify differences between the attainment of boys and girls. Individual attainment targets are set and data is gathered to show the gains made by students as they progress through the school. These results are shared with parents in students' annual written reports. Subject teachers liaise very well with form tutors and departmental heads to construct a detailed description of each student's academic and personal strengths and weaknesses.

Assessment targets are indicated on reports, and students then discuss these with their tutors. Individual action plans are then written to show how the agreed targets are to be met. In reading, writing and mathematics, key objectives are identified by teachers and shared with students. Students' progress towards meeting these targets is carefully assessed and recorded.

71. The school has very good arrangements for the monitoring of students' academic performance and personal development. During their school life, students' progress is tracked through a variety of internal assessments and external tests. These assessments form the basis of target setting and the following up of students' progress. Assessment data is collected consistently. The quality of individual teacher assessment records is good overall and often exemplary.

72. Students' needs are identified prior to their entrance to the school. Information from the primary school is well used to provide extra support for identified students. They receive additional pastoral support within their mixed ability groups. Students know and understand the level at which they should be working. Their personal progress is well recorded by staff, who offer constant support and help.

73. The school monitors students' performance on a termly basis and grades their effort and attainment. This information is shared with parents and the results are used in mentoring sessions with teachers. These results are also used to monitor patterns and trends across subjects and to target specific groups of students.

74. Procedures for assessing SEN and monitoring the progress of these students are very good. The school maintains an effective register of SEN, and this is monitored and updated regularly. Students' names are added to it as additional needs are identified, or removed when they reach a pre-determined level of attainment. Annual reviews of statements are regularly and properly carried out. They are supported by advice from parents and external support agencies as well as staff within school. The development of individual students' reading and spelling skills is monitored through the regular use of standardised testing to support teachers' assessments of their progress. Very good structures have been established to ensure that the needs of students with emotional and social difficulties are identified and met, as a result of the effective systems for monitoring behaviour.

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

- The parents' views of the school and the effectiveness of its links with parents are very good.
- The impact of parents' involvement on the work of the school is very good.

75. Burton Borough School is the first choice of very many parents and the school is oversubscribed. A significant minority of parents (12 per cent) who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire stated that they are not well informed about their children's progress and the school does not work closely with them. Inspection findings do not agree with these views.

76. The school offers very good support to students and gives them good information about their children's academic and pastoral progress. Parents are contacted promptly if the school has any concerns. They are also informed on an ongoing basis of actions that the school has taken and any progress made. The school encourages parents to make contact at any time, without appointment, to see form tutors, heads of year, class teachers or the headteacher if they have any concerns.

77. The school arranges an annual parents' evening for Years 7 to 11, a Year 9 GCSE option evening and a Year 11 careers evening. At these events, parents are given advice as to how they can support their children. Parents of children with SEN attend a 'working together' evening arranged by the school on a termly basis, run and organised as workshops.

78. The parents of Year 7 children are invited into school for an induction day prior to their children starting school, then again shortly afterwards for a 'settling in' evening. Parents are also invited into school for an evening hosted by their children, to show them the results of their studies to date.

79. Annual reports are provided during the year and are very good. They provide information on a subject-by-subject basis, giving good explanations of grades, progress and target setting. Students are shown the reports before they are issued. They are invited to contribute their views on the quality of the reports and to construct personal targets for themselves. The school logbook is well used by parents and provides a weekly means of communication between home and school. Staff are very responsive to parental concerns and communicate well with them.

80. The quality of information provided by the school for parents is very good. The prospectus is a well presented and high quality document that contains all statutory information, presented in a parent-friendly style. In addition, a separate, very informative brochure is provided for parents of Year 7 children, Key Stage 3 children (Years 7 to 9) and Key Stage 4 children (Years 10 and 11). All contain very useful information about the next stage of their child's education. Newsletters of high quality are provided each half term. In addition, the headteacher sends out a personal letter to parents at the start of each term giving his aspirations and targets for the term. The governors' annual report is very detailed and contains all required information and good information about the school's progress.

81. The school has a very active parent teacher association (PTA). It is small in numbers but extremely enthusiastic and raises valuable funds. Last term the association raised over £6,000 which funded a new sound system, log books and fees of visiting authors. The PTA also runs the May ball, monthly discos and various social events. Their work is very much appreciated by the school.

82. The school actively encourages parents to help and greatly appreciates the small number of parents who do so. A small number help in school in various ways, such as providing food at school functions, helping at community learning days and on school visits.

83. An open day is held on the first Wednesday of the month, when any members of the local community are invited into school on an informal basis to view the facilities. The students show them around. This is very good practice and reinforces the vision of the headteacher to make Burton Borough into a true community school.

84. The large majority of parents are fully supportive of the work of the school. They are extremely satisfied with students' behaviour, and with the high level of care and commitment shown by staff.

85. The SEN department offers very good support to the parents concerned, with whom there is a very real partnership. They attend annual reviews of their children's progress and receive regular updates. They discuss and are involved with setting the targets for their children. The school works very closely and successfully with outside agencies to support these students and their parents. There are very good links with the local education authority (LEA) and its support services, which ensure that specialist advice is regularly received by the school and communicated to all staff involved with the students concerned.

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

- The leadership and management of this very good school, by the headteacher and key staff, are very good.
- The headteacher provides excellent leadership and his deputy and the leadership team provide him with excellent support.
- The governors carry out their duties very well.
- The school monitors and evaluates its performance very well and takes effective action.
- The strategic use of resources, including specific grant and other funding, is very good.
- The principles of best value are applied very well and the school provides very good value for money.

86. The dedicated headteacher works extremely hard and delivers excellent leadership. He has galvanized the school and undoubtedly contributed to the very good atmosphere for learning and the consequent improvement in students' attainment. A strong and genuine shared commitment to succeed has been created through the head teacher's approachability and visible presence around the school and the excellent communication between the leadership team and staff. As a result of the head teacher's superb inter-personal and coaching skills, staff have a great belief in themselves and what they can achieve for the school and its students. The great strengths of the head teacher lie in his skill in selecting staff, in building highly effective teams and delegating real authority to them, so empowering staff to reach their goals. The head teacher has succeeded entirely in sharing his vision of where the school is going with staff, and has won their total support in helping him realise it. This vision is very well expressed in the school improvement plan, which is entirely appropriate with its twin emphases on raising attainment and improving teaching and learning. Thus the headteacher, with excellent support from his highly effective deputy and the talented leadership team, has succeeded in establishing a community that is determined to further students' achievements whilst feeling justifiable pride in what has been achieved to date.

87. The overall quality of leadership at middle management level is very good. Leadership and management are excellent in design and technology, history and music. They are very good in English, science, art and design and geography. They are good in all other subjects. All heads of departments have established clear educational direction for the work of their departments. Many monitor students' academic standards very effectively, thus driving up standards, though this good practice is slightly uneven. Standards are improving fastest in departments where the head of department provides a clear direction for the subject, motivates colleagues, monitors teaching and spreads good practice. These have been important factors in raising attainment in English, science, design and technology, history and music. Where relative weaknesses exist, the monitoring of the work of the subject is informal (as in mathematics, art and design and geography) and the department policies and procedures are inconsistent (as in physical education). Middle managers in all subjects, are not given enough time to carry out the quality assurance aspect of their roles or to ensure that good teaching and learning are achieved consistently through their departments. There is very good practice, for example in English and history, in that assessment is used

consistently across the department to monitor standards, to set targets for improvement and to support the planning of the teaching.

88. The effectiveness of the governing body is very good. Governors have a very good working knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses and have played an influential part in working with the head teacher and senior managers to create a strong strategic direction for the school. Governors clearly understand the challenges facing the school and are constantly striving for improvement, although they are rightly very proud of the school's achievements. Governors give freely of their time, and have developed highly effective, frequent formal and informal contacts with staff at all levels. Of particular note is the very good practice the chair and other governors have adopted of being present at parents' consultation evenings. Their highly visible presence not only gives them a valuable insight into parents' concerns, it is a very good tonic for staff and does much to boost their morale. A well structured programme of subject reviews and presentations ensures that governors understand clearly the strengths and weaknesses of all aspects of the school. Hence, they are fully aware of how well students are doing compared to students in similar schools, and of the progress they are making. However, because students do not receive their full entitlement to information and communication technology (ICT) in Years 10 and 11, the governors are not fully effective in fulfilling their statutory duties.

89. Financial planning is very good. The school manages its enhanced budget, additional funds and grants very well, particularly to secure improvements in staffing, although resources for learning remain modest. The school applies the principles of best value very well. It consistently applies the principles of comparison, challenge, competition and consultation. For instance, parents have been consulted over major changes in the allocation of resources. Financial and whole-school planning are closely woven together, and as a result the school has a very good mechanism to evaluate the impact of its spending decisions on standards in the classroom. The specific grants that the school attracts are spent appropriately. The costs of running this average-sized school are similar to other schools in the country.

90. Routine administration of the school's budget is very good. The school makes very effective use of new technology to monitor spending against the budget and to provide accurate up-to-date information. There are well-defined procedures to ensure best value purchasing. Routine administration is very efficient and ensures that the school runs smoothly.

91. The equality of opportunity within the school is good. The school has an equal opportunities policy, which addresses curriculum, student and staffing issues within the school. The policy is regularly reviewed by the governing body and the staff. Parents and students are invited to comment on its content. A draft policy on racial equality supports the equal opportunities policy. It has been formulated by a working group in response to the Macpherson report. Both policies include monitoring procedures whereby all issues of equality can be reviewed and issues of inequality be addressed.

92. Provision for special educational needs (SEN) is partly funded directly by the local education authority (LEA) in response to the need for support specified in students' statements. The school has good systems to ensure that this funding is targeted effectively and appropriately, as well as the special needs element within its general budget. The school meets all statutory requirements in implementing the revised code of practice for

students with SEN. There is an effective structure for identifying and assessing the needs of these students and appropriate arrangements for ensuring that these needs are met. Procedures for students' annual reviews are secure and ensure that provision is reviewed and updated appropriately.

93. The special needs department is very well managed by the special needs co-ordinator (SENCO), who exercises very good oversight of SEN provision in general, as well as the working of the learning support centre in particular. The successful way in which communication is established with other faculties and the extent of their joint working contribute significantly to the strong culture of recognition of special needs across the school. Senior management takes a leading role in promoting this culture, which is further supported by the identification of link teachers within most subject faculties to facilitate effective liaison. Resources are suitable and well chosen. Good use is made of ICT in supporting the literacy and numeracy skills of these students, as well as encouraging the development of their ICT skills. Management of learning difficulties is very effective. Delegated responsibilities are very well carried out, and the work of the faculty is well monitored. Preparation for the admission of statemented students is well managed to ensure that the school is well briefed. Good relationships with primary schools ensure that good quality information is transmitted about students with lower levels of need.

94. Accommodation is satisfactory overall and the school has learned to make very good use of what it has. The school has grown piece-meal over the years, and the growth in student numbers has put enormous pressure on certain parts. Corridors are narrow, the dining hall is small, and the learning resource centre is insufficient in size to meet the needs of the school. There is a severe shortage of facilities for indoor sports, which is holding back standards in physical education. There is an urgent need for a sports hall to enable the school to meet its very real potential in this important part of the curriculum. The shortage of general classrooms means that very few subjects are able to be grouped together, meaning that staff have to work hard to find ways of sharing good practice and developing a team ethos. This is particularly difficult in design and technology, where the rooms are located at opposite ends of the school. In science, the shortage of one laboratory means that some science lessons have to be taught in non-specialist accommodation, which holds back learning because teachers are restricted in the amount of practical investigations they can organise.

95. The school looks after the site very well and has created very good areas for learning. The mobile classrooms are all carpeted and connected to the main school. Through the imaginative use of display, they provide a very good home for the humanities subjects. The excellent use of students' work in classrooms and in corridors is one very good way in which the school compensates for its variable accommodation, and provides a warm, welcoming and stimulating environment for students to learn.

96. The school has a good level of staffing in terms of teachers and support staff, who provide a good range of learning support and technical and administrative support. There is a good match of subject specialists to the needs of the curriculum. There are no long-term shortages, although unexpected events and turnover of staff have had an adverse though temporary impact in some departments. In general, where non-specialists are providing subject teaching, they are supported effectively within the subject department concerned. The school usually finds that advertising for posts produces a small but adequate field of applicants. Additional salary points are used well to support identified additional responsibilities, and the school does not find it necessary to use these for recruitment or retention of staff.

97. There are good arrangements for the induction and support of new members of staff, including newly qualified teachers. There is a comprehensive staff handbook, and this is augmented by a good programme of school or subject department briefing meetings. Where appropriate, an individual support 'package' is provided for returning teachers or those who require it for other reasons, to enable them to be fully effective from the outset. Teachers already known to the school usually provide supply cover, and there are good arrangements in place to support them. Very good arrangements are made to ensure that newly qualified teachers have an appropriately adjusted timetable, with a well thought-out programme of observation visits within the school and in other schools as well as mentor-led activities. The school has an excellent relationship with Keele University, and provides very good support for students on initial teacher training.

98. Provision for staff development is good, with a clear link to subject and school development planning. The school has been awarded Investors in People status, and this has recently been re-confirmed. Arrangements for the management of staff performance are good. The school has an appropriate policy and is well into the first cycle of performance management. The results of monitoring are being collated and used effectively to promote higher standards of teaching. The school is in the process of refining its arrangements to ensure that the impact of the system on overall standards of achievement can be evaluated. It is the intention to consolidate the links between performance management, professional development provision and individual and school needs.

99. Staffing in SEN is good. Teachers and support staff are very well managed and effectively supported. The high level of training and expertise demonstrated by teaching assistants, together with the encouragement to show responsibility and take initiative, enables them to make a very wide ranging and effective contribution. This includes developing specialised skills to support students with physical or medical conditions.

100. Provision of learning resources in the school is satisfactory, though further improvements are limited by the constraints of a very tight budget. The school is the second-lowest funded school in the local education authority. Generally, most departments have appropriate equipment, textbooks and worksheets. In mathematics, resources are restricted and ageing, and therefore impede learning. The most outstanding resource restriction identified by many subjects is a lack of access to ICT. This is impacting on general skills of research and investigation, which specifically affects GCSE course work. Nevertheless, a recent input of laptops in the science department has improved its ability to meet the needs of the curriculum. Many departments are inventive and, where there is a lack of textbooks, teachers have designed good quality workbooks to support learning. Resources across the school are kept in sound / good condition through the efficiency and commitment of the many support staff and technicians, including those with specific responsibility for resources in design and technology and ICT.

101. The learning resource centre (LRC) is a very good resource within the school. However, because of restricted funding, the ratio of books is below the library association's recommendations. The LRC team keep immaculate records of resources used and a log of the exciting projects that are part of the library's contribution to the school's resource bank. The centre regularly hosts local authors, poets and illustrators to inspire students to read, as well as mounting initiatives such as the 'risk it for a biscuit' activity. Here students take a chance on a wrapped book, and get a biscuit if they read it. Computers play an active part in the LRC's battery of resources to challenge independent learning, and the use of the Internet is an important part of students' research techniques. Books are regularly reviewed and those no longer appropriate are sold at a second-hand book sale or sent to charities benefiting underdeveloped countries.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

102. To further raise standards and improve the quality of education, the headteacher, staff and governors should draw on best practice already evident in the school and elsewhere to:

- raise attainment further by:  
(*Paragraphs: 12, 13, 14, 16*).
  - \* equipping all teachers with the skills to challenge higher attaining students;
  - \* ensuring that the numeracy policy is consistently applied in all subjects;
  
- broaden the school's curriculum, especially in Years 10 and 11 by:  
(*Paragraphs: 20, 47, 92*).
  - \* making the curriculum more relevant by introducing more vocational courses;
  - \* ensuring that provision for information and communication technology (ICT) in Years 10 and 11 meets legal requirements;
  - \* ensuring that all subjects in Years 10 and 11 make full use of ICT as a medium for teaching and learning, and that its impact on students' ICT skills is carefully monitored;
  
- improve accommodation and learning resources by;  
(*Paragraphs: 16, 98, 99, 104, 105*).
  - \* working with the local education authority (LEA) and other appropriate bodies to find ways of providing additional teaching rooms, a science laboratory, indoor sports facilities and an additional drama studio;
  - \* increasing expenditure on books and other learning materials.



## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	134
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students	120

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
<b>Number</b>	9	47	52	18	2	0	0
<b>Percentage</b>	7	37	41	14	2	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. [When the total number is substantially less than 100, add] Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than one [two, three, etc] percentage point[s]. [Where the total is close to or greater than 100, use only the first sentence.]

### Information about the school's students

Students on the school's roll	Y7– Y11
Number of students on the school's roll	1037
Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals	81

Special educational needs	Y7– Y11
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	59
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	218

English as an additional language	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	15

Student mobility in the last school year	No of students
Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	14
Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	7

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.3
National comparative data	8.1

#### 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 (Year 9)

Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year:	<b>Year</b>	<b>Boys</b>	<b>Girls</b>	<b>Total</b>
	2001	110	93	203

<b>National Curriculum Test/Task Results</b>		<b>English</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>
Numbers of students at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	67	82	86
	Girls	72	72	71
	Total	139	154	157
Percentage of students at NC Level 5 or above	School	68 (84)	76 (81)	77 (80)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of students at NC Level 6 or above	School	41 (48)	45 (50)	38 (38)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

<b>Teachers' Assessments</b>		<b>English</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>
Numbers of students at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	79	81	95
	Girls	80	80	82
	Total	159	161	177
Percentage of students at NC Level 5 or above	School	78 (71)	79 (79)	88 (89)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of students at NC Level 6 or above	School	41 (39)	52 (50)	36 (36)
	National	31 (31)	42 (30)	33 (29)

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

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

Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year:	<b>Year</b>	<b>Boys</b>	<b>Girls</b>	<b>Total</b>
	2001	111	104	215

<b>GCSE results</b>		<b>5 or more grades A* - C</b>	<b>5 or more grades A*-G</b>	<b>1 or more grades A*-G</b>
Numbers of students achieving the standard specified	Boys	34	107	109
	Girls	63	103	103
	Total	97	210	212
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	School	45 (59)	98 (97)	99 (98)
	National			

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

<b>GCSE results</b>		<b>GCSE point score</b>
Average point score per student	School	38.6
	National	39

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

<b>Vocational qualifications</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>% success rate</b>
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those students who achieved all those they studied	School	0
	National	N/A

**Ethnic background of students**

	No of students
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	3
Indian	4
Pakistani	2
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	1
White	1009
Any other minority ethnic group	0

**Exclusions in the last school year**

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	1	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	47	7
Other minority ethnic groups	1	0

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

**Teachers and classes**

**Qualified teachers and classes:**

**Y7– Y11**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	57
Number of students per qualified teacher	16.8

**Financial information**

Financial year	<b>2000 / 2001</b>
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**Education support staff:**

**Y7 – Y11**

Total number of education support staff	18
Total aggregate hours worked per week	359

**Deployment of teachers:**

**Y7 – Y11**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	17
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**Average teaching group size:**

**Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 2	0
Key Stage 3	22.4
Key Stage 4	21.6

	£
Total income	2540817.00
Total expenditure	2594297.00
Expenditure per student	2502.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	69714.00
Balance carried forward to next year	16234.00

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

**Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	6.8
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	10.8

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	4
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	3.7
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	4

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out  
Number of questionnaires returned

1100
245

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	31	60	5	3	1
My child is making good progress in school.	44	50	4	1	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	26	68	3	1	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	22	56	17	4	2
The teaching is good.	34	62	2	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	38	48	12	2	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	47	47	4	2	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	61	37	1	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	28	55	12	3	2
The school is well led and managed.	40	54	2	1	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	41	52	3	1	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	33	49	5	5	8

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

### **ENGLISH**

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

#### **Strengths:**

- The respectful and supportive relationships between teachers and students.
- Planning that is collaborative, imaginative and effective.
- Very good teaching.
- Students' very good progress and achievement.

#### **Areas for improvement:**

- Expertise and confidence in teaching drama.
- The use of varied grouping within lessons to provide more opportunity for collaborative learning.
- Students' independence and understanding of how they learn.

103. Results in the 2001 National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 in English were above the national average for all schools and close to the average of similar schools. Results for students achieving the higher levels (Level 6 and above) were above average on both measures. Both boys and girls do better than the national picture for their gender, with girls further ahead than boys. The trend of improvement is above the national trend and minor variations from year to year reflect students' prior attainment. For example, results in 2000 were better than in 2001 because the students concerned had entered the school with higher attainment.

104. Results in the 2001 GCSE examinations in English Language were below the national average for A\*-C grades but in line for A\*-G. Girls' results were actually close to the national average for their gender for A\*-C grades, whereas boys' results were significantly below. The girls who left in 2001 entered the school with below average attainment but that of boys was well below average. Comparing boys' and girls' examination results to their prior attainment, their progress and achievement were very good overall, particularly so in Years 7 to 9. Compared with other subjects in the school, results in English are slightly better than in mathematics and science.

105. Results in English Literature GCSE were below the national average for A\*-C grades overall. Girls were above the national average, but boys substantially below. Girls did better in English and English Literature than in the average of their other subjects, but boys did worse.

106. Standards seen during the inspection were very good. They support the view that results in the 2001 GCSE examinations were unusually depressed on account of the historically low attainment of that year group, and of the boys in particular. Both boys and girls make clear and substantial progress over time. The careful planning of schemes of work and lessons enables students to develop knowledge and skills in demonstrable ways. This shows in students' writing. By the age of 14, lower attaining students are writing effectively in a range of forms. They benefit particularly from the attention given by their teachers to spelling, punctuation and drafting, so that their final versions are extended and well organised. Higher attaining students are able to write in sophisticated ways. For example, they write about themselves in the third person (converting autobiography to

biography) to produce life stories that are witty, well managed and often moving. By age 16, all students, including the low attaining, are able to research, argue, inform, and tell stories with good command and a sense of audience. Low attaining students write about what they have read and seen simply but with generally clear understanding. Average attaining students make capable comparisons between a variety of texts on the GCSE syllabus. High attaining students produce original writing of real quality. An imagined interview with Alan Ayckbourn, for example, was both highly inventive and critically informed. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used to a satisfactory extent in the writing of students from Year 7 to 11. Students are taught to draft, edit and experiment with presentation in ways that motivate and encourage progress. There is an overall difference in attainment between boys and girls. Girls generally write at greater length and more accurately, though higher attaining boys and girls achieve equal standards. Girls' attainment is in line with national expectations, while boys' attainment comes closer than the most recent performance in examinations would suggest.

107. Achievement in reading shows a similar pattern of very good progress and achievement, particularly in Years 7 to 9. By age 14, students can comment on a range of print and media texts. For example, they can identify the ways in which argument and debate are presented in newspapers and on television. Through well chosen materials and approaches, students of all abilities come to understand the distinctions between fact and opinion, polemic and rational argument. By age 16, students confidently read and analyse the effects of poetry, stories, theatre, media and information texts. Low attaining boys and girls, for example, through stimulating teaching and appropriate challenge, read *Our Day Out* with good expression and comment knowledgeably on character and technique. Average and higher attaining students compare and contrast stories, with good command of critical vocabulary. They have an appreciation of genre and intention. High attaining boys and girls, for example, in a lesson examining a number of love poems, commented in mature and insightful ways on form, tone, imagery and effect. All students follow a programme of wide independent reading. The extra-curricular reading club is well attended, and is indicative of the school's success in making students keen and appreciative readers.

108. Standards of speaking and listening are satisfactory. Teachers use questions effectively to keep students on their toes so that they listen and respond very well. They are less practised in using talk to develop and refine ideas and perceptions. Whereas there are very clear procedures to help students extend their writing, there is not as developed a framework to support progress in speaking and listening. In some lessons, grouping is varied to provide a range of opportunities for discussion and presentation. This practice is not always the case. Students are too dependent on teachers to direct and manage discussion. This is holding students back from becoming more autonomous. Since the last inspection, there has been a welcome introduction of drama into the curriculum. Nevertheless, students would benefit from a clear description of what counts for progress in drama. Assessment criteria do not sufficiently inform students' work at present.

109. Standards of teaching in English are very good and lead to very good learning. In Years 7 to 9, the majority of English lessons are very good, and none less than good. The same was true for Year 10. Although no Year 11 lessons were observed during the inspection, evidence from students' writing and records of progress confirm that teaching and learning are of a high order. English teachers plan carefully and collaboratively. Lessons have clear objectives. Much is expected of students and they respond positively to the challenges made of them and the close support given. Homework is used well to consolidate students' knowledge and understanding. Teachers mark students' work supportively and regularly. At its best, it informs students clearly about standards achieved



and the necessary steps to take to develop and improve. Occasionally feedback is not of that standard, however, and offers only vague encouragement. Teacher-student relationships are warm and supportive. Teachers model for their students the respect and courtesy they in turn receive.

110. These features of very good teaching are reflected in students' very good learning. Students of all abilities learn how to read and write for a variety of purposes. The carefully planned and progressive curriculum introduces a wide range of literature from a number of cultures. Students are brought to appreciate the techniques and purposes of different genres and media, and learn concepts and vocabulary to discuss and evaluate them. Examples given earlier indicate how this is so. A Year 9 lesson on the issue of cloning gave a further indication of very good planning, teaching, and subsequent learning. The topic makes a bridge between work in the lower school and the demands of GCSE. The lesson in question established key terms. These were used to analyse a video, *Designer Babies*, to see how fact, comment, and inference could be identified. Connections were made to knowledge from other subjects, particularly religious education and personal, social and health education (PSHE). Students' skills and understanding were challenged and advanced by teaching that involved them in a variety of relevant activities at a flat out pace, and which expected and supported high achievement.

111. Teaching and learning in drama are satisfactory. The drama curriculum is in a state of development, with a specialist teacher appointed for September 2002. Currently, non-specialist teachers provide a useful and well-received experience for students in Years 7 and 8. A GCSE option is a popular choice. Subject expertise is thinly stretched, however, and students' abilities to develop and evaluate their work are consequently limited.

112. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. There is a collaborative ethos in the department, and responsibilities are delegated clearly and effectively. Curricular provision in English is satisfactory. Schemes of work cover the requirements of the National Curriculum clearly and in detail. Information and communication technology (ICT) is explicitly provided for, though access to ICT facilities can be problematic. Literacy development is central to the English curriculum and is well embedded in the planning and conduct of lessons. Excellent use is made of assessment data to track students' progress, set targets and influence planning and curricular provision. Students' prior attainment is analysed with meticulous care in order to tailor programmes of work to individual needs. There is transparent concern for student and staff development. Rigorous attention is given to evaluating and improving teaching and learning in English. For example, there is a very good focus on strategies for raising boys' attainment. These include smaller groups, 'boy friendly' choices of text, a movement away from course work to timed examinations, and a growing emphasis on media studies. Accommodation for English is generally satisfactory, though the two mobile classrooms provide an uncomfortable environment for learning. Accommodation for drama is unsatisfactory. There is insufficient specialist space for the subject.

113. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The 1996 report noted the difference in attainment between boys and girls. This matter is prioritised in departmental planning and boys' achievement and progress is now on a par with girls'. The limited access to video mentioned in 1996 is now addressed, though access to ICT is still of concern. There are now opportunities (recommended in the previous report) for drama in the mainstream curriculum.

## Literacy across the curriculum

114. Provision for literacy is good. Professional development days have focused on literacy development and staff training has been effective. Arrangements are securely in place to oversee and monitor a school-wide literacy strategy. Key words are taught and displayed. Teachers are familiar with and follow the recommended practices of the National Literacy Strategy. Particularly successful procedures for promoting literacy were noted in English, design and technology, geography, history and special educational needs (SEN). Some departments, however, do not give close enough attention in marking to matters of spelling and expression. The staff of the learning resource centre teach a programme of library skills to Year 7. The library is used well by many departments for project and enquiry work. It is a valued resource, with a range of books well matched to the needs of students across the range of age and ability. Literacy is therefore given comprehensive attention and emphasis in the work of the school. Teaching in other departments contributes valuably to the development of students' literacy. Explicit support for the reading and writing demands of the subject is given in art, design and technology, geography, history, modern languages, SEN and religious education. Learning resource centre staff teach library skills, including information retrieval from the Internet, to Year 7 students as part of the school's provision for reading development.

## MATHEMATICS

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

### Strengths:

- The overall quality of teaching is good.
- Teachers have high expectations of students' behaviour and effort.
- Relationships between teachers and students are good.
- The standard of work of students with special educational needs (SEN) is high.
- The use made of investigations across all year groups is good.

### Areas for improvement:

- The use of Information and communication technology (ICT), in the work of the department.
- The monitoring of teaching and learning and the subsequent sharing of good practice.
- The co-ordination of numeracy across the curriculum.

115. National Curriculum test results for students at the end of Year 9 have remained above average for the past three years, with girls performing slightly better than boys. In comparison with similar schools, performance in mathematics is above average, with no significant difference between boys and girls. This represents very good achievement. Nevertheless, the number of students attaining the higher grades (Level 6 or above) is markedly low. For this age group, test results in mathematics are marginally below those in science but above those in English.

116. In the 2001 GCSE examination for students at the end of Year 11, the percentage of students attaining grades A\* - C was below average overall. The broadly average results of the girls were depressed by the well below average performance of boys. Compared with similar schools, the results are above average. The percentage of students obtaining grades A\* - G was above the national average. The overall result in terms of average points

score for all students was at the national average, with girls achieving slightly higher points scores than boys. Average point score results have risen steadily over the past four years, only to fall in 2001. Results in mathematics are on a par with those in science but below those in English.

117. Standards of work seen are generally good throughout the school. Not only is the Key Stage 3 Strategy making a positive impact on the work of many students up to the end of Year 9, but their overall good behaviour and positive attitudes to work help to make the most of the good teaching offered. Only in a few lessons seen did students' poor numeracy or arithmetical skills depress standards. For example, some students in a Year 9 lesson were unsure which numbers were prime, while others had difficulty with simple mental division such as  $84 \div 3$ .

118. In the light of below average standards of attainment on entry to the school, progress and achievement are very good for all age groups. Students in Year 7 excitedly proposed a novel way of testing a solution to a problem. They then went further, enthusiastically identifying a pattern in the numbers they were using. This allowed them to calculate easily the answer to an awkward sum. One class of Year 9 students did not achieve in line with expectation because of the teacher's weak planning and poor use of time. The class became confused as to what was required of them and some showed poor skills with arithmetic, for example when they failed to recognise 8 as  $2^3$ . Another Year 9 class quickly identified the strategy required in order to win a numerical game. One girl went as far as to propose two strategies; the strategy chosen depended on whether or not the opponent was proficient at the game. By Year 11, students correctly plot graphs of cubic functions and extract information from them. They understand the principles of vector algebra and use vector notation to identify lines that are parallel and those that are perpendicular.

119. In all years, higher attaining students extend their work productively and are not held back by those working more slowly. Students with SEN achieve well, because they are placed in teaching groups based on prior attainment (sets) in each year other than Year 7. Very few students of minority ethnic background were observed, but their attainment and progress are in line with their classmates. Differences in standards of the work seen between boys and girls are not significant. However, girls present their work more neatly, which makes their classwork more useful for revision purposes. Both boys and girls show some weakness in basic arithmetic. A minority of lessons below Year 9 represented little more than a repeat of work done in the primary school, which did little to promote interest or raise standards.

120. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good in all years. Within this, one unsatisfactory lesson was seen, one was exemplary and just over one fifth were very good. The majority of lessons seen were Years 7 to 9, the Year 11 classes being out of school. Evidence on standards, particularly in Year 11, is based on scrutiny of coursework and some classwork. For students in Years 7 to 9, many but not all lessons made effective use of the National Numeracy Strategy. In these, the main part of the lesson was preceded by a quick-fire mental starter and ended with a whole-class summary (plenary). When this structure was employed effectively, the pace of work and levels of student involvement were good. In most of these lessons, teachers linked the work to that of earlier lessons, and made good use of resources and related homework to reinforce learning. Overall relationships were at least good and often very good. This, coupled with the teachers' high expectations of both behaviour and effort, meant that most lessons proceeded at a good pace, with lively interest from the students that led to effective learning. Many lessons contained a strong element of investigation, which helped to encourage a sense of enquiry and excitement in many students.

121. The department is well led. Test results of individuals and classes are closely monitored and evaluated, and the information is used to make adjustments to setting arrangements and teaching, with an eye to improving standards. For example, 2001 is the first year in which Year 8 has been organised into ability sets, although some of these sets have a marked gender imbalance. Teachers use assessment information to provide a possible target outcome at the end of each year, but do not send this information home. Accommodation is good, and only one room of the six available is small. The clear delegation of tasks helps to weld the well-qualified staff into a strong team. The head of department has yet to monitor and evaluate teaching and learning in the department regularly, and so share the good practice that exists. The department has run a very successful whole-school training day on numeracy, from which other departments have benefited. However, the mathematics department had not capitalised on its advantage and co-ordinated the efforts made by others because there is no whole-school policy for numeracy. Dissemination of the Key Stage 3 Numeracy Strategy has yet to impact fully on all Year 7 to 9 lessons. Information and communication technology (ICT) is a weakness across the department because students have very limited access to the main school facilities for use in their mathematics work. Marking of students' work is rigorous and formative but uncoordinated, and different teachers use different systems. The department is over-dependent on school-generated worksheets.

122. Improvements since the last inspection have been good. The proportion of teaching judged to be good or better has risen from 60 per cent to just over 70 per cent. There are still occurrences of poor behaviour by boys, but they are less significant. Standards of numeracy in many departments of the school have improved significantly. Information and communication technology (ICT), on the other hand, is not used as well as at the time of the previous inspection.

### **Numeracy in other subjects across the curriculum**

123. Numeracy across the school is good although the school has no policy for numeracy across the curriculum. A recent very good numeracy training day helped many departments to strengthen this aspect of their work. In addition to the mathematics used in science, design technology and geography, departments such as English, history and physical education now make good use of numeracy to support their work. In English, for example, students created written texts based upon graphs and tables of figures. In history, reports are based on an analysis of British trade figures. The physical education department stresses the importance of accurate measurements of distance and time.

## SCIENCE

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

### **Strengths:**

- Above average and improving standards of attainment in Years 9 and 11.
- Very good achievement from entry to the school up to Year 11.
- Very good student attitudes and relationships with teachers.
- Very good overall quality of teaching.
- Good use of assessment data.
- Committed leadership and management.

### **Areas for improvement:**

- Teaching of literacy and numeracy through science.
- Match of tasks to the attainment of students, especially higher attainers, within a group.
- Quality of marking of students' work.

124. Attainment in science at the end of Year 9 is above average. In the national tests in 2001, the percentage of students who gained the expected level (Level 5) or higher was above the national average. The percentage gaining level 6 or higher and the overall average point score were also above average for all maintained schools. Standards have remained steadily above average for the past four years. Boys' attainment has been identical to girls' over the same period. However, the performance in science tests in 2001 was below average in comparison with similar schools. Teacher assessments were close to the test results. The overall performance in science was close to that in mathematics and English.

125. Overall, the results in the double award science GCSE examinations in 2001 were above the national average. Although the average point score exceeded the national average, the proportion of students gaining A\* - C was below average. This was under than found in the previous four years, and was attributed to the attitudes of students, particularly boys, in that year. However, all students gained at least grade G, and the proportion gaining the higher grades A\*/A was above national average. Performance in science was better than in English or maths. Girls' attainment was significantly higher than boys' in terms of percentages in the A\* - C range, highlighting the underperformance of boys last year.

126. Standards of work seen in lessons and in the exercise books of students in Year 9 reflect those found in most recent tests. Knowledge of essential concepts, such as energy or chemical reactions, is above average. Most students have developed a clear understanding of investigative procedures. Their work on the principles of analysis and evaluation of measurement shows that many students have a mature understanding of experimental technique. The achievement of students from Years 7 to 9 is very good. They have entered the school with below average knowledge and experimental skills and have progressed to a level above average in both aspects. Students with special education needs (SEN) have progressed very well because of the very good support provided and the good use of materials in lessons.

127. Literacy standards in Year 9 are average. Most students write adequate reports, but their presentation can be untidy and their descriptions lack detail. Diagrams are not drawn with enough care. Numeracy standards are broadly in line with those expected for the age, reflecting adequate, but not extensive, numerical work in topics. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well and students show evidence of a good level of skill in using word processing, data analysis and research on the Internet.

128. In the current Year 11, standards indicated by teacher assessments and mock examinations are above average. The predicted level of A\* - C grades, based on very good internal assessment procedures, is above average. These estimates are supported by available evidence of coursework. Standards seen in Year 10 also indicate above average performance at this stage in the course. Literacy standards in Year 10 are improving and numeracy is more confident than earlier years. The limited evidence available indicates that students in Year 11 have made very good progress overall since their entry to school. Students are achieving well from the beginning of Year 10, and those with SEN continue to make equally good progress to their peers.

129. Overall, the quality of teaching is very good. Progress in lessons and achievement over time is very good because there is a high consistency in the performance of teachers within the department. They plan and prepare carefully to match the needs of the pupils in the various classes. Students acquire secure understanding of the subject because teachers have expert knowledge and explain concepts in a clear, straightforward way. Planning is very effective, and ensures that students have a variety of tasks that relate closely to the National Curriculum requirements. As a result, students are keen and interested to learn, no matter what level of attainment they have reached. The degree of their learning reflects the high expectations that teachers maintain and the energy utilised to ensure the maximum participation of students in lessons. Teachers take every opportunity to ensure that difficulties in understanding by individuals are overcome. This is frequently through additional support for students in break times and after school.

130. Students with SEN are supported well by specialist assistants in many classes, by the use of well-targeted resources and through focussed individual help from teachers. Students of all abilities gain much from each other through the very good relationships and collaboration in practical investigations. The very effective teaching results in high motivation and generally good behaviour of most students. The overall challenge in the work relates well enough to the overall attainment of a group or set, but there is often not sufficient match of tasks to challenge the range of students within the class, especially the higher attainers.

131. The department has 12 portable laptop computers that allow ICT to be an integrated feature of learning in class. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well to aid the understanding of science and to analyse data, while developing students' expertise in computing skills. Practical resources are also used frequently to help understanding. Reference is made to key technical terminology but specific teaching of literacy skills is not a distinct feature. Numeracy is used as appropriate, for example in simple calculations and measurement, but opportunities are often lost in promoting numeracy.

132. Teachers use their questioning skills well to reveal individuals' understanding, and they provide immediate feedback. Marking of written work is regular but does not provide enough guidance on how students should improve their levels. Assessment data is used well to track the progress of students. Homework is given regularly but sometimes it is used to allow students to complete work started in class rather than extend all students' application to problems.

133. The leadership and management of the department are very good. The head of

department has a clear focus on raising attainment. The development plan is well thought out and reflects the school's priorities. There is a strong emphasis on using assessment data to help planning and monitor students' achievement. The science team show a strong commitment to improvement and share the development tasks, for example in the schemes of work. Meetings are frequent and constructive. Opportunities are always sought to improve practice, through in-service training and evaluation of ideas, for example on cognitive accelerated learning through science.

134. Monitoring takes place through performance management, but formal monitoring procedures are not well enough established to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of individual teachers. Staffing provision is very good, with experienced, well-qualified teachers in post and very good technician support. Resources are adequate and they are used well. Information and communication technology (ICT) resources are particularly good, although there are not enough laptops for whole classes to use at one time.

135. Accommodation is unsatisfactory, since there are not enough laboratories to ensure science is always taught in specialist rooms. This reduces opportunities for practical work. The available laboratories are of mixed size; some are too small and most are in need of refurbishment. Safety aspects are satisfactory although risk assessments need to be more rigorously documented. Preparation rooms are cramped and can present some hazard.

136. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Standards of attainment are rising at a faster rate than the national trend and remain above national average in national tests in Year 9 and in GCSE examinations. Students are increasingly challenged to achieve higher grades. However, there is still insufficient match of tasks to fully extend higher attainers, as was mentioned in the previous report. Behaviour has continued to be very good and relationships positive in their contribution towards learning. Teaching has greatly improved. In the current inspection, the level of good and very good teaching is far higher than in the previous inspection. Leadership and management continue to develop at a steady pace.

## ART AND DESIGN

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

### **Strengths:**

- Subject is very well led.
- Teaching and learning are consistently good.
- Lessons are well planned with very good integration of theory and practical work.
- Use of sketchbooks for research and development in Years 10 and 11 is very good.
- Attainment shows a marked improvement over time.
- Display around the school is very good.

### **Areas for improvement:**

- Information and communication technology (ICT) is under-used as a resource in Years 7 to 9.
- Development of three-dimensional work.
- Development of assessment procedures in Years 7 to 9.

137. Teacher assessments show that attainment is above the national average by the end of Year 9. However, these assessments are not reliable, and the work seen during the inspection is in line with national expectations. Girls' attainment is similar to that of boys.

138. The proportion of students gaining higher grades in the A\* - C range in GCSE examinations in 2001 was close to the national average. There has been an upward trend since the previous inspection because very good leadership has given the subject a clear sense of educational direction. The performance of girls matched national levels, but that of boys was just below.

139. Students' achievements by the end of Year 9 are very good in relation to their knowledge, understanding and skills in art and design when they entered the school, when they were well below average. There is no significant difference between boys' and girls' attainment, and both groups make equally very good progress. These standards are achieved because the teaching is consistently very good and students' attitudes to learning are very positive. Students with special educational needs (SEN) make good progress, as do those for whom English is an additional language (EAL). Students are able to use line, tone and texture effectively in their drawings. They observe well from direct observation and understand three-dimensional concepts. Evidence from sketchbooks shows that students successfully demonstrate the skills involved in exploring and assessing information. Little evidence was seen of the creative use of ICT, although students make sporadic use of it in research for cultural and historical information. In a Year 9 lesson using portrait studies from direct observation, the students were able to arrange shapes well for composition and had a good understanding of spatial layout. They experimented with colour mixing to create mood, and made good connections to the work of Picasso and Modigliani. Their work shows greater perceptual depth when students base it on first-hand observation.

140. By the end of Year 11, the work seen is at the standard expected, and students who choose to study art and design make good progress. Because of good teaching, students are well motivated and show good attitudes and behaviour. This is a direct result of high expectations and a good match of activities in lessons to students' prior learning. Well annotated sketchbooks are used effectively and technical language develops well. They demonstrate personal interests, ideas and responses to their own and other cultures through the work they produce. In a Year 10 lesson, students were able to speak confidently about their work and demonstrated good knowledge and understanding. Work from Cézanne and Van Gogh was being analysed for their use of paint and techniques. The use of a viewfinder to select areas of the painting was effective and concentrated the students' attention on the use of media. These studies were being used to develop their own environmental landscapes from direct observation. Students enjoy their art and design lessons and apply themselves purposefully. There is an effective working ethos. Students do their best and are eager to explain their work.

141. The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Boys and girls apply themselves well to their learning, have appropriately high aspirations and most want to do well. Teachers are committed, caring and supportive of students within their charge. Classroom management and control, built on a foundation of good relationships, are of a high standard. Teachers have a good knowledge of topics taught, set an effective pace and have high expectations. There is very good integration of theory and practical work. The use of clear introductions to lessons and time spent reviewing and reinforcing the work of the previous lesson enables students to build upon prior learning. As a result, students make good progress. Teachers make very good use of praise to encourage the participation of all, and use question and answer well to ensure all students are actively involved. The very good teaching occurred when classroom organisation was adapted to the demands of the task and the differing needs of the students. In a Year 7



lesson on textural surfaces, the teacher showed the class a good example of interpretation in clay work, using found surfaces outside the classroom as a starting point. The students fully understood the processes involved and the concept that recording information can be in any media. A well structured pattern of homework is in place in Years 7 to 9, but students are not always aware of their levels of work. Homework is very good and appropriate in subject matter, being used to support project work well in Years 10 and 11. Well constructed assessments make a significant contribution to the development and progress of students' work by identifying strengths and weaknesses.

142. The department is very well managed by a head of department who has established appropriate priorities for the development of the subject. Teaching schemes and departmental policies are clear and provide good guidance for staff. Teachers work well as a team and give freely of their time to students to extend their learning. Assessment in Years 10 and 11 is effective and informs curriculum planning well, but there is very limited access to computers within the department. Not enough use is made of working with clay and three-dimensional study. Literacy is being addressed within the art curriculum, and sketchbooks reveal that students are given active support with the development of their reading and writing skills. The library provision for good quality reference books is very good, meeting the requirements for knowledge and understanding in a subject with a wide cultural base. Extra-curricular activities and visits to galleries and museums have a positive effect upon the quality and range of students' work. Technical support makes it possible to teach a range of media, though storage and preparation spaces are still inadequate for the development of clay work. The stocks of reference materials held within the department are good.

143. Improvements since the previous inspection have been very good as a result of good teaching and clear leadership within the department. Strategies for raising standards at GCSE have been successfully implemented and entry numbers are now high. More individual and personal approaches to study are now evident in Years 10 to 11. Annotation of sketchbooks is good and work is better structured and more challenging. Schemes of work address continuity and progression, and include art history, cultural and multicultural connections. The programme of study is now more closely linked to teaching because plans set out clear learning objectives. The art accommodation has benefited from the gallery space for exhibitions. Work is well presented and displayed around school. The behaviour and attitudes of boys are now good and their attainment is closer to the national average.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Strengths:**

- Planning and progression: particularly well established links with primary schools.
- Committed and enthusiastic specialist teamwork.
- Individual student profiles that feed through to reports to parents.
- Very good use of the community.
- The broad range of materials used within courses.

### **Areas for improvement:**

- Boys' attainment.
- Improvement in information and communication technology (ICT) especially computer-aided manufacturing.

144. Attainment at the end of Year 9 is above national averages and continues to improve, because the design and technology team plan with reference to students' prior attainment in primary school and at home. This values and builds on prior learning, helping continuity at the time of transition between schools. In addition, the school offers the full range of design and technology materials as recommended by the National Curriculum.

145. GCSE results in 2001 in the A\*-C range were overall just in line with the national average for all schools and above average when compared with similar schools. In the A\*-G range, results were better than the national picture. Over the past four years, with the exception of a minor drop in 2001, the department has shown improving results year-on-year. Boys' attainment in 2001 was lower than girls' because boys did not have the maturity to handle the challenges of independent work and problem solving. In addition, a small group of boys did not meet portfolio deadlines, and difficulties in recruiting staff led to the interruption of learning of some groups. The department enters far more students for public examinations than is usual (20 per cent higher than national figures). This indicates a very good approach to equality of opportunity for all students, but it also reduces the potential proportion of higher grades. Girls in the department are gaining more grades at A\* and A than national averages. Point scores show girls' performance in design and technology to be overall in line with their other subjects, but boys' performance is lower.

146. Standards of work of students at the end of Year 9 seen during the inspection are higher than expected, because teachers use accurate, individual student profiles that help to extend individuals' learning. This profile consistently traces students' individual performance across the six strands of the subject, in all materials. Tracking allows teachers to intervene when a student's attainment appears to dip. The student profile has been recognised nationally as good practice by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. Students' attainment is tracked through the 5 units covered in Years 7 and 8. In Year 9, students then choose two preferred materials to study, so consolidating their knowledge and understanding of the design and make process. However, this early choice in Year 9 is polarising students into making stereotypical choices based on their gender. Challenging units of work in Years 7 to 9 extend practical skills, such as cutting, shaping, joining or combining a range of materials. Students learn new techniques in depth, with greater scope to develop specific tool handling skills and, most importantly, to focus on quality. For example, students in Year 7 produced a prototype party bag that could be mass-produced. They used numeracy skills to develop a 'net', building on previous work on structures from primary school, and the production of a carrier bag earlier in their course. A key feature of the lesson was the opportunity for students to review, select or reject designs, showing their confidence in their own knowledge, developed through carefully executed research. Well-planned tests at the end of each module examine students' use of technical vocabulary, the accuracy of their work and their knowledge of the material they have been using, as well as providing a regular and accurate check on attainment. However, there is a lack of structured self-assessment to help students understand how they learn best, and limited opportunity to test their thinking and problem solving skills, for instance in a full capability task towards the end of Year 9.

147. At the end of Year 9, students' achievement is very good. They are working at levels above expectation because the planning and teaching give close attention to individual needs. During a graphics lesson, the skills a student had developed as a result of his father's occupation were used effectively by the teacher. It illustrated to the class how important it is to take thinking about studies wider than school experience. It also raised the boy's self-esteem. Strong research and investigation skills have a positive impact on learning because effective independent use is made of the library. Library records show that design and technology students make the greatest use of library books and computers to develop their knowledge and understanding.

148. Standards seen by the end of Year 11 are very good, and excellent in a growing number of cases. Year 11 was on study leave during the inspection, but judgements of standards were based on a scrutiny of the majority of portfolios and a sample range of practical work. Students have a mature approach to their work. They confidently use problem solving and decision making to make sure designs meet the needs of their target audience. Year 10 lessons illustrated the consistency of expectations across the teaching team, and this is raising standards. In textiles, a girls' group worked as a team to produce a specification for their product. They discussed and evaluated large, detailed photographs of previous years' project pieces. The feedback was very professional and demonstrated the high calibre thinking and analysis that they were using. In graphics, a predominantly boys' group studied commercially produced point-of-sale displays to inform their designing. They used digital cameras to record their research and then analysed important design issues such as sustainability, European safety regulations and issues that bring advertising into disrepute. Well-informed discussion, based on high quality drawing and analysis, helped students to explain the reasons for modifying their designs. Coursework deadlines still present problems for a minority of students, mainly boys. Opportunities for whole-class reviews of individuals' progress are stronger in food and textiles.

149. Achievement at the end of Year 11 is very good. Several students in textiles, food and graphics produce outstanding portfolios of professional standard. The community takes an active part in improving learning, with the use of local architects and visits to textiles manufacturers, so putting design and technology into an industrial context. Consistent expectations of work ethic and behaviour by all staff help to maintain 'industry' and success in designing and making. The department supports the school's policy for the close monitoring of specific students most at risk of underachieving by introducing mentoring where it is needed. Alongside academic demands, the fun and enjoyment offered in design and technology ensure that all students reach their full potential.

150. Students with special educational needs (SEN) work well in design and technology. They achieve very well against their personal targets, particularly in practical work. Many still find difficulty with spelling, written responses to questions, use of numeracy and the skill of rendering. However, increased computer use is improving their presentation and communication. Students with English as a second language also make similar progress to their peers. In some situations, their traditional manipulative skills enrich their practical work, for instance in design embellishment in textiles. Gifted and talented students reach their full potential. The department's assessment system and tracking of results ensures that talent is nurtured.

151. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Over 75 per cent of lessons were very good, and teaching was excellent in a quarter of those lessons. Teachers have very good subject expertise. This includes some with useful industrial background that influences demonstrations and formal teaching input. The celebration of students' attainment in high quality interactive wall displays sets the benchmark for the standards expected. The lack of appropriate access to ICT restricts numbers of students reaching higher levels.

152. The demanding, dynamic and excellent leadership of the department sets the pace for action-packed teaching and learning. Teachers' infectious commitment to high quality work produces a creative buzz that is pushing all students to give of their best. Department policies work in tandem with school policies, therefore behaviour is very good and students understand the importance of homework. All teachers use the departments' assessment system to contribute to corporate decisions in planning and the modification of schemes of work. The teamwork and role models of staff have introduced an atmosphere of trust, where students work confidently in small groups or independently in all lessons. The forward thinking and support for health and safety by the department's technician keeps procedures

within the department working smoothly. However the split accommodation of the department, at opposite ends of the school building, causes problems because technical support is over-stretched and the corporate image of the department can be diluted. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

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

### **Strengths:**

- Students' very good attainment and achievement.
- The curriculum provision, including fieldwork and information and communication technology (ICT), which provides a rich framework for learning.
- The quality of teaching, which results in very good learning for the majority of students.

### **Areas for improvement:**

- Standardisation of assessment and marking in Years 7 to 9 in relation to National Curriculum Levels.
- Developing a formal programme for observing all teaching in the department and sharing strengths.

153. Teacher assessments show that students' attainment by the end of Year 9 is well above the national average. There has been a steady improvement over the last three years, with boys' attainment above average and girls' well above. Indications from assessments so far this year are that this high standard will be maintained, with the gap between girls and boys significantly reduced as a result of appropriate changes in teaching strategies.

154. At the end of Year 11, standards of attainment in GCSE are above the national average and well above the average for other similar schools. There has been an overall improvement over the past four years. Boys have been above average and girls well above. Geography results have been significantly higher than those of other subjects in the school. No Year 11 lessons were seen during the inspection because of study leave, but the school's predictions and the high quality of coursework that has been recently moderated indicate that these high standards are being maintained and improved upon.

155. Standards of work are well above average by the end of Year 9, showing steady and rapid improvement in skills and knowledge between Years 7 and 9. Teaching is focussed on studies of the local environment, in which students learn to ask key questions, to record answers in their own words and to think independently. These high standards continue into Years 10 and 11, with very good extended essays presenting cohesive arguments about global topics. Year 11 fieldwork is of a very high standard overall, with some excellent examples of data collection and analysis, including students' own annotated photographs.

156. In Years 7 to 9, these standards of attainment reflect very good achievement for students who came into the school with below average attainment. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is good because previous high standards are maintained. Much teaching effort goes into providing for higher attaining students and making sure that they are well challenged so that they make very good progress. This is an improvement since the last inspection. For example, in a Year 7 lesson about changing patterns of shopping, students' own experiences were used as examples, which meant that the higher attainers were constantly contributing to the development of the lesson. Lower attaining students and those with special educational needs (SEN) progress as well as their peers. This is partly because teachers know them well and give help and encouragement. It is also partly because frequent group

work in mixed ability classes means that they are supported by their higher attaining classmates. One student for whom English is an additional language (EAL) is one of the highest attainers in his group.

157. Teaching and learning are very good across all year groups. No teaching was less than good, and this is an improvement on the standards at the time of the previous inspection. One excellent lesson was seen where Year 8 students used Word or Publisher to plan the use of photographs to illustrate their work following a recent fieldwork visit. Not only were they manipulating the ICT programmes with a high degree of skill, they were also making independent decisions about recording and presenting their data and what it meant in terms of their study unit. In a minority of lessons, there was a tendency to tell students what they were learning instead of extending their understanding by asking them what they thought they were learning. Some of the planning did not take good account of the rate of students' learning; for example a video about the effect of economic change on the cotton industry in India provided too much information for students to follow in one session, and they lost concentration as a result. Without exception, teachers' very good management skills result in very good student attitudes and behaviour, so producing a positive atmosphere for learning. Any lack of concentration or temptation to misbehave is quickly corrected. Marking is up to date and regular assessment is built into the units of work. However, a lack of correlation between the effort grades given for classwork and the National Curriculum Level grades given for formal assessments means that students are not always aware of their overall standards of progress.

158. Literacy skills are well developed because of the requirement that students always record either notes or finished work in their own words. Because they are given many opportunities to express themselves orally, students are good speakers and listeners. Numeracy is developed through the frequent use of graphs and statistics. Information and communication technology (ICT) is an integral part of the schemes of work, both as a resource for research and as a tool for presentation. Group work and fieldwork expeditions contribute well to students' personal and social development.

159. The department is very well led and managed by an experienced, committed and enthusiastic head of department. All necessary documentation and policies are in place. Resources are adequate and are very well managed. For example, the department produces a series of course booklets that largely replaces text books in Years 7 to 9, and contributes to students' learning because they are easily updated and focus tightly on the relevant topics. Performance management is in place. However, at present there is no formal plan for the structured observation of all teaching in the department so as to share strengths and standardise best practice. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good, and the department has a very good capacity to build on its already high standards and improve even further.

## HISTORY

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

### **Strengths:**

- Teaching is very good. It is challenging yet supportive and provides all students with opportunities to acquire historical skills.
- Standards are above average by the end of Year 9 and are well above by the time students leave school. Standards are improving year-on-year.
- Leadership is excellent and all teachers share a vision for the future development of the subject.
- Relationships are very good. Students respond very positively to the subject and speak highly of their teachers.
- The department evaluates its performance very well and has made very good improvement since the previous inspection.

### **Areas for improvement:**

- Although boys perform better than in most other subjects, they can attain higher standards.

160. On entry to the school, students' attainment is below average yet they achieve very well and standards are above average at the end of Year 9. This is because teachers are concerned to meet the learning needs of all their students and because they challenge their charges relentlessly yet realistically. In the first three years and from a low baseline, students, therefore, make very good progress in understanding how historians work and in the pitfalls facing them when using a range of evidence. In Years 10 and 11, students build upon these skills and demonstrate a perceptive knowledge of the nature of evidence and how useful it is to those piecing together a story of the past. Because teachers treat their students with the utmost dignity and because they try hard to involve everyone in what the subject has to offer, students with special educational needs (SEN) make very good progress too. This is often recognised by those youngsters with a real flair for history, who appear to be delighted when their classmates succeed. In all years, students respond very positively to the teaching, thrive on challenge and demonstrate a profound interest in the lessons.

161. In 2001, GCSE results were well above average overall. Girls outperformed boys, but boys' results were broadly in line with national averages and were better than in most other subjects. There were high proportions of students with A\*, A and B grades, and there has been a marked improvement since the last inspection.

162. The standards observed in lessons confirm these examination results. Students in Year 7, for example, have good background knowledge of the Norman Conquest and can make links to work covered in other subjects. In Year 8, they are well aware of the dangers in using evidence and deliver well-balanced presentations on why Plains Indians are often seen as both heroes and villains. In Year 9, they can give the major features of democratic and dictatorial regimes, explaining accurately and in some depth the reasons why Hitler was able to come to power. Moreover, because teachers provide them with resources designed to make them think deeply about the subject matter, they ask perceptive questions of their teachers. They consider why, for example, Hitler was able to champion the Aryan race, yet looked nothing like those he regarded as its highest representatives. In Year 10, students use the language of history quite naturally and question the sources very accurately. Their understanding of the nature of evidence is profound for their years, and they approach its analysis with confidence. They are able to build up a convincing picture of architectural

styles linked to historical periods as they decide how the inner bailey chapel of Ludlow Castle was designed. The coursework of students in Year 11 is of a very high standard. Where students make use of information and communication technology (ICT), they do so with skill.

163. During the inspection, teaching was never less than satisfactory and it was very good or excellent in over three-quarters of lessons. Students are able to make this very good progress in their acquisition of historical skills because of the very high quality of teaching, characterised by a profound concern to use methods and resources that challenge and support while meeting the learning needs of all. Teachers encourage students to think and to do so objectively from the moment they enter school. Moreover, teachers foster their students' natural inquisitiveness by using questions that are designed to encourage them to see the past in shades of grey rather than black and white. Students are very often quite surprised at what they can achieve. In an excellent Year 7 lesson, for example, the strategies used to include all students were so successful that students with SEN answered questions with such depth of thought that it prompted higher attaining students openly to applaud their successes.

164. Students are able to learn in their own ways because teachers provide them with a wide range of different methods. Furthermore, teachers recognise that students can learn much from their peers and so they provide opportunities for pair and group work in every lesson. Because teachers place great emphasis on literacy and because there are word walls in each classroom, students become articulate at an early stage and use the language of history accurately in their presentations and in their written assignments. Teachers have very high expectations of what their students can achieve; students respond by displaying very high levels of industry and by aiming at the best they can do. They benefit from regular marking of their work and also from extensive comments on what they need to do to improve. Students, therefore, have the utmost confidence in their teachers and are not afraid to ask when they are unsure.

165. The department's contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. There is a strong ethos, which pervades everything the department tries to do and which encourages good behaviour, mutual respect, objectivity and co-operation at all levels. Students are encouraged to value the work of everyone and also to think deeply about what goes through people's minds at times of great sorrow. The assignments on the holocaust, after the fieldwork visit to the Anne Frank exhibition, are a most moving example of how teachers attempt to foster an empathy with the experiences of the past.

166. Leadership of the department is excellent, and the team of teachers shares a real vision for how history should be taught and for how young people should be treated. Staffing is good and the display in classrooms is of an exceptional standard. Learning resources are adequate and are augmented by good library stock and by the industry of teachers. They work long and hard to produce worksheets and source anthologies, which are thought-provoking and which are designed to include, and to challenge, students of all levels of prior attainment.

167. The department monitors its performance very closely and is not afraid to amend its practice when need arises. It is concerned, for example, to bring about better boys' attainment and is looking at ways of extending its already effective literacy provision. Because the department takes self-evaluation seriously, it has made very good improvements since the last inspection, particularly in relation to the quality of teaching, the range of learning experiences open to students and, therefore, its examination results. The department is well placed for future development.

#### **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)**

Overall, the provision for information and communication technology is **good**.

**Strengths:**

- Teaching is good in all years and leads to students achieving well.
- Students' attitudes are good: most are responsible and enjoy their ICT lessons.
- Recent developments have greatly improved students' access to high quality ICT facilities; the two new ICT rooms are of a very high quality.
- The subject is well led and managed, and good progress has been made since the previous inspection.

**Areas for development:**

- Students with special educational needs (SEN) do not make the same good progress made by many other students because not enough additional in-class support is provided and teachers do not always match the work closely enough to their needs.
- The full statutory requirements of the National Curriculum are not being met for many students in Years 10 and 11.
- Many subjects have difficulty gaining access to the ICT facilities because they are being fully utilised by the ICT department.

168. Results in the 2001 GCSE examinations were below the national average. Girls attained significantly better results than the boys. Results have improved rapidly since the previous inspection although there was a dip in 2001. Students' results in ICT were not significantly different from those they attained in most other subjects.

169. In the work seen during the inspection, the standards attained by students at the end of Year 9 are average; this represents a good level of achievement given students' levels attainment of entry to the school. Students construct databases and know that data must be entered correctly. Higher attaining students carry out complex query routines though lower attaining students tend to struggle with the concept of interrogating a database. Students successfully use a word processor to design questionnaires so as to produce data. By the end of Year 9, students access the Internet for research purposes. Higher attainers are discerning in the way that they research and then edit information from the Internet, though many middle and lower attaining students tend to capture the entire article and fail to extract what is needed. For example, one higher attaining girl produced a high quality presentation on bottle-nosed dolphins. This presentation included a subtle blue backdrop that provided the text with an almost sea-like effect. On the other hand, a piece by a lower attaining student was basically copied text from the Internet. Students' knowledge and understanding of control techniques are below average because they are limited to controlling a virtual turtle on the screen rather than physical events; this is because the school does not have enough resources to cover this aspect of the National Curriculum in detail.

170. In the work seen during the inspection, the standards that students attain by the end of Year 11 are above average. This represents a good level of achievement overall, and higher attainers achieve very well. Students construct basic spreadsheets and higher attainers use a range of software functions successfully. However, lower attaining students do not always understand why a spreadsheet is such a powerful tool for modelling situations. Most students make good use of basic formulae, such as being able to add the contents of different cells together, but few go on to use operations such as series filling. For example, lower attainers produced a spreadsheet that calculates the profit made by a tuck shop, but they did not use any of the shortcuts built into the software. All students produce PowerPoint presentations. Higher attainers import text, sound bites and manipulate images within their presentations. Middle and lower attainers can also import images, but are less likely to appreciate the overall appearance of their presentation and will pack a slide with as many



images as possible. In an English project, one student produced an excellent piece of work on the poetry of Sujata Bhatti. The student took the 'Search for my tongue' poem and produced a detailed analysis, not only of its meaning but also of its technical attributes. The student did this very well using the word processor linked to WordArt to provide a visual image of the poem.

171. Students with SEN make satisfactory progress. Their progress is good when they receive targeted in-class support. However, when this additional support is not available, they struggle with the tasks. For example, in a Year 8 class, the teacher failed to match the task to the needs of the students. The task of creating a Web page with hyperlinks was far too difficult for the group. This led to a small number of students becoming frustrated, and they in turn disrupted the learning of other students. There is no significant difference in the progress of students from different ethnic backgrounds. Girls tend to make better progress than the boys because they are more diligent with their work, whilst boys are prone to drifting off task and not always completing their work.

172. The quality of teaching and learning is good in all years, and this represents an improvement on the previous inspection. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject. For example, in a Year 7 class, the teacher gave a very good demonstration of some of the more advanced features of a database application. From this, students were able to design their own forms, labels and reports. Teachers have high expectations of both students' behaviour and the standards that they should attain. For example, in a Year 8 class, the teacher expected students to design and produce a Web page in a single lesson. Teachers generally manage students well. However, there are occasions when teachers do not use the most appropriate techniques to handle challenging students. For example, in one Year 8 class, the poor attitudes of a small minority spoil the lesson for the rest of the students and the teacher failed to deal with this behaviour. Teachers prepare their lessons well and make very effective use of the interactive whiteboard. By using the interactive whiteboard, teachers are able to demonstrate the software clearly to an entire group. Teachers provide many opportunities for students to work in pairs or in small groups. This enables students to develop social skills and to share ideas. Homework is set appropriately and does not rely on students having access to computers at home. There are ample opportunities for students to use the computer facilities outside normal school hours.

173. Recent developments have greatly improved students' access to high quality ICT facilities. The two new ICT rooms are of a very high quality. However, the student to computer ratio is still a little worse than that seen nationally, and many subjects have difficulty gaining access to the facilities because they are being utilised fully by the ICT department. Approximately half of all students do not take an accredited course in Years 10 and 11, and there is no separate ICT provision for these students. Whilst many of these students will encounter ICT through other subjects, the full National Curriculum statutory requirements are not being met.

174. The subject is well led and managed. The subject has made good progress since the previous inspection. The quality of teaching has improved along with GCSE results. The issues raised in the previous report have been addressed, although there is still a need to further develop ICT across the curriculum.

## Information and communication technology (ICT) across other subjects of the curriculum

175. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used to varying degrees by subjects across the curriculum. In design and technology, students use the electronics application software to design circuits and then use a design package to produce their layouts for a printed circuit board (PCB). Students are now beginning use the Pro-Desktop computer-aided design package to enhance their design work. However, the subject is struggling to run this application across the network and is currently using standalone computers, which restricts students' access. In English, students use the Internet to carry out research topics. In science, the new wireless laptops are being used successfully for data logging. In modern foreign languages, students use the Internet to research topics. Students make good use of word processing and the PowerPoint software application to enhance their work. Throughout the inspection, students were observed during lunch breaks and after school using the computers in the resource centre. Students carry out homework tasks and make effective use of the systems to email work back and forth from their homes.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

### Strengths:

- The proportion of students entered for GCSE examinations is above average.
- In French, results in GCSE examinations are above average for similar schools. In German, they are well above average.
- All students make good progress because they are consistently well taught.
- Higher attaining students have a good choice of three languages: French, German and Spanish.

### Areas for improvement:

- Boys attain far lower standards than girls. The margin of difference is greater than that found nationally.
- Aspects of accommodation impact unfavourably on some students' learning.
- All students do not have an equal choice of languages to study.

176. Attainment at the end of Year 9 in French is broadly in line with the national average. In 2001, by the end of Year 11, students' results in GCSE examinations in French were below the national average but above average for similar schools. Girls' results were far higher than those of boys and by a wider margin than found nationally. The school is aware of this difference and is successfully adapting teaching styles to improve the situation. The proportion of students entered for GCSE examinations in French is above average. Over the last three years in general, the trend has been for students to attain results well above average for similar schools and above average for all schools. Standards of work in the current Years 10 and 11 are average.

177. Standards of attainment in German by the end of Year 9 are average. The work of the small number of higher attaining students currently studying German to Year 11 is well above average. Students entered for GCSE examinations in German over the past five years have consistently obtained results well above the average for all schools. A group of more linguistically able students have started Spanish in Year 10. Their attainment is satisfactory for the limited time they have been studying the language.

178. Achievement by the end of Year 9 in both French and German is good. Teachers insist on using the foreign language concerned as the normal medium for communication with students inside and outside the classroom. As a result, students learn to understand the spoken word quite naturally. At the beginning of one lesson, a group of Year 8 students responded easily to the exchange of pleasantries and incidental chat with their teacher in French as they waited to enter the classroom, and continued in French with their teacher and each other as they quickly settled to work.

179. Teachers continuously emphasise how to build longer communication from single words and phrases. Students, therefore, speak and write well with increasing fluency and impressive length. They cope accurately with situations familiar to them, using past, present and future tenses. Most average and lower attaining students work confidently within a restricted framework. Higher attaining students ask questions and give extended answers, freely drawing on their previous knowledge to personalise their spoken and written responses. Because their teacher used this technique, everybody in a Year 7 class, including several with special educational needs, moved from repeating single phrases about the weather to saying, accurately, what they did under certain weather conditions. Higher attaining students were able to extend their responses easily, well beyond their original starting point, in answering questions about, for example, what they were wearing, whether they liked what they did and what they would prefer to do.

180. Students have regular access to information and communication technology. They use computers well to research for information on topics such as school life in France and to improve the presentation and illustration of their written work. They considerably increase their confidence in speaking by making PowerPoint presentations of their daily routine and by using video to record dialogues on such situations as a visit to the doctor. In these instances, their pronunciation, intonation and fluency are good because they rely more on their memory. Where they rely solely on written prompts, their pronunciation is more anglicised and their fluency is weaker.

181. A good reading scheme has been introduced since the previous inspection. Students in Years 7 and 8 have regular sessions of reading for pleasure, and they develop good independent learning skills in this way. They are taught how to use dictionaries efficiently. From early in Year 7 they become adept at using cognates and context to deduce meaning, a skill frequently not attempted until much later in learning a language.

182. In both French and German, higher attaining students in the current Years 10 and 11 develop their linguistic skills rapidly in line with the requirements of their examination syllabuses. In writing, their range of vocabulary and idiom and their grasp of basic structure are good. Therefore, they produce accurate, interesting pieces of work. Because their teachers increase the speed and complexity of what they say to them, students have developed the ability to cope with the unfamiliar well when speaking. All have good understanding of factual texts and most can handle inference in longer, narrative texts satisfactorily. Average-attaining students have a less secure grasp of basic structure. Their writing is often careless because they do not heed the corrections made in their work by their teachers. They guess rather than work out the meaning of material they read and so find inference difficult. Lower attaining students lack confidence and require considerable support. However, their recall of previously learnt material is satisfactory and they understand most of what their teachers say to them. Although their capacity is very limited, they are able to write sufficiently well to attain passes in their Certificate of Achievement examinations.

183. Standards of achievement for the current Year 10 studying Spanish are good. Students appreciate their teacher's enthusiasm and so are committed to make the extra effort necessary to complete a full GCSE course in the short time available. They assimilate new material rapidly and are prepared to use it fluently. Higher-achieving students can use their limited knowledge to extend their responses to questions into simple free dialogue. Their pronunciation is satisfactory. All students use what they know in other languages well to help them in speaking, reading and listening. In writing, their range of vocabulary and idiom is not extensive but it is adequate for their purpose. They use verbs accurately but make basic mistakes in other simple structures due, in the main, to the brief time they have been learning the language.

184. The quality of teaching is good overall. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. In French, in Years 7, 8 and 9, three quarters of the teaching was good with some very good and excellent teaching. In Years 10 and 11, one in three lessons was very good. All teaching in German and Spanish was very good. Strengths in teaching include the high level of fluency of all staff and lessons that have clearly stated objectives. Lessons contain a good variety of tasks and teachers provide the support that students need to perform them successfully. Tasks are very carefully planned to ensure they appeal to students' interest, especially boys'. Games, competitions and acted-out situations form a major part of the delivery of the best lessons. Praise and the use of short-term rewards, for example giving individual tasks National Curriculum Levels, are used skilfully to boost students' confidence. Teachers mark students' work thoroughly and give them good advice on how to improve. They set homework that consolidates students' knowledge. Where teaching has a weakness, tasks are not sufficiently well explained to enable students to succeed or they are presented in a way that does not engage their interest. Some marking is too lenient. Students are allowed to persist in making the same kinds of basic error in their writing and so do not learn from their mistakes.

185. The head of department has a clear idea of where the department is now and the direction in which it should be moving. The determination to succeed is very strong. Good support is given to members of the department and a regular exchange of good practice has been established. Data from assessment is used to improve teaching and learning. Regular monitoring of the work of the department is leading to greater consistency in the delivery of lessons and the assessment of students' work. Good use is made of all available resources, including the valuable contribution of the foreign language assistant in preparing materials, assisting in lessons and consolidating current classwork with small groups of students. Extra support sessions and regular visits to France improve students' competence and confidence well. Talks from local business people raise the profile of language learning in the school effectively. Accommodation in the main specialist teaching rooms is good. However, several classes have a high proportion of their lessons in non-specialist rooms. This affects the delivery of some lessons and has an adverse effect on students' learning. Although choice in modern languages has improved with the introduction of Spanish into the curriculum, lower attaining students may study only French.

186. There have been many staff changes since the time of the previous inspection but standards have been maintained. The main issues concerning standards in reading and speaking and the assessment of students' work have been addressed.

## MUSIC

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

### Strengths:

- The provision for students with special educational needs (SEN) and the more musically able.
- The excellence of the accommodation.
- The very wide range of extra-curricular activities.
- The commendable number of students receiving instrumental tuition.
- The growing number of students studying for the GCSE examination.

### Areas for improvement:

- The regular use of homework to develop students' ability to express themselves about music.
- The regular use of musical vocabulary in class and in written work.
- The regular use of student evaluation of performances in class.

187. Teacher assessments in 2001 show that at the end of Year 9 the attainment of the majority of students was well above national expectations. Inspection evidence shows standards at the end of Year 9 to be more in line with national averages. The main reason for the apparent drop in standards is the more realistic assessment of students' work that is now taking place under the new head of department, and the lack of continuity caused by frequent changes in music teachers over the past year. No significant difference was noted between the standards achieved by boys and girls.

188. The curriculum for Years 7 to 9 is based on practical work, so that all students, whatever their attainment, can join in enjoyable musical activities and achieve a reasonable standard. Students in Year 7 discover the elements of music and the importance of pulse and rhythm through a variety of modules based on listening and performing. They learn to play 'Ode to Joy' on a keyboard and create graphic scores based on their compositions. In lessons observed during the inspection, students were composing a piece of gamelan music by using the multi-tracking facilities on the electronic keyboards. Carefully written work sheets presented them with several simple stages, enabling them to achieve some complex compositions. Students in Year 8 use a drone bass, repeat patterns in accompaniments called *ostinati*, and write simple melodies. They learn to play Pachelbel's *Canon* and some of the variations. They discover the five note or pentatonic scale, through practising a piece called *Pentatonic Rondo*. At present, students are building up performances of the twelve bar blues by adding one part at a time and storing it in the keyboard or computer memory. They are familiar with the facilities offered by both media, and use their imagination to choose suitable instruments to play the different parts. Unfortunately performances created on the keyboards are completely erased as soon as the instrument is switched off. Performances created on the computer, however, can be stored and re-visited in successive lessons. Students in Year 9 continue the work started in the previous year by exploring the different styles found in jazz. They continue to develop their ability to devise and play chord patterns and analyse the structure of popular songs. In lessons observed, students were writing the lyrics and constructing the chord patterns and appropriate melodies for their own songs, and then performing them for the class. Owing to current shortages in staff and computers, it is not possible for all students in Years 7 to 9 to have regular access to ICT, and they are therefore not receiving their full National Curriculum entitlement. However, more computers are awaiting installation and more staff have been appointed to join the department in September.

189. In the 2001 GCSE examination, the percentage of students obtaining A\* - C grades was just below the national average for similar schools. The number of students obtaining A\* - C in 2001 was similar to that in 2000. Over the last two years, there has been a significant rise in the number of candidates taking the examination due to the department's commendable policy of admitting all students who want to take the examination. In the 2001 examinations, some of the less academically able students achieved either their highest grade in music or their only grade.

190. During the week of the inspection, Year 11 students were on study leave having completed their course work. As this had already been marked and sent off to the moderator, it was not possible to ascertain standards for this year group. However, standards in Year 10 are either in line with examination requirements or better. In the lessons observed, students were tackling the unseen section of the examination, for which they are provided with a choice of stimulus from which to compose a short piece. In this lesson, as with others, the very approachable worksheet enabled all students to tackle the task positively and produce acceptable results according to their ability.

191. Provision for students with special educational needs is very good. Activities are designed to be accessible to all students, and this enables those with special needs to produce good results, thus boosting their self-esteem. Learning support teachers in Years 8 and 10 spoke highly of the valuable contribution the department makes to the lives and outlook of the students under their supervision. They found that the lack of need to read and write was presenting these students with opportunities to achieve not found in most other subjects. Provision for higher attaining students is excellent. All the practical activities have a wide range of opportunities that allow more musically able students to develop their skills further, and some very interesting results were observed. In a Year 10 class, a student modestly played a piano rag realised on the computer which was already of above an A\* standard. Higher attaining students also receive extra challenge from the growing number of instrumental lessons that are now available, and from the exceptionally broad range of extra-curricular activities.

192. Attitudes and behaviour in music lessons in all year groups are good and often very good. This is due to the friendly but professional approach of the teacher and her ability to build good relationships with the students. The pace and content of lessons and the teacher's high expectations continually challenge the students, keeping them interested in the task and firing their desire to achieve well. The students respond well to the teacher's clear explanations and quickly settle down to their learning tasks, which they obviously enjoy. Relationships between the students are good, particularly in group work where students rehearse profitably in adjoining practice rooms, often without the immediate supervision of the teacher.

193. The standard of teaching and therefore learning overall is very good. It is good or very good in Years 7 to 9, where the teacher has a very good command of the subject and is skilled in enabling students to learn for themselves. This includes being able to offer suitable advice and direction to students attempting to use the computers. Lessons are well planned with realistic use of time limits, which encourage the students to remain focussed on the set task with a view to completing it successfully, thereby meeting the teacher's high expectations. Good use of questioning helps students recall past learning, and this assists the understanding of the connections between previous lessons and new activities. Students are occasionally asked to read out sections of the worksheet to the class, but whilst the displays on the classroom walls contain references to key words used throughout the music curriculum, very little musical vocabulary is used on a regular basis. The good organisation of time allows a number of students to play the results of their practice regularly to the remainder of the class. These are evaluated by the teacher but few opportunities are offered

to the students to express their own views on the performances heard. This holds back their ability to express themselves in musical terms. Nevertheless, in a Year 7 lesson observed when there were student evaluations, some interesting positive comments were offered, showing the extent of the students' listening and evaluating skills. Not enough use is made of homework to encourage students to write short sentences about their performance in class, music heard, or carry out research into new topics. On-going assessment during lessons is very good and is designed to aid the learning process. The department does not make enough use of early examination data to set targets and predict students' future performance. Teaching in Year 10 is excellent, with the teacher continually providing stimulus and motivation for every one in the class to succeed according to their ability. The teacher has very thorough knowledge of each student's strengths and areas of difficulty. This is put to excellent use in overall lesson planning, devising and revising worksheets to ensure that all students receive appropriate challenge.

194. The department accommodation is excellent. Using money obtained from a lottery grant, the staff and an architect have designed a building that is flexible enough to meet the department's varying and growing needs. However, the broadening range of activities is attracting an increasing number of students, which is taxing instrument storage spaces. The building has become a social centre during non-teaching time, catering for the needs of musical and non-musical students alike. Present provision for resources is good, and this will improve once the recently acquired computers are installed and regularly used.

195. Since the previous inspection, there have been two new heads of department who have begun to address the issues raised in the previous report, particularly during the last academic year. However, progress slowed due to the unexpected departure of a newly appointed second in the department. A permanent replacement was not found, despite extensive advertising. In order to maintain standards, the newly appointed head of department has undertaken to ensure that all students are taught by her for a minimum of half of every term. This has been achieved by reducing her non-contact time, and is in addition to carrying out her regular duties with her normal meticulous efficiency. New documentation has been devised, an extensive list of concert commitments has been compiled and is still being fulfilled, and the regular rehearsal schedule has been maintained. It is envisaged that this punishing state of affairs will be alleviated next September, when a full time member of staff and an associate teacher join the department and resume some of the responsibilities.

196. The quality of provision for music is very good. It has the potential to improve further due to the excellent management of the department since the new subject leader was appointed in September 2001.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

### **Strengths:**

- Good teaching that promotes good student achievement.
- The attitude, behaviour and personal development of the students.
- Extra-curricular activities and links with the community.
- The commitment of staff.
- The quality of leadership.

### **Areas for improvement:**

- The development of schemes of work to meet new requirements.
- The development of assessment procedures and their use to familiarise students with National Curriculum levels and enhance their understanding of their learning.

197. The teacher assessment of students at the end of Year 9 in 2001 indicated that standards in physical education were below the national average. There has been an improvement, and the attainment of students currently in Year 9 is broadly in line with national expectations. Girls and boys are attaining similar standards. During Years 7 to 9, students begin to apply skills accurately with precision and control. This was apparent in an athletics lesson for Year 9 boys and Year 8 girls, where the majority were throwing the discus with precision and good technique. In all lessons, students develop their knowledge and understanding of spatial awareness when involved in skills' practices. They understand health and safety issues, with boys and girls showing acute awareness of their peers when throwing, retrieving, and measuring. They adhere very well to outdoor safety procedures. Most students in Years 7 to 9 develop an understanding of health-related fitness. They realise the importance of warming-up before exercise, though standards in this aspect are below average overall because not enough time is given to it.

198. Examination courses became a feature of the physical education curriculum in September 2001. Predicted grades for the first cohort of students to follow the GCSE course were 45 per cent in the A\* - C range. These grades are based on secure information of what students have already achieved, and it will represent considerable success if this target is achieved. During the inspection, only 4 lessons could be observed in Years 10 and 11, and all involved Year 10 classes. Two of the lessons took place at the nearby recreation complex, where all students gained great enjoyment and demonstrated very good personal and social skills whilst experiencing ice-skating or ten pin bowling. The lessons exemplified the total development of the person through sport. Two were GCSE lessons. In both lessons, students were attaining in line with national expectations. In a theory lesson, students were very adept at analysing and explaining their understanding of the question, 'Why take part in sport?' In a practical lesson, boys were proficiently organising and running throwing competitions.

199. The level of students' achievement is good in relation to their standards on entry. They make good progress in Year 7. This was seen clearly in a lesson for girls in putting the shot and one for boys on throwing the javelin, where new skills were being acquired with enthusiasm and accuracy. The large majority of students in the school work at a level in line with their age and ability, and make good progress. The achievement of students with special educational needs (SEN) is also good. The department has a very well implemented policy of inclusion. It has adopted a variety of teaching styles appropriate to students of different abilities within groups. More able students are stretched by more demanding tasks in practical lessons and extension work in GCSE theory classes.



200. Students are encouraged to learn well by the good quality of teaching that they receive. A very high proportion of teaching observed was good or better. The high quality of teaching has a very good impact on the pace and productivity in lessons. It enhances the learning environment and promotes student progress and success. All specialist teachers are very secure in their knowledge of their subject and in methods of teaching skills. The teacher displayed this well in a Year 9 lesson, where boys who were being taught the discus benefited from his very good demonstration. Teachers' management of students and relationships with them are very good. This produced enjoyable lessons that promote high levels of enthusiasm. This was evident in all lessons. Lesson content is strong on performance and sound on evaluation. The department does not allow enough opportunities for students to plan and re-plan parts of lessons to develop their independent learning skills.

201. Although the curriculum meets statutory requirements, its structure is limited by poor indoor accommodation. As a consequence, there is an over-emphasis on games. The curriculum is dated and restrictive. It is not exciting and stimulating enough to fully capture students' physical, intellectual and creative abilities. The time allocation in Year 11 is only half the national recommendation. Extra-curricular provision is a strong feature of the department. A limited range of activities is open to all students, with opportunities for the more skilled to compete at representative levels. A significant number of students have gained local, regional and international honours. The school has good links with local clubs, which cater for the sporting interests of a large number of students. Approximately 40 per cent of students engage in sport out of school. Schemes of work have not yet fully been brought into line with curriculum 2000. New assessment procedures are good but have only recently been introduced. Students are not informed of the National Curriculum levels they are working at, and thus do not have a full enough understanding of their own learning and the standards they are attaining.

202. Leadership of the department is good. Staff relationships are very good. They support each other well and work with high levels of commitment to the subject and the students. The staff contribute significantly to the ethos of the school. They are beginning to shape a combined vision for the future, reflecting present and future educational initiatives. Management of the department is satisfactory. Procedures are well established but the good work of the department is not supported by the relevant paper work.

203. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Strengths identified then have been maintained. Action has been taken to address the weaknesses, though this has not been fully effective in some areas, such as curriculum planning.

204. The department is providing a good standard of education for the students, despite poor indoor accommodation. The overwhelming need for a new sports hall and a fifth specialist member of staff is holding back the potential of the department to raise standards further.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision for religious education is **good**.

### **Strengths:**

- Students develop subject skills rapidly when they enter the school.
- The quality of teaching is often very good or excellent.
- A wide variety of teaching techniques is used to motivate students.
- Relationships are very strong and students enjoy their lessons.
- The new GCSE short course motivates students to do well.
- The subject makes an excellent contribution to the personal development of all students.

### **Areas for improvement:**

- There is no provision for the subject at present in Year 11.
- Lower attaining students have a limited range of learning materials to suit their needs.
- Higher attaining students need more opportunities to develop independent learning skills.
- Students would benefit from more visits to sites of religious interest.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) needs further development within the subject curriculum.

205. In lessons observed and work seen during the inspection, standards are in line with the expectations of the locally Agreed Syllabus by the end of Year 9, despite the fact that many students enter the school with low levels of subject knowledge. This represents good achievement. During Years 7 and 8, students acquire a sound understanding of Christian beliefs and those of other major world religions, such as Islam and Buddhism. They discuss these beliefs with confidence and make good progress in discussions. During Year 9, students develop their knowledge and understanding of the subject more fully, and, in this context, some very detailed and accurate written work on Sikhism was seen in Year 9 exercise books. This has addressed successfully the issues arising from the previous report on lack of progress and limited understanding at this stage.

206. There have been very few entries in recent years for the full GCSE course in this subject, but some 50 students took a new GCSE short course for the first time last year in Year 10. Results were well above the national average, and half the students achieved an A or B grade. This is a notable achievement, and nearly all Year 10 students were entered for the examination this year.

207. During Year 10, students develop the capacity to examine moral issues, such as euthanasia. They also make good progress in understanding key concepts in Christianity, such as the Trinity and the Resurrection. As a result, standards at this stage are above the expectations of the locally Agreed Syllabus. There is no timetabled provision for the subject in Year 11, but many key issues, such as human rights, poverty and the environment are covered in the personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme during that year. Not enough time is allocated to religious education in Years 10 and 11, however, meaning that students examine spiritual issues in insufficient depth. Throughout the age range, higher attaining students make good progress, but they lack sufficient opportunities to develop their independent learning skills in depth. Lower attaining students and those with special educational needs (SEN) make satisfactory progress, but there is a limited range of materials in classrooms to suit their individual needs.

208. The quality of teaching and learning is never less than satisfactory. It is good overall, and half the lessons seen were very good or excellent. This represents a considerable improvement since the previous inspection, when one in four lessons seen was deemed to be unsatisfactory. Where teaching is strongest, teachers have very good subject knowledge and plan lessons well, so that students know precisely what to do. Care is also taken to include all students in the learning process through well-targeted questions. Teachers use a wide variety of teaching techniques to support students' learning, including video, artefacts, group work, class discussion and short written tasks. This was demonstrated to the full in an excellent Year 7 lesson, during which students examined the teachings of the Buddha on suffering. The lesson provided students with a very rich variety of experiences, drawn from video extracts, artefacts, discussion, written tasks, music and a meditation exercise. Clear aims and objectives are set for lessons. Time is allowed at the end of most sessions for students to reflect on their progress. Teachers are very enthusiastic about their practice and, as a result, students are encouraged to become active participants in lessons and they learn well. In a minority of lessons, however, tasks are not fully matched to students' learning needs and consequently the pace slackens and more limited progress is made.

209. Relationships are very strong and students have very positive attitudes to their work because of the good teaching they receive. They show respect for their teachers and for each other and clearly enjoy their learning. Above all, they are eager and willing to join in lesson activities and show maturity in their oral responses. As a result, the level of classroom discussion is often high and students make good progress, particularly in their speaking and listening skills. This was seen to very good effect in a Year 9 lesson, during which students showed considerable maturity and responsibility in a very well orchestrated discussion on euthanasia and what constitutes quality of life.

210. The department is managed well with enthusiasm and commitment. Assessment is used well to monitor students' progress, and positive marking provides students with a clear idea on how to improve their work. There is a commendable emphasis throughout the curriculum on the development of literacy, and this provides a considerable boost to students' progress. The subject makes an excellent contribution to the personal development of all students, particularly in the area of multi-faith education. Resources are used well to support learning, both within the classroom and in the learning resource centre, but students have limited access to local religious sites and visiting speakers. ICT is beginning to make an impact on the subject curriculum, but more work is needed in this area.

211. Overall, the department has made very good progress since the previous inspection, particularly in terms of the improved quality of teaching and learning and the provision of a short course examination for all students in Year 10. The key challenge now is to develop a wider offer of public examination courses in the subject and raise the status of religious education in the school. The department is very well poised to achieve these objectives.