

INSPECTION REPORT

WROTHAM SCHOOL

Wrotham.

LEA area: KENT

Unique reference number: 118881

Headteacher: Mr. G.Thompson

Reporting inspector: Mr. M. Dowden
11467

Dates of inspection: 12th –16th November 2001

Inspection number: 190862

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 School

School category: Foundation

Age range of pupils: 11-18 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Borough Green Road
Wrotham
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Kent

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr. Derrick Groom

Date of previous inspection: December 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
11467	Mike Dowden	<i>Registered inspector</i>	Drama; Theatre Studies.	Standards of attainment and achievement; Leadership and management; School improvement and effectiveness; Staffing.
19693	Sally Hall	<i>Lay inspector</i>	Personal social and health education.	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development; How well does the school care for its pupils; Partnership with parents; Accommodation; Resources.
1845	Robert Tweed	<i>Team inspector</i>	Religious education; Special needs.	How good are curricular and other opportunities.
4426	Terry Fitchett	<i>Team inspector</i>	Modern foreign languages.	Teaching and learning.
12118	Allan Paver	<i>Team inspector</i>	Geography.	
21416	Margaret Brookes	<i>Team inspector</i>	Design and technology.	
19866	Peter Austin	<i>Team inspector</i>	Art.	
11240	Paul Shallcross	<i>Team inspector</i>	Informationa and communication technology; Design and technology (Sixth Form)	
10979	Peter Hooker	<i>Team inspector</i>	Science.	
18950	Carmen Rodney	<i>Team inspector</i>	English; Media Studies.	
14638	Steve Williams	<i>Team inspector</i>	Business Studies; Sixth Form.	
19135	Derek Ebbage	<i>Team inspector</i>	Mathematics;	
3755	Trevor Hulbert	<i>Team inspector</i>	History; Geography (Sixth Form).	
30563	Jacqueline Pentlow	<i>Team inspector</i>	Physical education.	
31705	John Mason	<i>Team inspector</i>	Music.	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Wrotham School is a mixed non-selective modern school for pupils aged 11 to 18 years. It is a growing school with 756 pupils on roll, compared to 565 at the last inspection. It is still rather smaller in size than average, compared to other secondary schools. Most pupils entering the school at age 11 have reached average levels of attainment, but there are few pupils entering the school with above average attainment. This is because local grammar schools admit over a quarter of the higher attaining pupils in the age group. The school is very popular with parents and each year is heavily oversubscribed in the number of pupils applying for places. The proportion of pupils with special needs is slightly higher than the national average. Very few pupils are from ethnic minority groups and only three pupils have English as a second language. The school serves a wide area and although many pupils come from homes which are relatively advantaged both socially and economically, substantial numbers come from disadvantaged backgrounds. Overall, the socio economic circumstances of the pupils are average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Wrotham is a sound and caring school in which staff and pupils enjoy working. Teaching is good throughout the school, so pupils learn well. Pupils have good attitudes to learning and their behaviour both in and out of class is good. Support for pupils with special needs is good. Sixth form provision is satisfactory and students achieve well. The headteacher motivates staff and pupils well and is highly regarded by parents. There are, however, some significant weaknesses in the overall leadership and management of the school and in the curriculum. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

- Attainment at GCSE is consistently above the national average in science and geography.
- Pupils with special needs make good progress.
- Teaching is good throughout the school.
- Pupils' attitudes to school and their behaviour are good.
- Heads of subject departments lead their teams well.
- Staff are very committed to the school and to bringing about improvement.
- The range of extra curricular activities is good.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- The writing skills of all pupils, particularly those of lower and average attaining pupils.
- The use of ICT to support learning in different subjects.
- Aspects of leadership and management: communication of the school's aims and priorities and how they will be achieved through focussed planning.
- The systematic monitoring and evaluation of teaching and the quality of pupils' work.
- The curriculum, including its overall management and its breadth and balance.
- Ensuring that statutory requirements are met at Key Stage 4 for the teaching of a modern foreign language, religious education, information and communication technology (ICT) and design and technology.
- Systems for assessing pupils' attainment at Key Stage 3.
- Pupils' spiritual development.
- Systems for ensuring the health and safety of pupils in the school.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in December 1996. There has been improvement in attainment at Key Stage 3. At the last inspection standards at the end of this key stage were below average; now they are at the national average. At Key Stage 4 there has also been substantial improvement in the numbers of pupils obtaining 5 or more A* to C grades and the school is now well above average compared to similar schools. Using the school's overall average point score for GCSE, however, attainment is below the national average and below average compared to similar schools. An unsatisfactory curriculum at Key Stage 4, has contributed to this lower attainment, because pupils do not have the opportunity to study as many subjects as usual. Curriculum organisation is weaker than it was at the last inspection. The quality of teaching, however, has improved, with substantially more very good teaching than in the last inspection.

The sixth form has grown very substantially from a very small sixth form at the last inspection. Teaching in the sixth form is still good, as it was in the last inspection. In recent years, pass rates in some A level subjects have been unsatisfactory, but the stricter entrance requirements for students starting courses have led this year to better achievement and improved attainment, because virtually all students are now studying appropriate courses for their ability.

The school's leadership has not responded sufficiently vigorously to the key issues for action arising from the last inspection report and progress on these issues has been inadequate. Although ICT is now effectively taught as a subject at Key Stage 3, it is not used well in many subjects across the curriculum. Religious education has greatly improved at Key Stage 3, but is still not studied by most pupils at Key Stage 4. Aspects of assessment at Key Stage 3 are still unsatisfactory. The use of form tutor time is still not satisfactory in all classes. There has not been enough improvement to library provision for the sixth form. Statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship are not met.

STANDARDS

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

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

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

The Year 2001 National Curriculum test results at the end of Key Stage 3 in English, mathematics and science, when taken together, were in line with the national average. This was an improvement on the Year 2000, when they were below average. Achievement was good in English, where attainment was above the national average and an improvement on previous years. In science attainment was average, sustaining reliable performance of several years, and it was below average in mathematics. Work seen during the inspection indicates that pupils in Year 9 are reaching the national expectation in English and maths and, because of improved teaching, are now above average in science. Despite lower than average attainment by girls in science tests in the last two years, boys and girls in Year 9 now achieve equally well. Overall achievement is satisfactory for pupils at Key Stage 3. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is good. It is particularly good in reading, although in writing some pupils with special needs still have difficulties with simple spelling and grammar by Year 9.

The overall achievement of pupils at GCSE is satisfactory. Since 1998 the school has successfully met its own targets for GCSE for 5 or more A*-C grades. It has also reached the national average for the percentage of pupils gaining these grades in 2000, and it was well

above average compared to similar schools. Pupils reached very slightly lower levels at 5 or more A* to C grades in 2001. Achievement in geography and science at GCSE in 2000 was very good. The school's average point score, which measures the achievements of all pupils taking GCSE, is however, below the national average and below average for similar schools. Pupils' point scores are lower, because most of them study fewer GCSEs than normal. This is mainly because the school's curriculum does not enable most pupils to study the full range of subjects at Key Stage 4. During the inspection, the overall standards seen in Year 11 were in line with the national average in most subjects and were above average in science and geography. Boys and girls in Year 11 achieve equally well, despite some under achievement by girls in science GCSE in the last two years. Pupils with special needs continue to make good progress.

Results at A/AS level have been well below average for the last three years. Results in GNVQ business have been above average. Most students gaining grades A –E at A/AS level in the last two years have done well in the light of their earlier prior attainment at GCSE. But A level results in 2000 in mathematics, science, design and technology and theatre studies were unsatisfactory, because there were too many ungraded results, suggesting that the school had not guided some students effectively into following the best courses for them. However, entry requirements on to A/AS level courses in the school are now stricter. From work seen during the inspection, virtually all students currently studying for A/AS level are now well matched to their courses, are achieving well and are reaching the average standards for A/AS level students. This is an improvement on attainment in previous years. Standards are particularly high in A level art and design and technology.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' attitudes to the school and their work are good. Pupils are motivated, interested and responsive to good teaching.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is good in and out of lessons. Most pupils behave well and work hard.
Personal development and relationships	Overall personal development and relationships are good. Pupils work together well, in lessons and other school activities. They are confident in expressing ideas and opinions. They enthusiastically take part in extra curricular activities.
Attendance	Satisfactory and in line with the national average.

Pupils have good attitudes to school. They enjoy school and their enthusiasm for learning has a positive impact on their progress. Pupils' behaviour is good. They use very well developed skills in speaking and listening to work well together in lessons and socially.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching was good in over half of lessons; it was very good in one in five lessons. It was unsatisfactory in only 2 per cent of lessons and there was one poor lesson. Teachers have a firm grasp of their subject and relate positively to pupils. The support for pupils with special educational needs in the school is a strength and they achieve well because of good teaching. Mathematics teaching is good, although at times it is hampered by unsatisfactory arrangements for grouping pupils according to their attainment, in which some pupils do not learn well.

Teaching is good in English in all year groups with some very good and occasionally excellent features. In design technology, French and religious education, the enthusiasm of teachers has a particularly positive effect upon pupils' motivation and interest. Pupils achieve particularly well in geography because of sustained good teaching. The best science lessons challenge pupils to think and stretch their knowledge of the subject. Drama successfully stimulates pupils' creativeness but, in most other subjects, pupils' creative effort and capacity for independent study are not sufficiently extended. Marking is inconsistent. Much of it is good but a substantial amount does not guide pupils onto future learning. Literacy and numeracy are well taught in some subjects, but they are not well supported by a clear, whole school approach to improvement. There are some weaknesses in the writing skills of middle and lower attaining pupils because writing skills are not systematically taught in all subjects. ICT is not used well to support learning in most subjects, although in some subjects, provision for ICT is good.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Unsatisfactory curriculum overall. Some unsatisfactory timetabling of lessons. Arrangements for grouping pupils according to their attainment, limit some learning of some pupils at Key Stage 3. At Key Stage 4 statutory requirements are not met, as most pupils do not study religious education or a modern foreign language and some pupils do not study information and communications technology (ICT) and design and technology. Statutory requirements for design and technology not fully met at Key Stage 3. Good range of extra curricular activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Pupils make good progress. Whole school organisation is very effective; classroom assistants give good support and most teaching is planned to ensure all pupils can achieve well.
Provision for pupils' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good provision for pupils' moral and social development. Satisfactory provision for cultural development, except not enough preparation for pupils for living in a multicultural society. Pupils' spiritual development is unsatisfactory: absence of religious education at Key Stage 4 for most pupils and statutory requirement to provide a daily collective act of worship for all pupils is not met.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Pupils well supported and guided by their tutors. Satisfactory systems for ensuring assessment information is used to help pupils improve and reach higher standards. Satisfactory procedures for monitoring behaviour and attendance. Some health and safety issues not addressed. Unsatisfactory approaches to assessing pupils' overall attainment at Key Stage 3.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Visible and constant support for staff and pupils by the headteacher. Aims and educational direction not clearly communicated. Insufficiently co-ordinated strategies for school improvement. Unsatisfactory school development plan, with senior managers unclear as to their responsibilities in securing improvements.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Individual governors give very committed support. But the governing body does not contribute sufficiently to shaping the future direction of the school and is not sufficiently aware of its strengths and weaknesses. Statutory responsibilities for the curriculum at Key Stages 3 and 4 and for collective worship not fulfilled.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Improved systems of monitoring the individual performance of pupils. But outcomes of assessment and observation of teaching by senior managers are not sufficiently analysed to identify clearly the school's strengths and weaknesses and the specific actions needed to improve standards. No whole school strategies to involve subject leaders in monitoring.
The strategic use of resources	Appropriate use of its good accommodation and satisfactory learning resources. Teachers are well qualified and have good experience and are satisfactorily supported through professional development. Satisfactory financial administration but financial planning not sufficiently well linked to supporting the educational priorities of the school development plan. Specific grants and funds are used appropriately for designated purposes. The principles of best value are not sufficiently addressed.

The headteacher's high profile around the school enables him to be well informed of day to day issues and he communicates very well with pupils and sixth form students. This helps to account for their generally good behaviour and positive attitudes to the school. However, the overall leadership and management by headteacher, senior managers and governors are unsatisfactory, although the commitment of the head, staff and governors to improving the school is strong. There is a lack of clear direction and insufficiently co-ordinated strategies to bring about improvement, which limit the effectiveness of the contribution that staff can make to school improvement. Some financial decisions are informed by the principles of best value, but overall the process is not sufficiently well planned for. The school has the capacity to bring about necessary improvements, through the high commitment of all staff and the expertise of a strong team of subject leaders.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils like school. • Pupils make good progress at school. • The good quality of teaching. • The good quality of behaviour. • Good information on their children's progress. • Comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. • The school expects their children to work hard and do their best. • The school is well led and managed. • The school helps pupils become mature and responsible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 13% of parents felt their children did not get the right amount of homework. • 14% felt there should be more extra curricular activities.

The inspection team endorses all the strengths identified by parents, apart from some aspects related to leadership and management. The inspectors are also of the view that information on progress, while satisfactory, could be improved. Inspectors judged that, overall, pupils were given an appropriate amount of homework and that there is a good range of extra curricular activities.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM

WROTHAM SCHOOL

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form of 99 students, with 56 boys and 43 girls, is much smaller than average. Over 50% of students from Year 11 continue into the sixth form. The percentage of students receiving free school meals is lower than the national average; the percentage of students with special needs equates with the national average. Overall, students' backgrounds broadly reflect those of pupils in the main part of the school. The overall standard of students on entry to the sixth form is below average. There were no permanent exclusions from the sixth form in 2000/2001.

The number of students in the sixth form has risen rapidly over recent years. The range of courses has expanded in line with this rise in numbers, and 11 A/AS courses are currently offered. In vocational subjects the range offered remains limited. However, it will be increased in the coming academic year by courses offered at other schools as part of a collaborative arrangement for post 16 provision, operating locally. Around one third of students progress from the sixth form to higher education.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form provision in the school is satisfactory. Students achieve well in most of the subjects they study and in all subjects achievement is at least satisfactory. In previous years some A level results have been unsatisfactory because A level study was too difficult for some students on the course. But stricter rules now govern who follows A/AS level courses and students are now well matched to their courses. Teaching is generally good and it is very good in art, and design and technology. Students have positive attitudes to the sixth form. They build successfully on their previous studies. Just over three quarters of the students who begin sixth form studies go on to complete courses successfully and this is just satisfactory. Attendance in the sixth form is unsatisfactory. The quality of information and guidance provided for students, including careers education, is unsatisfactory. Overall, provision in the sixth form is adequate and the sixth form gives satisfactory value for money. The main strengths and areas for development are:

Strengths

- Achievement in design and technology, business education and art is particularly good;
- Students achieve well in the light of their previous GCSE attainment;
- Teaching is good;
- Students have a positive attitude towards the sixth form and the school.

What could be improved

- Teaching students to be effective independent learners;
- The leadership and management of the sixth form;
- The quality of educational guidance, including careers guidance;
- Statutory requirements in respect of religious education and collective worship are not being met;

- Attendance.

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

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Satisfactory quality of provision. Teachers' planning of lessons and management of students are good, leading to good interest, concentration and attitudes to study by the students. The assessment of students' work requires attention and students need more support in how to be good at independent learning.
Science	Good quality of provision. The new courses are more suited to the needs of current students. Teaching is good and students are well supported, although more support for independent learning is needed. Relationships in class are very good and students are working hard to succeed.
Design and Technology	Very Good quality of provision. The quality of work seen in current A and AS groups is above average. Achievement in lessons is very good with students making good progress. The quality of teaching is excellent. There is very good leadership and management of the subject.
Information and communication technology (ICT)	Good quality of provision in the vocational ICT course. Standards of attainment are above average. Teaching is good. The computer and network quality is good. The course is new but students are learning fast.
Business education	Good quality of provision. Students achieve well. They acquire good research skills. Teaching is good. ICT is well used and effective use is made of drafting, redrafting and refining by students in their assignments.
Art and design	Very Good quality of provision. Very good teaching leads to very good learning and achievement. There is very good support for students as individuals. Very good leadership and management in the subject contribute to high standards.
Geography	Good quality of provision. This well managed department provides effective teaching and tutorial support that encourages students to make good progress. The courses are enriched by lively teaching, good use of a range of suitable texts and well-planned fieldwork. Students need more support to become good at independent learning.
English	Satisfactory quality of provision. Over the past three years results have been well below average. Provisional results however, improved in 2001. Students in Year 12 achieve well at AS-level. Teaching and learning overall are good but students are too dependent on their teachers.
French	Good quality of provision. Teaching is good and students respond well. Students have a very positive commitment to their studies and work hard. Their understanding of written and spoken language is good and they have a sound grasp of grammar. They do not have yet, however, the confidence to conduct extended conversations in French.

Work was sampled in other sixth form courses. Students achieve well in theatre studies. After below average A level results in 2001, all students are now reaching the average in theatre studies and are achieving well. Achievement is satisfactory in the new media studies course. In history students achieve well and reach the average for A level. Information and communications technology (ICT) is well used in design and technology, where students design parts of their coursework with advanced computer aided design and manufacturing software. ICT also supports learning well in French and geography but not in other subjects, where

improvement in the use of ICT is needed. Students take part in a good range of extra curricular activities in the sixth form, with a number following the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Systematic guidance for students is unsatisfactory but is improving. Teachers give good individual support, but planned arrangements and policy for regular guidance are unsystematic. Guidance on careers and induction arrangements for students are unsatisfactory.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Day to day management of the sixth form is efficient and well organised. Overall strategic leadership and management is unsatisfactory because responsibilities are not effectively defined and priorities are not driven forward and monitored.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the pastoral support in the sixth form • the support given by their subject teachers • the accessibility of their teachers • the work ethos 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the extent to which they are treated as responsible young adults in the sixth form • the quality and extent of advice on what they should do after they leave school • the extent to which the school listens to and responds to the views of sixth form students • the enrichment programme

Most students feel positive about being in the sixth form and the great majority feel they are taught well and have teachers who support them well. The inspectors agree with this view. About a third of students who responded to the sixth form questionnaire had reservations as to the quality of overall guidance and a larger proportion had reservations as to the quality of careers guidance. Inspectors agree that the quality of systematic guidance for students, including careers guidance, could be improved. Discussion with students during the inspection produced a positive picture as to how well they are listened to.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

OTHER INFORMATION

The governing body is responsible for drawing up an action plan within 40 days of receiving the inspection report, showing how the school will tackle the improvements needed. This action plan will be circulated to all parents at the school.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. The attainment of most pupils when they start at the school is close to the national average but there are very few pupils attaining above the average. This is confirmed by work seen in the current Year 7 as well as by National Curriculum tests carried out at the end of primary school and by tests administered shortly after pupils start school in Year 7.
2. Overall performance at the end of Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests in English, mathematics and science was average when compared to all schools nationally in 2001 and an improvement on performance in 2000 when it was below the national average. Better performance in 2001, as a result of better planning led by a new head of department, reflected particular improvements in English after below average results in that subject in 2000. With the exception of below average performance in 2000, Key Stage 3 results have reached the national average since 1998 and are better than in 1996, the time of the last inspection, when they were below average. With the exception of a significant dip in 2000, the upward trend in the school's average point score from 1997 to 2001 has been broadly in line with the national trend.
3. In 2001 English results were good. They were above the national average at both the expected level 5 and also at the higher level 6. Key Stage 3 results in science have reached the national average for the last four years. Results in mathematics, particularly at the higher level 6, have been below average over the same time. Pupils currently in Year 9 are reaching the national expectation in English and mathematics but in science, because of improvements in teaching, they are better than in previous years and are now, overall, above the national expectation for pupils of this age.
4. Teacher assessments for other subjects in 2001 were not accurate in most cases and underestimated standards reached. Work seen in the current Year 9 shows that in art, physical education, music, drama and modern languages, pupils are reaching national expectations. Attainment is above expectations in geography; it is below in design and technology, information and communications technology (ICT) and history. Overall, achievement at Key Stage 3 is satisfactory. It is particularly good in geography, and science. The progress of pupils with special educational needs, including the very small number with English as a second language, is good. It is particularly good in reading, where accurate school records indicate marked improvements during the key stage, although in writing some pupils with special needs still have difficulties with simple spelling and grammar by Year 9.
5. The overall attainment of girls in the Key Stage 3 tests for the last two years has been below average. This has been mainly because of their lower than average attainment in science. The attainment of girls currently studying science has improved however, particularly in Year 9, and no underachievement was seen in the performance of girls. Boys' attainment in English, while still being below that of girls, has improved recently and is now better in the current Year 9. There were no significant differences in attainment between boys and girls in other subjects, except in design and technology where girls' attainment was better than boys in the 2001 teacher assessments, although there was little marked difference seen in lessons. The school does not do enough to monitor the relative performance of boys and girls at Key Stage 3.
6. Between 1995 and 2000, the latest year against which comparable results were available in the inspection, results at five or more A* to C grades have improved from below to above the national average and to being well above average compared to similar schools. The school has significantly improved its A* -C GCSE results since the last inspection. In 2001 the

school's results were of a similar standard. During the same period the proportion achieving five or more grades at A* to G has varied between equating with the national average to being above average. In 2000, compared to similar schools it was above average. The school has sustained its good performance at A* to G grades.

7. A different way of measuring results, known as the average point score, is calculated by allocating points for each grade and then averaging them. This gives a measurement, which shows how well pupils have done overall. Using this to measure attainment at GCSE, the school has been below the national average over the last four years and in the Year 2000 it was below average compared to similar schools. An unsatisfactory curriculum at Key Stage 4, has contributed to this lower attainment, because pupils do not have the opportunity to study as many subjects as usual. This helps to confirm the overall judgement of the work seen during the inspection, that at Key Stage 4 pupils' progress and achievement are satisfactory, but could be improved with a better curriculum providing more opportunity to gain GCSEs. The progress of pupils with special needs is good, building on Key Stage 3. The performance of girls has been below the national average for girls in the last three years, mainly because they have not achieved as well as would be expected in science, but also because of lower than average performance in English. No significant differences in performance between boys and girls were seen during the inspection across subjects.

8. In the 2000 GCSE English results, the proportion of pupils achieving grades A*-C was average although the English literature results were well below the average. The 2000 English results were a significant improvement since 1997, with more pupils gaining the higher grades. The 2001 GCSE results sustained this improvement in English and results were considerably better in English literature. GCSE results in mathematics have reached the national average over the last three years, while results in science have been well above the national average. Results in both mathematics and science have improved since the last inspection. Girls' relative under-performance at GCSE in science was not reflected in the science achievement of girls observed during the inspection. The trend in the school's GCSE average point score for all core subjects has been broadly in line with the national trend over the last five years. 2001 results suggest that this trend is being sustained.

9. GCSE examination results in art, French and drama have been in line with the national average; they have been well above in geography. GCSE results have been below the national average in music and history, although there were significant improvements in history in 2001. In design and technology, GCSE results in resistant materials were below average but were in line with the average in food technology. In the current Year 11, pupils are on track to reach the national average standards in all subjects, except science and geography where attainment is above average. Achievement across all subjects is satisfactory at Key Stage 4 and it is good for pupils with special educational needs where the great majority achieve 5 A* to G grades at GCSE. The highest attaining pupils achieve satisfactorily, although the school has not as yet formally identified its gifted and talented pupils.

10. The school has given considerable attention to measuring the progress individual pupils make, as they move from Years 7 to 11, and from school based tests and results of Key Stage 3 statutory assessment tests (SATs), set appropriate whole school targets for GCSE. These targets have been consistently achieved in the last three years. The progress of individual pupils is monitored by tutors and year heads at Key Stage 3, but the subject departments do not use all the information available in order to review achievement and set rigorous targets for improvement.

11. Pupils' literacy skills and their ability to use them across the curriculum are satisfactory overall. They are good at speaking and listening, but there are some weaknesses in their writing skills. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are developed skilfully in geography, history, music and physical education. In history, they use a range of oral skills; for instance, hypothesising, role-play and persuading when talking about events. But in maths pupils do not get enough opportunity to use their good oracy skills because teachers do not make this

demand on them. In most subjects, teachers are attentive to pupils using specialist vocabulary accurately and words are prominently displayed on walls. Good reading skills are promoted in geography, history, design and technology and ICT. In these subjects, pupils are taught the skills of skimming and scanning, researching and making succinct notes using their own words.

12. Lower and middle attaining pupils make too many errors in spelling and grammar. Some teaching supports pupils well, however, for example religious education, where pupils at Key Stage 3 have written extensively and very well on the present issues Muslims are facing. ICT lessons help pupils to check their spelling and explore new forms of writing. However, while some teachers mark written work thoroughly for spelling and grammar, and encourage pupils to redraft and improve their presentation, there are other subjects where errors are not corrected. Greater consistency across the curriculum is needed when correcting work and helping pupils to improve their writing. The lack of an active school strategy for improving literacy, and especially writing, is holding back progress.

13. Pupils' number skills and their ability to apply them in other subjects is satisfactory. In science, simple calculations are completed by pupils with confidence, although in Years 10 and 11 pupils in science have some problems in dealing with more complex scientific formulae. Numeracy skills are developed in design and technology, where pupils measure and design in various materials. In information technology, pupils make good use of numeracy skills when using formulae in their work on spreadsheets and databases. In Year 8, pupils in geography can manipulate quite complex statistics in their studies on population trends. In history, pupils place dates and quantities into rank order, represent distributions in bar charts and use Roman numerals efficiently. In French, pupils use numeracy in considerations of dates and foreign currency. There is also good numeracy work on spatial awareness in art and design, which introduces three-dimensional structures.

Attainment in the Sixth form

14. For the last four years, the average point score for students entered for two or more A/AS levels, from a very small cohort of about twenty students each year, has been well below the national average. The school's results were well below average in 2000, the latest year against which comparable results are available. A small number of candidates have taken the advanced GNVQ qualification in business since 1998 and over the last three years the average point score gained in this course has been above the national average.

15. In the Years 2000 and 2001, A level results were good in art, as they have consistently been for the last three years, when most and sometimes all students have achieved the higher A to C grades. Results for the 7 students taking English A level were below average in 2000 but in 2001 there was a significant improvement. There has also been a steady improvement in results in A/AS level geography. However, the overall results of the very small numbers of students taking A level in mathematics, science, design and technology and theatre studies in 2001 were unsatisfactory. Results were also unsatisfactory at AS level in mathematics and science. In these subjects, half or more of the students taking the exam did not achieve a pass. A sample analysis of students' earlier GCSE points scores demonstrates that their achievement was generally in line with those which were predicted. Students who failed to get a pass grade in subjects had begun their courses from a very low starting point at GCSE. This suggests that the school had not guided some students effectively into following the best courses for them. Since September 2000, the entry qualifications for A/AS level have been made stricter. As a result, all students currently studying A/AS level, with a very small number of exceptions in Year 13, show that they are capable of reaching at least the average levels at A level.

16. In the current Year 13, attainment in mathematics and science for the small numbers of students studying these subjects, is below average. Most students are achieving well. In the business advanced vocational course, students in Year 13 are currently reaching the national average and are achieving well in the light of their previous attainment. In art, attainment in Year 13 is above average and students achieve very well: they are encouraged to be self reliant and

adventurous. As a consequence one student, drawing upon the work of the artist Jenny Saville, had created technically very ambitious sculptures of high quality. Another student had crafted a three dimensional textile light, which was of exhibition quality. In English, Year 13 attainment is below average, but judged against earlier GCSE attainment, is satisfactory. But it could be better if some students attended more regularly. Overall, achievement in Year 13, including the achievement of students with special needs, is satisfactory.

17. Students following A/AS level courses in Year 12 reach at least the average grade. Students achieve particularly well in the new ICT advanced vocational certificate of education (AVCE) course. For example when working on a brochure design project, calling for different presentations for different audiences, students produce work of high quality. Overall achievement of Year 12 students across subjects, including those with special educational needs, is good. This is because of effective teaching and students' hard work. Achievement could be even better, however, if students' independent learning skills were developed and the attendance rate of a minority of students was improved.

18. Standards achieved in the sixth form in key skills (communication, application of number and ICT) for the very small number of students seeking accreditation, are in line with the expectation. But there are weaknesses in the development of key skills for all students, particularly in ICT, because of unsystematic planning for teaching them. Across subjects generally, the key skill of working with others is well developed, but most students are not sufficiently good at note taking, independent research skills and the presentation of work through ICT.

19. The sixth form has grown very substantially from a very small sixth form at the last inspection. Teaching is still good, as it was in the last inspection. In recent years pass rates in some A level subjects have been unsatisfactory, but the stricter entrance requirements for students starting courses have led this year to better achievement and improved attainment, because virtually all students are now studying appropriate courses for their ability.

Pupils' attitudes

Main school:

20. Pupils, including those with special needs, have good attitudes to school and this reflects the picture found at the time of last inspection. They enjoy school and their enthusiasm for learning has a positive impact on their progress. In some lessons, pupils have excellent attitudes to their work. This was seen, for example, in a Year 10 geography lesson about the changing patterns of urban shopping. Pupils displayed great interest in the topic, listening carefully to the teacher and to each other and enthusiastically voicing ideas and opinions. They were also very well organised, writing notes independently and using their contact books and other resources very well. They followed instructions closely and concentrated hard on their tasks. Most pupils concentrate well in lessons. Even though lessons are 70 minutes long, most pupils sustain their concentration and remain focussed throughout.

21. Pupils' behaviour is good and this reflects the findings of the last inspection. The school operates as a harmonious and orderly community and this has a positive effect on pupils' learning. Pupils know that all adults working in the school expect good behaviour and they generally respond well to these expectations. The behaviour of a small minority of pupils is unsatisfactory in a few lessons. These pupils lose concentration and chat. There was one permanent exclusion in the past year. The rate of fixed term exclusions is slightly higher than similar schools.

22. Pupils' personal development and relationships are good. They co-operate with each other in lessons and work well together in groups. Good relationships enable pupils to sensitively share their ideas and express their opinions without fear of ridicule. The vast majority of pupils show respect for adults and feel confident in asking for help. This has a positive impact in lessons and around the school. Some pupils enjoy taking responsibility and

successfully undertake duties, such as librarians and prefects. They enjoy raising money for charity and take part with enthusiasm in the good range of extra-curricular activities. Over sixty pupils are currently involved in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, an impressive number.

23. Pupils' attendance is satisfactory. The attendance rate and the unauthorised absence rate are broadly in line with similar schools. In 2000/2001 the attendance rate rose to 93.5 per cent and all year groups had an attendance rate of over 92 per cent. However, too many pupils are late for school. Although there are some difficulties with public transport, the vast majority of latecomers arrives on foot or by car and these pupils are missing an important start to the school day.

Students' attitudes in the sixth form.

24. Students' attitudes to school and their participation in the sixth form are satisfactory. They have a positive attitude towards their school, including positive and constructive relationships with their tutors and teachers. Relationships between students are good. Evidence from the students' questionnaire and in particular from discussion with students during the inspection, confirmed generally positive views about the sixth form.

25. Students' approach to learning is good in lessons. However, they do not use independent study time as well as they should. The majority of students have somewhere between a quarter and a half of the school week, where they are expected to engage in independent study in school. The school has responded to students not using this time effectively by introducing a new system of supervised study, involving teacher referral and self-referral. So far this approach has not been effective. The sixth form study areas are not well used for study during the school day and students seldom use the school library, although some students use public libraries and the computer facilities for sixth form students are extensively used. The extent to which students use the internet as a source of research to support independent learning out of lesson times is satisfactory. This is most effective where teachers have used lesson times explicitly to facilitate research, using different internet sites.

26. There are some opportunities for students to participate in the school as a community and this broadens their social development. There is a Sixth Form Council elected by members of the sixth form and this contributes to the sense of involvement by sixth form students in the life of the school. Students understand its role and it is effective as a channel of communication. Students' social development is also enhanced through their participation in extra curricular activities, for example the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme. Moral and cultural development are satisfactory, although not enough emphasis is given to preparing students for living in a multicultural society. Students do not experience a systematic programme of religious education and assemblies do not provide an adequate spiritual experience. As a result, this aspect of students' development is unsatisfactory. Attendance in the sixth form is currently unsatisfactory and the school needs to take steps to improve this.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

Main School

27. The overall quality of teaching is good. Of the lessons observed, one in five was very good and over half was good. There was no unsatisfactory teaching in Key Stage 3 and a very small amount at Key Stage 4. There is little variation in the quality of teaching between subjects. There is evidence of some very good teaching in all subjects and excellent teaching in design and technology and French. Whereas some unsatisfactory teaching was observed in lessons in Key Stage 4 in design and technology, the quality of teaching overall in this subject is satisfactory.

28. Teaching is good in English overall in all year groups, with some very good and occasionally excellent features. In English, teachers have clear expectations, which challenge pupils to think critically. In the best English lessons, teachers question pupils very well and are successful in stimulating a full response and in making pupils think. Teaching is good in mathematics, especially the teaching of numeracy, and much thought and planning has been given to introducing new methods to stimulate pupils' learning. There is a good drive in many mathematics lessons to push forward pupils' learning; teachers intervene at appropriate times and add to the pace of lessons. The best science lessons challenge pupils to think and stretch their knowledge of the subject; the final session of these lessons was well used to check science understanding.

29. Almost without exception, teachers have a firm grasp of their subject and in a number of lessons in mathematics, design technology, French and religious education, the enthusiasm of teachers had a particularly positive effect upon pupils' motivation and interest. In a Year 8 mathematics lesson, the teacher's inspiring delivery on the theme of substitution into formulae, contributed to pupils' strong commitment and enjoyment of the subject.

30. In the majority of lessons, teachers plan well and organise activities to suit the 70 minute period. Where lessons are particularly effective, the planned balance of presentation and tasks ensures that pupils are fully involved and that time is well used. Lessons are usually conducted at a brisk pace, following a well-organised start. In most cases teachers explain the purpose of the lesson and make sure that pupils know what to do. In art, for example teachers' high expectations of pupils led to a very positive and enthusiastic response from pupils. In some lessons teachers emphasise the development of pupils' literacy skills but this is not consistent across all subjects and it is usually not explicit in lesson planning. There is little evidence of the planned application of numeracy across the range of subjects. Use of information communication technology is inconsistent across the curriculum. It is still insufficient in English but is strong in geography, where teachers know which pupils do not have computers at home and ensure that these pupils have priority use of those available in school.

31. Most teachers set challenging targets for their pupils. In an outstanding Year 9 French lesson conducted solely in the foreign language, pupils responded very positively to encouragement to use the foreign language extensively. They made very good progress in their understanding of complex recorded material on the topic of personal finance. Explanations and presentation are usually clear and questioning is purposeful and productive. In resistant materials lessons, pupils' learning benefits in particular from very clear presentations and explanations by teachers. In the best lessons, pupils are engaged in group or paired activities and make good progress in acquiring skills and knowledge.

32. Teachers manage their pupils very well and set high standards of behaviour. They sustain a fast pace and ensure that pupils are on task. Teachers have established positive relationships with their pupils and in only a minority of lessons are pupils inattentive. Whereas most pupils are still reliant upon structured teaching and regular guidance, teachers in a small number of lessons are successful in motivating pupils to work independently and to be creative. In a Year 9 music lesson dealing with rhythms linked to African origins, pupils worked individually on their own composition, presented their ideas to the group, listened with respect to each other's contributions and refined their work, following critical comment from the teacher. Pupils worked with creativity and independence in a number of drama lessons. For example in a successful Year 10 lesson, each group developed its own interpretation of the characters of "Billy Liar" through short improvisations. In most cases, however, pupils are still reliant on prompts from the teacher and seldom take the initiative.

33. Teachers use resources well to develop learning. They were used well in a resistant materials lesson, where the simultaneous use of projected images, diagrams and real artefacts helped pupils make connections between their plans and their final project. Teachers frequently praise their pupils and give informal feedback to them on how well they are doing.

Much of the marking is good. However, the quality of marking of pupils' work is not consistently effective and planning of lessons is not sufficiently related to the teacher's assessment of pupils' strengths and weaknesses. Homework is regularly set and is appropriately related to the work of the class.

34. Teachers show good awareness of pupils' special educational needs and make appropriate use of their individual education plans (IEPs). Good classroom management enables pupils with special educational needs to focus on their work, and isolated cases of disruptive behaviour in lessons are dealt with very effectively. Specialist teaching in small groups for basic skills is very well organised and makes skilful use of individually targeted support. Classroom support assistants are deployed well and most teachers effectively share their objectives and planning with them. In geography, English and religious education, specially adapted materials are provided to give pupils with special educational needs more accessible language and this assists their learning.

Sixth form

35. The overall quality of teaching in the sixth form is good. Of the lessons seen, over one in four was very good and occasionally excellent, and a little under half was good. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. Teaching is at least satisfactory across all subjects, with some very good and occasionally excellent teaching in art, design and technology, French, geography, history and key skills. Without exception teachers' expertise in their subject is very good. Lessons are well planned and teachers apply appropriate and effective methods, using a range of resources. Very clear lesson objectives well linked to assessment criteria, characterise many design and technology lessons.

36. Teachers have high expectations of their students and in the majority of lessons students rise to the challenge. In a Year 12 geography lesson on the environmental management of water resources, students were required to extract, analyse and synthesise data and then to balance the evidence to formulate their own judgements. They carried this out very well, learning very effectively as they did so through planning, modifying and improving their approaches. High expectations were also demonstrated in business, where students involved in a market research activity based around the Bluewater Shopping Centre, very successfully tested out their questionnaires, reflected critically on the results and refined the questionnaire accordingly.

37. Invariably teachers have very good working relationships with their students, creating a productive learning environment. Students learn well and with few exceptions apply themselves conscientiously to their work. A general strength in sixth form teaching is the help which teachers give to students, recognising their individual needs. For example in art, the teacher of a Year 13 student capitalised on his interest and research into Pointillist artists, by providing him with the knowledge he needed in order to complete his own extensive set of pastel studies of local landscapes. In English, teachers show very good awareness of the gaps in individual students' knowledge and address these by good explanation and questioning.

38. There is no clear plan for the teaching of key skills across all subjects. Despite this, in some lessons, for example geography, teachers use appropriate methods to develop key skills but this is not consistent across the sixth form. Use of information and communication technology (ICT) is not uniform across the sixth form curriculum, but in an outstanding Year 13 design and technology lesson on electronics, excellent use was made of crocodile technology, as well as very good application of number to produce results of high quality. In a Year 12 French class, students accessed news items from the internet as a foundation for later discussion. The key skills course provided for a small minority of students is very well taught. However, there is no systematic teaching of key communication skills, for example note making and reading for information, either through the induction programme or through subject lessons. As a result, many students have limited skills in research and other aspects of independent enquiry.

39. In a number of subjects, teachers do not create sufficient opportunities to promote independent learning. For example in mathematics, students over rely on teachers' explanations and support in class. They are not given enough guidance in tackling longer term assignments and managing tasks on their own. On the other hand, students are well supported in the vocational ICT course in being able to use the internet and other large databases as a springboard to further research. Art teachers support students well in tackling longer term assignments, including the provision of after school classes in life drawing. But generally speaking, students do not receive enough guidance and help in managing longer term assignments. Although there was no unsatisfactory teaching in the sixth form, lessons judged to be only satisfactory often had shortcomings in assessment, because students had limited opportunities to focus on how best they could improve.

40. Where teaching and learning are particularly strong, students take responsibility for their learning, know their strengths and weaknesses and show a maturity of thought and application. In a Year 13 art lesson, students working on individual assignments selected different materials and processes, used information technology to experiment with ideas on imagery and developed their own techniques, based on the work of Impressionist painters.

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

Main school

41. Overall, the curriculum is unsatisfactory. Not all statutory requirements are met at either key stage.

42. At Key Stage 3 the school provides satisfactory learning opportunities for its pupils but not all statutory curriculum requirements are met. Pupils follow the programme of study in all national curriculum subjects. The curriculum is enriched for all pupils through the study of drama. However, in mathematics there are complicated arrangements for teaching different groups by ability, which have an adverse effect on pupils' learning. In design and technology there is not enough time for the subject and, because of the time lapses between food technology, resistant materials, and ICT, pupils do not find it easy to remember knowledge and skills after long periods between each aspect of the subject.

43. There are some weaknesses in whole school curriculum planning which adversely affect the way pupils can build on their previous learning. Some classes in English and geography, including those with lower attaining pupils, are timetabled for a double period lasting two hours and twenty minutes. After this, the gap in days before their next lesson is too long and work is forgotten. In physical education the two week timetable means that groupings and staffing can vary from week to week and so pupils' lose touch with their learning programme.

44. At Key Stage 4, the school does not provide a satisfactory range of learning opportunities; neither does it meet statutory requirements. Most pupils in Years 10 and 11 do not study a modern foreign language or religious education as statute requires; significant numbers do not study design and technology or the full programme of study for information and communications technology (ICT). Pupils' learning however, does benefit from the study of English literature for all pupils. There is also a popular and successful drama course. The organisation of pupils into different groups according to their attainment, is broadly satisfactory, except in science where some pupils in lower sets lose the chance to study for the higher GCSE grades.

45. Pupils' learning is enriched at both key stages in some subjects by the use of visits and other events. In history and geography pupils benefit from field study trips to locations such as Dorset and North Wales. Participation in the regional finals of the "Young Engineer" competition have made a significant contribution to pupils' achievement in design and technology, and pupils have done particularly well to win prizes in national essay-writing competitions in religious education.

46. Pupils with special needs have, generally speaking, satisfactory access to the curriculum. They are effectively supported by well deployed classroom assistants. But some arrangements for grouping pupils by attainment, for example in mathematics, limit the learning of pupils with special needs. While resources are well adapted to pupils' needs in geography, English and religious education, in some science lessons material is too difficult for some pupils to read. The English department works closely with the special needs department to ensure that pupils follow the same programmes of study and that pupils are not disadvantaged by withdrawal arrangements. In history, however, setting arrangements mean that pupils with special needs do not experience the same opportunities for discussion that other pupils have.

47. Strategies for teaching basic skills are satisfactory in most subjects. However, there are weaknesses in the teaching of writing across subjects and pupils of lower and middle attainment make too many errors in spelling and grammar. Improvement would be accelerated with the adoption of a clearly directed whole school policy for literacy. Provision for information and communication technology across the curriculum is unsatisfactory. The use of ICT is not effectively planned to enhance the study of English or science and in mathematics the lack of facilities greatly hampers its use. ICT is well used in some subjects, for example geography, but overall its use is not properly planned for. Insufficient improvement in the planned use of ICT has been made since the last inspection.

48. There are good opportunities for study support through the homework club and subject departments such as geography provide valuable materials which help pupils to succeed. Pupils with special educational needs are effectively helped through lunch time support sessions and have good opportunities to use computer programmes, which help support their learning. A rich and varied range of extra-curricular activities provide good opportunities for pupils and extends their learning in most subjects. 60 pupils take part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. Physical recreation is also supported through annual skiing holidays, adventure holidays at Carroty Wood, and through many competitive and recreational sports. There is a good range of lunchtime and after school clubs. The school makes satisfactory provision for equality of access for all pupils. Boys are encouraged, for example, to take part in dance lessons as part of their physical education, and girls have their own football team.

49. The personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme of learning is not at present effectively co-ordinated because of changes in staffing. Despite generally good teaching of PSHE lessons, the lack of a co-ordinator restricts the development of effective links between PSHE lessons and the programme of support from form tutors. The work experience programme in Year 10 provides placements for all pupils for two weeks and works well. Some pupils benefit from good links to local companies, for example those Year 11 pupils who, as part of their studies in design and technology, visit a factory which demonstrates the techniques of injection moulding. However, the programme of support for careers education is not sufficiently well planned or detailed in what it provides; nor are links with the careers service adequate, particularly for pupils who go onto the sixth form. Overall, careers education is not satisfactory. The school's partnership with the community, including partner institutions, is satisfactory. Appropriate links with local employers have been established, which enable pupils to prepare for the world of work. Visits from outside speakers, for example the community police officer, enrich the curriculum. Pupils gain useful academic and social skills from a range of trips and residential visits.

50. Opportunities for pupils' moral development are good. There are high expectations of behaviour and pupils learn to distinguish right and wrong through considering the consequences of their actions on others. For example pupils are taught to understand the results of the moral choices that they make through their studies in literature and drama and through issues discussed in French. Moral debate is also addressed well in religious education at Key Stage 3, where complex questions to do with human life are considered in depth and pupils respond well. Physical education gives many opportunities for pupils to learn about the importance of rules and fair play and environmental issues are dealt with particularly well in geography.

51. Opportunities for pupils' social development are good. Co-operative work in lessons, such as paired, group and team work in physical education, encourage good standards of social behaviour. In design and technology, pupils support each other very well and pay particular attention to the needs of their lower attaining peers. Important global, social and environmental issues are discussed in geography and science. At a whole school level, pupils have good opportunities to take on roles of responsibility during the school day, for example through the prefect system.

52. Pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils are encouraged to value and develop their own cultural heritage through the study of English and European history, geography, art and music. Broader cultural development is less well developed, although there are strengths. Music, for example, effectively introduces pupils to African, Caribbean and Indian music. In art pupils are required to investigate historical sources from Asian and African art. Religious education at Key Stage 3 successfully engages pupils in considering multicultural issues. Overall, however, there are too few opportunities for pupils to learn about the cultural life of the wider society in which they will live as adults.

53. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is unsatisfactory. Strengths include religious education at Key Stage 3, where all pupils are encouraged to reflect on ultimate questions such as the existence of life after death. Geography successfully involves pupils in considering the spiritual dimension of the created world. But opportunities elsewhere in the curriculum are too limited. Most pupils do not study religious education at Key Stage 4. Assemblies do not provide pupils with sufficient opportunity for reflection and the school does not meet its statutory requirement for a daily corporate act of worship.

Sixth form

54. The sixth form curriculum provides satisfactory learning opportunities for its students but statutory curriculum requirements for religious education are not met. The range of subjects and courses available in the sixth form enable students to build on what they have already achieved in the 11-16 curriculum, as well as some new opportunities through business education. Students can choose from a range of 11 A/AS level subjects, which build on earlier subjects studied, including A/AS level Theatre Studies. Students can also choose to study the new information and communications technology (ICT) advanced vocational certificate in education (AVCE) one year course, with an option to extend this into a further year.

55. Courses are appropriately organised to ensure that students make effective progress and that their needs, interests and aspirations are met. Small group sizes in some subjects create challenges for teachers, particularly in drama, french and English, where activities often call for extended pupil discussion and interaction. However, teachers plan well for this and students' learning is not impaired. There is, however, insufficient planning for the teaching of key skills across subjects. Despite this, in some lessons, there is clear and appropriate teaching of relevant key skills, as for example in geography. In most subjects, teachers do not plan the use of ICT effectively to support students' learning.

56. Although, there are no clearly defined aims for the sixth form curriculum, students' preferences for courses of study are generally met. Guidance for Year 11 pupils on their

options, including balanced guidance on post 16 education, is satisfactory. The school takes reasonable care to inform Year 11 pupils of alternative places of study locally. However, while students progress well in lessons, they are not given enough support and guidance as to how they should work during non taught lesson time.

57. The enrichment programme is satisfactory. Students are encouraged to be involved in the management of the sixth form and the wider life of the school, through a sixth form council and through organising events such as discos. Students also take part in the good range of extra curricular opportunities provided, including the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. Excursions are arranged to Stratford and to Barcelona for AVCE business and A level art and design students, and their learning and social development benefit greatly from this. A limited range of physical education activities has recently been introduced into the sixth form, but so far the take up has been low. There are appropriate links with business and the community to extend and enrich the business course. The school is preparing to work with three other sixth forms in local schools, to provide a wider range of courses from September 2002.

58. Some sixth form PSHE teaching is very good. But overall the PSHE programme of study is not sufficiently well co-ordinated and monitored. The sixth form does not meet statutory requirements in respect of religious education or a daily act of collective worship.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

Main School

59. The school has satisfactory procedures for child protection. Key staff have received relevant training and other staff have a sound understanding of the school's procedures. The senior head of year is the designated member of staff with responsibility for child protection and carries out her duties effectively. The school's provision for first aid is satisfactory.

60. There is good personal support for pupils. The school is a caring community where pupils feel they can turn to staff for help and guidance. Tutors know pupils well, and there is an ethos of trust between staff and pupils. Other adults working in the school, including support staff, administrative staff, the librarian and lunchtime supervisors, also make valuable contributions in caring for pupils. Members of the senior management team and heads of year work hard to support pupils who have particular difficulties.

61. The procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance are satisfactory. The school gives staff clear guidelines on the types of absence which will be regarded as unauthorised. Tutors and heads of year follow up unexplained absences. The school works closely with the educational welfare officer (EWO) to monitor and support pupils whose attendance is a cause for concern. The school rewards pupils for good attendance.

62. The school's procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are satisfactory. The ethos of good behaviour is reinforced in lessons, assemblies and by the example of adults working in the school. The referral system works well and ensures that key staff are kept informed of good or poor behaviour. The school has a sound discipline policy which includes details of rewards and sanctions. Pupils say that incidents of bullying are usually dealt with effectively.

63. The school's procedures for ensuring the health and safety of pupils are unsatisfactory because of weaknesses in monitoring. The issue of risk assessment, identified at the time of the last inspection, has not been fully addressed. The teacher who is responsible for health and safety has made some progress, but the school recognises that there are still practices and procedures which need to be improved. These include the execution of termly fire drills and ensuring that risk assessments are completed.

64. At Key Stage 4, procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are effective because well conducted moderation requirements ensure teachers are accurate in their judgements. But the school assessment policy has not been sufficiently updated in order to give clear direction to moderation procedures at Key Stage 3 for the foundation subjects. In most foundation subjects, overall teacher assessment of pupils' attainment is, as a consequence, inaccurate. As a result, it is not possible for departments to accurately follow the progress of pupils and analyse performance data (including by gender) as a way of improving progress. At this key stage the attainment grades which pupils receive for all their subjects each term are not based upon sufficiently clear assessment criteria and do not accurately reflect pupils' progress in the National Curriculum. At Key Stage 3, overall procedures for assessment are unsatisfactory.

65. The use of assessment information to influence curriculum planning and set targets for pupils is satisfactory at Key Stage 4. Assessment is very good in art where pupils receive clear guidance on their future work, including specific targets. Guidance is also good at this key stage in design and technology, English and science. Pupils also benefit from developing Records of Achievement of good quality, which effectively summarise achievements and indicate future targets. But the use of assessment guidance is unsatisfactory Key Stage 3. At this key stage, target setting for pupils is not well established. For example the information obtained on pupils' prior attainment in Year 7, is not used consistently across all appropriate subjects to inform planning. In most subjects at Key Stage 3, for example design and technology, mathematics, science and history, marking is not consistently effective in helping pupils to plan the next steps in learning. Marking in English at Key Stage 3 is not sufficiently well linked to the levels pupils have attained, to provide them with useful information on next steps.

66. At neither key stage are departments systematically using the attainment data which they do have, to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the teaching and its impact on different groups of pupils. Some recent developments are addressing this, however, for example the pilot programme in design and technology to evaluate information from the electronic data collection system.

67. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic progress are, overall, satisfactory. Based on pupils' prior attainment, targets are effectively monitored by form tutors and subject teachers at Key Stage 4, and action is taken to support pupils making insufficient progress. While form tutors provide good general support at Key Stage 3, this does not extend to the rigorous monitoring of progress against academic targets.

68. Good procedures are in place for monitoring the progress of pupils with special educational needs in meeting targets in their Individual Education Plans (IEPs). Parents are kept well informed of the outcome of any in school reviews and are involved in the annual reviews. IEPs are carefully written with appropriate targets and strategies, which are reviewed regularly. They are accessible to subject teachers. Parents and pupils are positively involved in the assessment process by commenting on progress.

Sixth form

69. The educational and personal support and guidance for sixth form students are satisfactory. Students are well cared for. They benefit from the good relationships that exist in the school community and are well supported by all staff in their work and leisure activities. Tutorial staff know students well; they spend considerable time and effort in ensuring that they

are happy and successful in their studies. Communication about students' needs flows effectively between tutors and teachers. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are also satisfactory, although this has not succeeded in preventing a current record of unsatisfactory attendance and this needs urgent attention. Day to day guidance provided for sixth form students by their tutors is good.

70. Procedures are in place for regularly monitoring and supporting students' academic progress and arrangements are satisfactory. In their subjects, through good marking and discussion with their teachers, students receive regular, detailed and accurate feedback on their progress and are set targets for improvement. But this is not backed up by a well planned programme of information, guidance and support. Before they enter the sixth form, guidance is adequate, but students do not receive regular and co-ordinated advice and guidance once they are in the sixth form, and this aspect of provision is unsatisfactory. There is, for example, no systematic induction programme into the sixth form and students are not clear what independent learning skills they possess and which they need to develop further. Although there has been incidental support in subject teaching, there has been no systematic programme of support for students in how to manage their learning. Careers education and guidance are also unsatisfactory, partly because they are managed entirely separately from careers education and guidance in the rest of the school; consequently provision is unsystematic and students do not have clear action plans based on interviews which are regularly reviewed.

71. Satisfactory procedures are in place to assess the work of students in the sixth form. Good marking and feedback are based upon accurate and rigorous moderation. The quality of marking is particularly good in English, design and technology, geography and art. These subjects were highlighted by students in discussion as providing very helpful guidance through marking and subsequent dialogue between teachers and students. In art for example, students spoke of the way in which "post it" stickers were attached to their sketchbooks, containing detailed lists of points for improvement and an agenda for discussion during the next phase of work. There is appropriate provision for communicating information to parents and carers.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

72. The parents' and carers' views of the school are very positive. The local community hold the school in high regard and there are many more applications than there are places. The parents feel that the school works closely with them and they value the way in which the staff are willing to discuss any concerns. They feel that their children are well taught and make good progress in the school.

73. The school has satisfactory links with its parents. The quality of information which the school provides to parents is satisfactory. The prospectus gives parents useful information about daily routines and the governors' annual report gives brief summaries of recent developments, although neither document contains all the statutory information required. The school sends parents a helpful calendar of school events for the whole academic year. It also provides parents, including those who live apart from their children, with satisfactory information about their children's progress. Not all annual reports contain clear messages about how pupils can improve their work however. Some reports are too vague and at times do not help parents to understand what pupils need to do to improve.

74. The impact of the parents' involvement in the work of the school is satisfactory. Parent governors are supportive of the school and the parent teacher association works hard to organise fund-raising and social events. The school has recently drawn up an appropriate home/school agreement and the vast majority of parents have signed the document.

75. The parents' contribution to their children's learning is satisfactory. Their attendance at parent consultation evenings is high. Parents help with the railway club and transport for sporting events. Parents also support their children with homework and sign the contact books conscientiously. There are good opportunities for parents of pupils with special educational

needs to meet with the co-ordinator and there is a very good level of parental involvement. Parents and students are positive about the sixth form, although a significant number of students feel that careers education is inadequate.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

76. The leadership and management of the headteacher, senior staff and governing body are unsatisfactory, although the commitment of the headteacher, staff and governors to improving the school is strong. The school's capacity to bring about necessary improvements is satisfactory, through the high commitment of all staff and the expertise of a strong team of subject leaders.

77. The headteacher provides visible and constant support for staff. His high profile around the school enables him to be well informed of day to day issues and he communicates very well with pupils and 6th form students. This helps to account for their generally good behaviour and positive attitudes to the school. The headteacher is also effective in maintaining good relationships with parents, who have high confidence in the school and in the headteacher. However, the lack of clear direction and insufficiently co-ordinated strategies to bring about school improvement, limit the effectiveness of the contribution that staff can make to school improvement.

78. The educational vision of the school is not sufficiently well developed. Although staff and pupils are motivated by the school motto "only my best is good enough," this aim is not complemented by a broader set of school aims. There is, for example, no clearly expressed vision for the curriculum and many pupils at Key Stage 4 do not study all the required subjects. Neither are the school aims sufficiently explicit about developing pupils' spiritual and cultural development.

79. Some individual members of the governing body have regular and very committed involvement with the school and they have provided support over a long period. However, the governing body is not effective in shaping the overall direction in which the school is moving. It is not effectively involved in the process of constructing and shaping the school development plan, not does it have systematic involvement in influencing and monitoring progress towards intended targets; neither has it reviewed with sufficient rigour the progress of the action plan since the last inspection. It has very little formal and systematic contact with the good work being carried out by the subject departments across the school. Minutes of governing body meetings, criticised for excessive brevity in the last inspection report, still do not provide a record of effective scrutiny of the work of the school. The knowledge of the governing body of the school's individual strengths and weaknesses is, as a consequence of these shortcomings, unsatisfactory.

80. The school development plan has articulated some of the important priorities for improvement, including literacy, ICT and the growth of the sixth form. But these priorities have not been driven forward systematically, nor have they been sufficiently clearly underpinned by financial planning which supports each target. This is because senior managers are not sufficiently clear about what is expected of them in implementing each target. As a result, there has been limited progress in a whole school approach to improving literacy and the use of ICT to support learning in different subjects.

81. Day to day financial administration is satisfactory and specific grants are appropriately used. Efficient office management provides monitoring information on the budget so that regular and timely financial information is made available to the headteacher and finance committee of the governing body. Recommendations from the most recent auditors' report have been addressed. The school does not, however, make sufficient use of technology to support its administration. Timetabling arrangements, for example, are not computerised and teachers do not have ready access to assessment data through the school's computer network. Provision for special needs is, however, well managed by the special needs co-ordinator, to

ensure that resources are used well, especially classroom assistants: their good training and skilful deployment benefit pupils' learning. In some respects the school has appropriately adopted the principles of best value, for example through obtaining a range of quotations in advance of securing contracts for work carried out. However, the principles of best value have not been sufficiently well planned for and systematically applied and overall this aspect of management is currently unsatisfactory.

82. The school monitors its performance in a number of ways. Identifying baseline scores at the beginning of Key Stage 4 has supported successful target setting to identify the proportion of pupils who will gain 5 or more A* to C grades at GCSE. The school has been successful in slightly exceeding its own target in two of the last three years. Senior managers have monitored the quality of teaching as part of the school's performance management arrangements. This process has made some contribution to improving teaching. It has not, however, extended to systematic scrutiny of pupils' work or the collection of evidence of strengths and weaknesses of teaching in the school; nor has it been used to identify and promote the best practice in teaching. Nor are subject leaders included in the process. Most subject leaders promote effective teaching in their departments, but teaching would be even more effective if the school's expectations for subject monitoring were clearly defined. Overall, current approaches to monitoring teaching are unsatisfactory.

83. Teachers are adequately supported through the school's strategy for performance management. Subject leaders are good at ensuring that their staff are kept up to date and they link effectively with the senior manager responsible for co-ordinating professional development across the school. Similarly, the arrangements for securing the effective professional development of staff, including the induction of three newly qualified teachers, are satisfactory. Valuable training opportunities are provided for all staff by the special needs department. In addition, a recent development day on improving the motivation and performance of boys has been helpful in providing strategies for improving boys' achievements.

84. The qualifications, experience and expertise of the staff are strengths in the school. Staff have a strong expertise in their subject and this has a positive impact on pupils' learning. The school has sufficient specialists in most subjects to ensure full coverage in all years, although there are currently insufficient staff to teach religious education to all pupils at Key Stage 4 and satisfy all option choices at Key Stage 4 in religious education and geography. The school is finding recruitment increasing difficult, but managed to ensure that eight out of the ten vacancies for the current academic year were filled by qualified specialist teachers. Staff work well together and new staff quickly feel part of the team. Technical assistance is effective, for example in resistant materials and science. The administrative staff and the librarian are welcoming and efficient.

85. The accommodation is generally good and allows the curriculum to be taught effectively. There have been improvements in music, drama and foreign modern languages since the last inspection. English is very well served by a new classroom block. The gymnasium is cramped and limits physical activities and the food room is not clean. The library is too small, especially for the demands of sixth formers. The range and quality of equipment and materials to support teaching is generally satisfactory. The school has addressed the shortages in design technology, information and communication technology (ICT) and religious education. The quality of books is generally satisfactory, but the range is often too small.

86. Progress in implementing the key points for action since the last inspection have been overall, unsatisfactory, although there have been some improvements. Religious education is now well taught at Key Stage 3 and pupils' learning is good. However, the subject is still not provided for most pupils at Key Stage 4. While there have been substantial improvements in the teaching of ICT as a separate subject, there has been limited progress in using ICT to

support learning in different subjects. Although form tutor time is now used satisfactorily in many classes, the activities provided in a number of classes are still not properly planned and effective. There are still some weaknesses in assessment and improvements in 6th form library provision have been insufficient.

87. The school's capacity to improve is now dependent on focussed leadership, harnessing the high commitment and expertise of staff, particularly the strong team of subject leaders, to bring about the necessary improvements that are needed. A succinct plan is required, with clear targets and time scales, to take full advantage of the strong potential for improvement.

What the school should do to improve further:

88. The headteacher, senior management team and governing body need to attend to the following:

- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - * developing focussed strategies for improving writing across the curriculum.
 - * developing focussed strategies for improving ICT across the curriculum.
 - * establishing and communicating clear educational aims to staff, pupils and parents.
 - * establishing strategies to ensure the governing body is fully engaged in shaping the future direction of the school, through close involvement with school development planning.
 - * refining the school development plan so that it spells out clear goals, timescales and accountabilities, as well as targeting financial resources to support priorities.
 - * ensuring that all necessary health and safety arrangements are in place.

- Develop further the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning by:
 - * identifying ways in which governors can be involved in monitoring provision.
 - * enabling middle managers to monitor their teams and share good practice.
 - * undertaking a regular and effective scrutiny of pupils' work.
 - * undertaking an analysis of best practice in teaching.

- Review and improve the curriculum throughout the school by:
 - * clarifying curricular aims in the school and defining strategies for achieving them.
 - * improving the way pupils are grouped for lessons as well as improving timetabling arrangements in some subjects.
 - * ensuring that all pupils study religious education, a modern foreign language, information and communications technology and design and technology at Key Stage 4.

- Improve the effectiveness of the school's systems of assessment of academic progress at Key Stage 3 by:
 - * implementing moderation arrangements to ensure accurate judgements are made on National Curriculum progress.
 - * using information effectively to set targets for pupils at Key Stage 3, through improved marking and through improved target setting by form tutors.

- Strengthen the provision of spiritual education by:
 - * planning opportunities within the curriculum for pupils to reflect on their own and other people's lives and beliefs.
 - * moving further towards meeting the statutory requirements for a daily collective act of worship.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

89. Day to day management is efficient and well organised. Overall strategic leadership and management are unsatisfactory, however, because responsibilities are not effectively defined and priorities are not driven forward and monitored. The process of guidance throughout students' time in the sixth form lacks coherence.

90. Management of key skills is underdeveloped. There has been no planned and co-ordinated approach to teaching the literacy, ICT and numeracy skills required for sixth form study; nor has there been effective planning for developing the skills required for independent learners. Professional development of staff, including performance management arrangements are satisfactory. Strategic use of resources, including specific grant and other funding is also satisfactory, and, although best value principles are not satisfactorily applied, the sixth form provides an adequate education for its students and gives satisfactory value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

91. The sixth form is adequate but has significant weaknesses which should be addressed. In order to improve further, the school should:

- implement a clear strategy for teaching the skills required for independent learning, including key skills.
- improve existing management structures in relation to the needs of the expanded sixth form, supported by a clear development plan, and consistent with clearly defined aims for the sixth form.
- improve the management of careers education and guidance in the school.
- ensure that statutory requirements are met in respect of teaching religious education and collective worship.
- improve attendance in the sixth form.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

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Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	124
	Sixth form	41
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		98

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 – 11							
Number	4	20	65	30	2	1	0
Percentage	3.2	16.1	52.4	25.8	1.6	0.8	0
Sixth form							
Number	3	8	18	12	0	0	0
Percentage	7.3	19.5	44	29	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	653	99
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	53	7

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	20	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	180	1

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	3

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	11
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	20

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.7
National comparative data	7.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.1
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	68	61	129

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	37	47	60
	Girls	47	35	45
	Total	84	82	105
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	72 (53)	63.6 (66)	81.4 (68)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	38 (4)	27 (37)	27 (27)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	36	42	41
	Girls	57	42	32
	Total	93	84	73
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	72 (62)	65 (66)	56.6 (54)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	31 (23)	20 (35)	27 (27)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	50	42	92

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	26	48	50
	Girls	21	38	42
	Total	47	86	92
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	51 (41)	93.5 (95)	100 (100)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6 (95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	33.9 (32)
	National	38.4 (38)

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	19	96
	National	N/A	94

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2000	7	4

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	12.7	7	10.4	4	0	4 (7.2)
National	17.8	18.6	18.2 (17.9)	2.6	2.9	2.9 (2.8)

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	19	96
	National	N/A	94.7

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	4
Chinese	0
White	751
Any other minority ethnic group	

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	43	1
Other minority ethnic groups		

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	40
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.9

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	21
Total aggregate hours worked per week	368

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	74.6
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	24.6
Key Stage 4	24

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	16
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	19.4

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

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	2,018,024.00
Total expenditure	2,005,247.00
Expenditure per pupil	2793.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	79,391.00
Balance carried forward to next year	92,168.00

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out
Number of questionnaires returned

756
189

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	39	53	5	3	0
My child is making good progress in school.	45	48	4	0	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	28	60	7	0	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	30	55	12	2	1
The teaching is good.	37	55	6	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	51	40	7	1	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	64	32	2	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	69	29	2	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	43	48	7	1	1
The school is well led and managed.	53	43	1	1	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	41	50	5	1	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	32	46	11	2	9

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths:

- Key Stage 3 and the GCSE results in 2001 were much improved on results in recent years
- Teaching is a strength and teachers have high expectations of their pupils.
- There is a new team of teachers with a strong commitment to raising standards
- A new and improved scheme of work reflects the diverse learning needs of pupils
- Teachers prepare conscientiously for lessons
- There is clear and purposeful leadership.

Areas for improvement:

- Improve aspects of writing as a key target for action across the curriculum.
- The provision of ICT in all year groups.
- Timetabling, to reduce the uneven distribution of lessons on the fortnightly timetable.
- Consistent approach to marking, the use and analysis of data to inform planning.

92. On entry to the school the attainment of most pupils in English is broadly average with a relatively small percentage of high attaining pupils. By the end of Year 9, their attainment is average overall. The standards reached over four years have varied from being above average to in line with, or well below the average expected nationally. Given their attainment on entry, the results show satisfactory achievement for most pupils. Over the same period of time, the average points score was below the national average and boy's results were lower than girls. However, boys are now doing better. The 2001 results at the end of Key Stage 3 were above the national average and above average for similar schools. These results represent a significant improvement to those of 2000.

93. In the 2000 GCSE English Language results, the proportion of pupils achieving grades A*-C equated with the national average and was above average compared to similar schools. English literature results were well below the national average and below average compared to similar schools. The 2000 English Language results were a significant improvement since the last inspection, with more pupils gaining the higher grades and boys' results being average. Although girls continue to outperform boys, their results are below the national average for girls. Overall English literature results have not improved as well as English results and continue to be below average, although there has been improvement in 2001. The 2001 results in English and English literature were higher than those in recent years, with 64 per cent A*-C in English and 51 percent in literature. Pupils currently in Year 11 are reaching, overall, average levels of attainment in English, sustaining the improvements of the previous two years.

94. Pupils' achievements by the end of Year 9 and Year 11 are satisfactory and the achievement of pupils with special needs is good. Under new leadership the team is effectively introducing changes to raise standards further. There is greater stability and clearer structure in the department and the improved results in 2001 testify to this. The projected and challenging targets reflect realistic expectations.

95. Speaking and listening skills are very good and pupils in all year groups have highly developed oral skills. They are articulate and speak confidently with poise and understanding. In all elements of the subject, oracy skills are their main strength. From the start of Year 7, pupils give clear explanations and draw on a wide vocabulary when expressing their viewpoints. By the end of Year 9, lower attaining pupils receiving support in lessons discuss their ideas thoroughly with support staff before committing them to paper. There is no

discernible difference between the contributions of boys and girls during oral work. In Years 10 and 11, pupils achieve above average standards in speaking and listening. Their contributions are often mature and thoughtful. Pupils demonstrate the communication skills necessary to work effectively in groups and to give precise responses.

96. Pupils make good progress in reading. They can talk engagingly about their reading as well as their choice of text and authors. Reading is an enjoyable class activity, as illustrated in a Year 7 lesson where pupils read Westall's, *The Wind Eye*. In this lesson, pupils of all abilities gave some perceptive responses when talking about the characters' motives. By Year 9, higher attaining pupils understand how to give detailed and thoughtful answers when completing comprehension exercises. They use quotations to support their answers and they can tease out the main points in texts. Average attaining pupils give sound responses but answers are not always in-depth. Overall, pupils understand and know how to make inferences as well as extract and represent information in their own words, as was demonstrated in their work on *Animal Farm*. By the end of Year 11, higher attaining and some middle attaining pupils read and interpret texts competently. They use background information on texts they are reading, such as *Macbeth* and Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* to understand the themes. Pupils with special educational needs understand the story line of literary texts and can place them within a particular time period, but they respond at a basic level. However, the higher and average attaining pupils do not always develop their work in depth, quotations are not fully embedded or language analysed, in order to achieve the higher GCSE grades in literature.

97. Overall, writing skills are satisfactory for higher attaining pupils. By the end of Year 9, these pupils have a greater sense of using grammatical features accurately, as seen in their extended book reviews and creative writing. They have a good understanding of using a range of punctuation marks to establish meaning. These high attaining pupils work competently when structuring extended writing. By the end of Year 11, the higher and some average attaining pupils organise essays satisfactorily. The lower attaining pupils with special educational needs understand and use the basic sentence structure correctly. They work effectively when they use a writing frame to organise their work. Writing skills are relatively weak for the lower and some average attaining pupils. This is because they are insecure in using a range of grammatical features accurately. Pupils use relevant materials when writing but the ideas are not clearly expressed. Spelling is also weak and this is a persistent feature in every year group. The process of writing is not routinely practised.

98. Teaching is good overall in all year groups with some very good and occasionally excellent features. It is rarely less than good. Teaching promotes good learning. Teachers have a good command of the subject and prepare lessons thoroughly, based on the well-planned units of work, which reflect the diverse needs of pupils. Planning is carefully organised so that pupils can recognise how they are achieving the set objectives. Teachers have clear expectations, which challenge pupils to think critically. For instance, in the excellent Year 9 lesson, pupils were expected to demonstrate good textual appreciation when analysing Jacob's *The Monkey's Paw*. In the best lessons, teachers lead by example, modelling work and giving clear examples to illuminate pupils' understanding of the work. This was best illustrated in the Year 10 lesson with high attaining pupils, where the teacher demonstrated how to critically review a media assignment on Tom Sawyer.

99. Teachers use questions effectively and prepare interesting resources to effectively engage their pupils. They give good quality support to all pupils and there is good provision for pupils with learning and behavioural difficulties. For instance, work reflects their needs and attractive and colourful in-depth worksheets are tactically used to motivate pupils. Support assistants give good quality guidance and encouragement to help pupils with learning. As a result, pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Behaviour is good in lessons and pupils display positive attitudes to their learning in English. They concentrate well in the 70 minutes lessons and apply themselves to their work.

100. Information and communication skills (ICT) are not well promoted in English and pupils make less progress than expected. ICT is mainly used with Year 10 and 11 pupils following the study skills course. Here there is very good use of ICT to support their work and it is used to increase pupils' skills to structure and present their work.

101. The units of work for Year 7-9 pupils have many strong features. The Key Stage 3 Strategy is included in the Year 7 schemes of work. Planning includes some extension activities but there is nothing for gifted and talented pupils, as they have not been identified. Timetabling arrangements for teaching literacy in Year 7 present teachers with a disjointed curriculum. Some classes, including those with lower attaining pupils, are timetabled for a double period lasting for two hours and ten minutes.

102. Gaps between subsequent lessons are too long. There are limited extra-curricular activities to extend pupils' cultural awareness and although there is some teaching of literature from other cultures, the curriculum in Years 7-9, does not sufficiently reflect a multicultural society.

103. Arrangements for assessing pupils' work are better in Years 10 and 11 than they are in Years 7-9. Coursework for the GCSE examinations are carefully marked, graded and moderated using the assessment criteria, but at Key Stage 3 there is not a published or rigorous approach to marking, assessing and recording pupils' work. Work and reports to parents are not always levelled and portfolios of work to exemplify standards are not in place. Marking has not improved since the last inspection and assessment data is not used rigorously enough to inform planning.

104. The department has made less than satisfactory progress in some areas of its work since the last inspection, for example the use of ICT. Standards have fluctuated year on year but there is good evidence to show that now they are improving. The weaknesses in writing remain and marking is still an area for improvement. Good units of work guide teachers on mixed attainment teaching and the deployment of teachers in Years 10 and 11 has improved. As there are no whole school arrangements for departmental monitoring, this aspect of the department's work is limited.

105. Under the leadership of the new head of department there is clear vision and direction for the department and teachers are well supported in their planning. There is high potential to improve further.

MATHEMATICS

Overall, the provision for mathematics is **good**.

Strengths:

- Improvement in attainment over time.
- Good quality of teaching.
- Management of pupils is very good.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good.
- Pupils' interest in learning and their concentration in lessons.
- Good team effort is being developed.

Areas for improvement:

- The arrangements for grouping pupils into classes in Key Stage 3.
- Greater use of information and communications technology.
- Numeracy development should be extended across the curriculum.
- Monitoring of pupils' performance.
- Monitoring and evaluation of teachers' work and taking effective action.

106. Standards in mathematics at the end of Year 9 are in line with national averages. In 2000, the percentage of pupils reaching Level 5 or above was almost the same as the national average, and the percentage of pupils reaching Level 6 or above was also in line with the national average. The percentage results in 2001 were very similar at Level 5, but were below national averages at Level 6. When judged on average points scores, pupils performed below the national average. Attainment has increased at about the same rate as the national average over the last three years. Results in mathematics have been below those in science over the last few years. One factor accounting for this disappointing performance is the way in which pupils are allocated to teaching groups in Years 7 to 9. Three lessons per fortnight are in mixed attainment groups and the other two lessons are held in groups which are set on levels of attainment. These changes in patterns of organisation lead to difficulties in pupils making steady progress in their learning. There are also some timetable problems, where classes have consecutive lessons of mathematics on the same day, followed by a long gap before the next lesson, when pupils have forgotten what they have learnt.

107. Results in GCSE examinations at grades A*-C were in line with the national average in 2000 and were well above average compared to similar schools. In 2000, girls performed below the national average and boys performed above the national average. Results at grades A*-G are slightly above national figures; in 2001, the pass rate at this level was 100 per cent. There has been a significant improvements in results since the time of the last inspection. Overall, pupils achieve satisfactorily in mathematics at both key stages.

108. When pupils join the school in Year 7, most have average mathematical skills, although there are very few higher attainers. The courses in Year 7 and Year 8 have been carefully structured to build on pupils' skills, and good planning has taken place to introduce new ideas and new methods of teaching, as recommended in the National Numeracy Strategy. Pupils' appreciation of mathematical processes is good. Pupils in Year 8 deal well with sequences of numbers; they construct tables efficiently and find general rules. Pupils handle algebra confidently; a low ability group in Year 8 successfully replaced letters by numbers when substituting into formulae. Extension work moves them on to an understanding of square numbers. Statistics is well covered: pupils in Year 7 constructed bar and pie charts, having collected data using tally marks. Pupils with special educational needs learn satisfactorily, but their learning, and the allocation of learning support assistants, is hindered by the organisation of the groups. Levels of achievement are being enhanced by the introduction of quick 'starter' sessions at the beginning of lessons. These sessions involve the whole class working together, to respond to lots of quick questions from the teacher to sharpen mental arithmetic.

109. At Key Stage 4, short 'starter' sessions are again used to good effect, and pupils' arithmetic and algebraic skills are well developed. Pupils in Year 11 have a good understanding of the simplification of algebraic expressions, although some pupils have not yet mastered the rules for dealing with indices. In a good lesson on statistics in Year 10, pupils learned to differentiate well between discrete and continuous variables and how to complete line graphs and histograms. Higher ability pupils in Year 11 study extension work on standard deviation; their ability to calculate accurately is good. They also show good understanding of a variety of mathematical topics when practising problems from past examination papers.

110. The quality of teaching in mathematics is usually good. All the lessons observed were satisfactory or better and three quarters of the lessons were good and sometimes very good. Teachers' knowledge and understanding are very good. The teaching of the basic skill of numeracy is good, and much thought and planning has been given to introducing new methods to stimulate pupils' learning. Teachers set high standards and pupils are expected to match them. There is a good drive in many lessons to push forward pupils' learning; interventions by teachers are appropriate and add to their pace. Teachers control pupils well, which leads to lessons in which pupils concentrate well and are keen to learn mathematics. Pupils are keen to demonstrate their mathematical knowledge by working at the front of classes on the board. However, ICT is not used sufficiently to help pupils learn well.

111. Teachers use time well, with most lessons starting promptly. Support staff for pupils with special educational needs are thinly spread, and there is a lack of continuity of help. Very good use is made of pupils' personal white boards. These are used very well by pupils who are keen to show what they know, and often strive to be the first to answer. Although pupils present their problems in a satisfactory way, they do not give sufficient emphasis to showing clearly how they solve problems. Marking is variable in quality and helpful comments are not consistently provided on pupils' work. Homework is set at the end of most lessons. Teachers can improve pupils' learning even more by giving summaries of what has been learnt at the end of each lesson. Teachers know pupils very well and show great care and patience in their classroom practice. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good. They are keen to learn mathematics and concentrate well in lessons. Behaviour is good. Pupils know the expectations of teachers and show very good respect in the lessons. They are committed to learning mathematics and show good levels of self discipline.

112. A numeracy policy for the whole school is not yet in place, but many initiatives, including some training, have been taken within the mathematics department. Pupils' numeracy skills seen in mathematics lessons are average, but are improving due to the teachers' awareness and changes in teaching techniques.

113. The recently appointed head of department is highly committed to raising standards and is already giving satisfactory leadership in the educational priorities necessary to bring about improvement. There are no whole school arrangements for departmental monitoring and as a result this aspect of the department's work is not well developed. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. With a strong team of teachers, the department serves pupils well and has a very high potential to improve further.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths:

- Pupils make very good progress in science and achieve very well;
- Attainment at both key stages is above average.

Weaknesses:

- ICT is not used well in science lessons
- The marking of pupils' work is inconsistent.
- Some resources do not match the needs of lower attaining pupils

114. Pupils enter the school with below average levels of attainment in science and there are few high attainers. During Key Stage 3 pupils achieve very well, including those pupils with special education needs. Test results at the end of Year 9 in 2001 at level 5 or better were above average compared to all schools. Key Stage 3 results have improved steadily over the last 4 years in line with national trends. However, teacher assessment in 2001 was 20 per cent below the test results. This indicates that procedure for assessing pupils' attainment are

unsatisfactory. The performance of girls has been below average in tests, while that of boys has been average. In lessons, however, girls achieved well. Currently the department does not monitor this aspect of its work sufficiently.

115. Overall, pupils currently in Year 9 reach above average standards. Teaching throughout the key stage efficiently reinforces and extends existing knowledge and understanding of life processes, materials, physical processes and scientific investigation. In a Year 9 lesson, for example, pupils demonstrated that they could put together their equipment and produce a table of results to show the temperature differences which take place when aluminium and water are heated separately by an electrical immersion heater. When asked, they were able to give a broad outline of what was happening but found predicting and evaluating their results difficult. Currently pupils have limited opportunities to practise the important skills of prediction and evaluation.

116. Pupils have a good knowledge of materials and chemicals and are able to carry out scientific investigations. For example in a Year 9 lesson on the preparation of salts pupils used Bunsen burners safely to evaporate the chemical solution. When questioned they could name the chemicals involved and higher attaining pupils could write the word "equation" for the reaction. Pupils' written work is generally of satisfactory quality and most read well enough to be able to use their textbooks effectively. Pupils' knowledge of scientific vocabulary is good and is effectively reinforced by wall displays in the laboratories.

117. At GCSE pupils achieve well in science, including those with special educational needs. All pupils take Double Science and in the 2000 GCSE results, A*-C grades were well above the national average and above average compared to similar schools. Attainment over the last four years has been above average and is rising. In 2001 boys did significantly better than girls. The department does not give sufficient attention to monitoring the relative performance of boys and girls at Key Stage 4. However, no significant under-performance of girls was observed in the inspection.

118. Throughout Key Stage 4 pupils' achievement in science is good. They make good progress, as shown by the results of their GCSE modular test results. As pupils move up the school they show greater confidence when carrying out practical investigations, when researching information from their books and when answering questions in class. Some aspects of numeracy are weak, for example pupils' ability to do two-step calculations.

119. Teaching is always at least satisfactory and in most lessons it is good, with elements of very good teaching. Teachers have made their laboratories attractive and interesting places in which to learn. The use of word banks and displays effectively reinforce pupils' literacy skills and act as a prompt for weaker pupils. Staff have a good working relationship with their pupils. Teachers have good knowledge of their subject which they use well when planning lessons and questioning pupils. As a result pupils knowledge is secure and they make good progress.

120. Teachers give clear instructions and share with pupils the plan for the lesson. They have high expectations and most lessons are planned with a good range of activities. This means that pupils are well motivated and contribute positively in these lessons. Lessons move at a good pace with a good sense of purpose, ensuring that the rate of learning is good. In the better lessons pupils are also made to think and questions stretch their knowledge of the subject. In these better lessons good use is made of sessions at the end of the lesson to summarise what has been learnt and to check understanding. Pupils respond well in these sessions, offering full answers to the questions put to them. But some learning material is inappropriate for the needs of lower attaining pupils, who find some of the written material too difficult to understand.

121. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly, but rarely explain in their comments what pupils need to do to improve. But they do use tests effectively, both during and at the end of units of work, in order to monitor pupils' progress. Pupils react very positively in their work and

generally want to succeed. Most show good levels of concentration and come to their lessons prepared to work. Key Stage 3 pupils are developing good practical skills. They work well together in groups and organise the sharing out of tasks. There is a good working atmosphere within the laboratory and pupils work safely.

122. In most respects teachers plan pupils' work well and follow an effective scheme of work consistently, although ICT is not used in science lessons and this is an unsatisfactory aspect of science teaching. At Key Stage 4, all pupils study for modular double science at GCSE. However only the top sets study the material required for the higher tier Examination. This arrangement limits some pupils' opportunity to gain higher grade passes, because these grades are only awarded on the higher tier examination papers.

123. In its day to day operation the department is well led. Clear delegation and effective daily administration contribute to the smooth running of the department. However, forward planning and evaluation are not well established. Some aspects of health and safety need attention. These include the need to audit the chemical store and dispose of unwanted chemicals. Text book resources are good, but general apparatus stocks are barely adequate.

124. One of the four main issues for improvement raised at the last inspection has been addressed through the elimination of poor behaviour in some lessons. However improvements in ICT, the provision of adequate support material for lower attaining pupils and improvement in pupils' marking have not been adequately addressed. Overall there has been insufficient improvement on these issues since the last inspection.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths:

- Good Teaching leads to good learning and achievement.
- Very good leadership and management in the subject contribute to high standards.
- The contribution of the subject to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education.

Areas for improvement:

- Enable pupils to use ICT so that they learn about its applications in art and design.
- Establish ways of assessing pupils when they start at school in Year 7.

125. Teachers' assessments in 2001 placed most pupils at the end of Year 9 at below average attainment when compared to national results. Inspection evidence, however, indicates that standards are above this, with most pupils at the expected level of attainment. In the year 2000, GCSE examination results were broadly in line with national averages and above average compared to similar schools. Results in 2001 were broadly similar to the previous year.

126. Pupils' achievement overall is good. Work seen during the inspection shows that, when they enter the school in Year 7, pupils are below average. By the end of Year 9 pupils have made good progress. This is because of the effectiveness of teachers' lesson planning and their good use of a range of teaching methods, so that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, learn well in lessons.

127. Teachers place good emphasis on the importance of direct observational study and on the acquisition of a wide range of skills and techniques. Thus, by the time pupils reach the end of Year 9, they have achieved well in their ability to draw accurately from observation and can paint, print, construct and model with greater understanding. Pupils also improve in their

capacity to write about and discuss art, craft and design from a variety of periods and cultures. This is because teachers require pupils to investigate art historical sources such as those from Asian and African art, as well as European art, and to record their findings in drawn and written form in their sketchbooks.

128. Pupils who study the GCSE course build well on their prior attainment. Those features of good teaching which have contributed to the good achievement in Years 7, 8 and 9 are equally apparent in Years 10 and 11. They enable pupils to extend their previous learning so that by the end of Year 11 they achieve well in a range of two and three-dimensional work. Good examples of this are the technically competent and imaginative paintings by Year 11 pupils of people, landscapes and still-life, which are beautifully displayed in the art rooms and in areas such as the assembly hall. Year 10 pupils also achieve well in their responses to a range of issues such as racism, the Holocaust and eating disorders. Pupils also learn to integrate their studies of a range of styles and ideas in art with their practical work. These examples provide evidence of pupils' good achievement in the spiritual, moral and cultural aspects of their studies.

129. The quality of teaching is consistently good. Teachers plan lessons so that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, can learn well. The work teachers set is explained clearly through the use of a variety of methods such as whole class teaching, demonstrations of processes and the use of visual examples. Teachers also support individual pupils well, by explaining and demonstrating processes further. They make good use of questions so that all pupils have opportunities to contribute answers.

130. Teachers also pace lessons well in order to review progress and to ensure that all pupils have understood the tasks. This provides pupils with the opportunity to reflect, to express opinions and to value each others' achievements; it contributes well to pupils' learning in the subject and is an improvement since the previous inspection. The subject's use of information and communication technology, however, is unsatisfactory: the statutory curriculum is not being met.. Teachers' effective management of lessons creates a purposeful working atmosphere and helps to engender enthusiastic attitudes and good relationships amongst the pupils. Teachers also make effective use of homework. Tasks are explained well so that pupils are aware of their relevance to their classwork.

131. The department has good assessment procedures and the marking of pupils' work is very good. Teachers use a simple but very effective system of notes to pupils which tell them clearly, and in detail, what they have achieved and what they must do in order to make further progress. There is also very good dialogue between teachers and pupils, which contributes well to pupils' understanding of the progress they are making. In Years 10 and 11 teachers make particularly good use of the GCSE assessment criteria in order to set individual targets for pupils.

132. Leadership and management in the subject are very good and have contributed well to the overall good improvement since the previous inspection. The relatively new head of department has been successful in creating a good sense of teamwork, an example of which is the support given to the non-specialist teacher.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Overall the quality of provision in design and technology is **satisfactory with some very good features**.

Strengths:

- Raising standards of attainment.
- Teachers' good knowledge of the subject.
- Well prepared and planned lessons.
- Good use of ICT in some lessons.
- Commitment to improvement.
- Good teamwork between staff and non teaching staff.

Areas for Improvement:

- Leadership and management of the subject.
- Curriculum organisation at Key Stage 3.
- Resourcing.

133. The standards achieved by pupils in Year 9 are below the national average but represent satisfactory achievement overall. Pupils currently in Year 9 are reaching the levels expected in the work they undertake, but the gaps in pupils' knowledge result in their attainment being below that of pupils of a similar age nationally. The organisation of the curriculum, together with some staffing difficulties, are contributory factors which have adversely affected standards recently. Over the last three years there has been a general trend of improvement in the design and technology non statutory National Curriculum assessments, though standards were still below those expected at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2001.

134. Standards were generally below the level expected nationally in food technology in Years 10 and 11, but higher standards were reflected in the majority of lessons in resistant materials and systems and control. In the majority of lessons pupils attained the standard expected for their age and in some lessons pupils attained higher standards. This represents satisfactory achievement for these pupils. In Key Stage 4, the examination results in 2000 in resistant materials were below the national average and results in food technology were close to the national average. In comparison with similar schools these results are close to the average in resistant materials and above in food. Over the last few years there has been a steady trend of improvement, especially at higher grades in resistant materials. In 2001, results improved in both subjects.

135. Girls' achievement was better than that of boys in the National Curriculum assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2001. Fewer girls take examinations at the end of Key Stage 4 than boys, but their performance relative to boys is higher. In lessons there was little marked difference. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well as a result of the good individual support from the teacher and Learning Support Assistants. At both key stages standards in numeracy are satisfactory but standards of presentation of written work, where there are weaknesses in pupils' spelling and use of grammar, could be improved.

136. Most pupils at Key Stage 3 have sound factual knowledge and understanding of the topics studied, and develop designing and making skills satisfactorily. They have for example, a satisfactory grasp of systems and control: they recognise how inputs and processes affect outputs. In food technology in Year 9, pupils understand that boiling softens dietary fibre and coagulates protein. As a result they can draw conclusions about the effect of prolonged heat on changes in the colour and texture of food. There are particular strengths in pupils' use of ICT for designing and control. However, pupils have little knowledge of structures and do not have the opportunity to work with textiles.

137. Higher attainers in Year 10 are on course to reach above average standards by the end of the key stage in resistant materials and systems and control. Pupils in a Year 10 lesson used the computer competently to design 3D shapes, rotate them and print in orthographic and isometric views. Higher and average attaining pupils in Year 11 studying food technology, showed satisfactory skills of analysis of problems associated with the development and manufacture of food products. However, the depth and quality of research is generally below average.

138. Pupils have positive attitudes towards design and technology. When the teaching is very good pupils sustain concentration, listen well and observe acutely. Pupils showed problem solving skills in a Year 10 lesson in which they developed a series of instructions to be transferred from the computer to a robot. They work very sensibly in close proximity, sharing equipment safely and courteously. They work particularly effectively together comparing ideas and helping each other in their learning. Pupils with special educational needs persevere.

139. Pupils' positive attitudes and satisfactory progress are directly linked to the good, and sometimes excellent teaching in the department. Teaching was good or better in all but one of the lessons in resistant materials and control technology seen during the inspection. In one of these lessons it was excellent and in two more it was very good. Pupils' learning benefits in particular from very clear presentations and explanation by the teacher and the expert practical support from both teachers and technicians who work very well together as a team. In food technology half of the teaching was unsatisfactory. Very weak management of behaviour and pupils' own poor attitudes and behaviour resulted in pupils learning very little in one Year 11 food technology lesson.

140. The very good teaching in resistant materials was characterised by expert subject knowledge. This was reflected in good use of resources and the quality of demonstration and support to pupils and in the consequent progress pupils made within the lesson. Clear instruction guides successful learning. Pupils' understanding is supported through effective individual guidance and tuition. This is particularly beneficial for the learning of lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs. The strongly structured learning supports lower attainers well, but at times limits opportunities for higher attaining pupils to take the initiative and achieve as well as they might.

141. The detailed constructive guidance to pupils for the improvement at their work at Key Stage 4 is a key factor in assisting them to raise standards. It is less rigorous and helpful at Key Stage 3, and in food technology at this key stage there is little evidence of regular and helpful marking. Insufficient use has been made in the past of the full range of performance data available to both track pupils' progress and set soundly based targets for improvement.

142. Due to the hard work and commitment of teachers in the department the subject has improved its status and image in the school. However, the lack of a coherent management structure for co-ordinating the aspects of resistant materials, systems and control and food technology is unsatisfactory. There is no overall leader to address weaknesses in the curriculum, monitor teaching and guide and support development in all aspects of the subject. The school does not meet statutory requirements at either key stage. Low curriculum time at Key Stage 3 results in inadequate coverage of the National Curriculum. The time gap between the study of different aspects of the subject during the year, means pupils forget what they have learnt. Procedures for the monitoring, evaluation and development planning are largely informal and need to be more systematic to support further development. The enthusiasm of the experienced and dedicated head of department of resistant materials and systems is a prime factor in improving the quality of provision and rising standards in these aspects. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory in most respects.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths:

- Attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 is good.
- Attainment by the age of Key Stage 4 is very good.
- Teaching and learning are generally good and very good in one quarter of lessons.
- Leadership and management of the department are very good.

Areas for development:

- Accurate measurement of attainment by the end of Key Stage 3
- Use of data about attainment on entry as a baseline for continuous assessment.
- Establish a numeracy policy for the department.
- Raise the attainment of pupils at GCSE on their written papers.

143. Attainment on entry to the school is average for most pupils with very few pupils with high prior attainment. Attainment of pupils currently in Year 9 is above the national average and those of higher prior attainment are already on course to achieve the higher levels. Attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 is therefore good.

144. Attainment at GCSE in 2000 is very good. It is well above the national average at A*-C and well above average compared to similar schools; over 90 per cent of pupils gain the national average grade of a D. The same high standard is maintained in 2001 and is consistent with results over a number of years. Boys have done much better than girls in exams and both boys and girls make better progress than in any other of their subjects. Those of low prior attainment attain well. However, marks gained on written papers at GCSE do not match the high standards of course work that are approved by the external moderator, particularly at the higher tier paper.

145. By the end of Year 9, pupils can remember facts well from lesson to lesson and are learning to use a variety of skills to solve problems and to answer questions. For example, Year 9 pupils working on earthquakes, remembered very well information they had gained from dramatic video clips, could compare and contrast earthquakes in Japan and the United States and begin to suggest ways in which earthquakes might be predicted and their effects managed. Girls and boys of all levels achieve well.

146. Attainment of pupils currently in Year 11 is above average. Their achievement is good and pupils make good progress across a well-organised examination course.. They accumulate a good body of their own case studies in their exercise books. Year 11 pupils responded well to a lesson taught to the whole group about the developing of iron mining in Brazil. Again, the very effective use of well-made video clips helped very good retention to the next lesson.

147. Teaching is good overall, and is very good in a quarter of lessons. Teachers are well-qualified, confident and enthusiastic geographers, whose very good subject knowledge is particularly seen in the quality of explanation to classes and individuals and in the speed of accurate response to questions. This allows pupils to grow confidently in knowledge, understanding and skills. Where explanation is best, teachers use very clear language and do not repeat themselves. This obliges pupils to listen and adds to the already fast pace of teaching and learning. The teaching of basic skills is mixed. There is no departmental plan for the development of the use of numeracy skills so that teachers' contribution to improved numeracy is limited. There is a developing plan for the teaching of literacy which is not yet fully implemented, but pupils' writing skills are effectively developed by their being expected to write in a variety of forms: for example, empathetically in describing the impact of an earthquake on people's thoughts and feelings.

148. Despite limited access to computers, the department delivers its statutory obligation to teach parts of its curriculum through the medium of information technology. All pupils practice using word processing, data processing and searching databases and the Internet through geography. Those pupils who do not have a computer at home are given priority use of those in the department and in the library, with good support from the librarian. Pupils learn to study independently and to think for themselves. They are asked to solve problems and to answer questions. This gives them access to the higher levels of the National Curriculum.

149. Expectations of pupils' work and behaviour are very high and pupils respond with attitudes and behaviour which are good and often very good. Pupils are mostly engaged in their work and time is well used but there are problems with the length of lessons and the structure of the school day: most seventy-minute lessons lose time because of the late arrival of some pupils and because there is a shortage of chairs in the geography building. Pupils work hard and many are flagging by the end of a fast lesson. Nevertheless pupils are sharp listeners who focus well. They always have their equipment and contact books and they organise these well with a variety of resources on their tables. They co-operate well in learning. All lessons have periods of a buzz of cheerful learning talk. There are also periods of intense silence as pupils think and work on their own. Here the pennies are often seen to drop. These periods are well used by teachers who do not talk over them.

150. Teachers support pupils well in their learning. Pupils who ask for support are often not told directly what to do but are skilfully guided by good questioning to find their own solution. Teachers give more support to those whose educational needs are special. Higher attaining pupils are given access to more difficult resources but their development is less well supported than those of lower prior attainment. Classroom assistants support the learning of geography well for pupils with special educational needs. A good programme of fieldwork supports the practice of skills. The strong model of extended homework is effective in allowing pupils to work at their own level and pace. Teachers' use of assessment to monitor progress and to set targets is under-developed. Marking is thorough but supportive comments do not necessarily show pupils how to improve their work.

151. The department is very well lead and managed. Problems are identified, targets set and solutions sought. The development plan however, is simply a list of targets and is not adequate. The sharing of successful ideas is effective but monitoring needs to be more structured.

HISTORY

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

Strengths:

- Carefully planned lessons are taught by staff who motivate pupils well.
- Pupils are taught specialist vocabulary.
- Lower attaining pupils make good progress.
- Good use made of field trips to exciting locations.
- The resources of the department are well managed.

Areas for improvement:

- Improve marking at Key Stage 3 to sharpen progress goals for pupils.
- Improve the monitoring of teaching to share best practice.
- Challenge higher attainers more.

152. Standards achieved by pupils by the end of Key Stage 3 have been very variable since 1998 but have consistently been below or very much below the national average. There were improved results 2001 but these were still below the national average.

153. Pupils currently in Year 9 reach slightly below the level of expectation. At the beginning of Year 7, pupils' overall attainment is below average. They make swift progress and the work seen showed a good understanding of time and the order of events. This skill was being put to good use by one group in developing and understanding the role played by the army in the growth of the Roman Empire. Work seen already reflected the care in presentation which the department expects from all pupils. Higher attaining pupils display diligence in all aspects of their work. This is particularly evident in project work, where good use has been made of visits to Dover by Year 7, a detailed study of Wrotham Church by Year 8 and a visit to the World War 1 battlefields near Ypres by Year 9. Pupils combine evidence from these visits into well-constructed project work.

154. Between 1998 and 2000, results in GCSE have fluctuated but have generally been below the national average. In 2000, the pass rate at A*-C was well below the national average and the average for similar schools. Results in 2001 showed a significant improvement, however. This improvement is sustained in the current Year 11, where pupils are on track to reach average standards in the subject by the end of the year. Key Stage 4 work builds on Year 9 progress and becomes more focused. For example in a Year 10 lesson, pupils studied evidence from York in Roman, Saxon, Viking and Norman times, and were enthusiastic when identifying the changes that had occurred. Higher attaining pupils identified links between different periods of firm government and stages of improvement in public health. Lower attaining pupils could recognise the links between living conditions and the spread of diseases.

155. Pupils at both key stages reach satisfactory levels of achievement. They are well supported in lessons and are encouraged to make valued contributions to class discussions. This they do with confidence. Lower attaining pupils are also well supported in classrooms and make good progress.

156. Lessons are carefully planned by teachers whose subject knowledge and interest enriches pupils' experience and hold pupils' attention for long periods. Good use is made of a range of colourful modern books that provide pupils with easily accessible information. However, there are few opportunities to select material from a range of sources. In consequence, pupils are not developing sufficiently skills in broadly based research. In Key Stage 3, the department provides very good broad coverage of the National Curriculum, but there are too few opportunities for them to develop more sophisticated skills. In consequence the levels of attainment reached by the end of Year 9, particularly the ability to engage in independent study, are lower than they could be.

157. Good classroom management in all years secures commitment and attentiveness from pupils. Homework is regularly set and this extends and consolidates knowledge. Careful attention is paid to the building and use of specialist vocabulary. Key words are well displayed in classrooms and are reinforced by homework, tests and marking. Pupils' work is well presented, although a wider range of writing could be developed in the subject.

158. Teaching would improve with more emphasis on developing skills of selection, explanation and evaluation. The time needed to do this may well require fewer areas to be studied in depth, but pupils who are able to take greater responsibility for their own learning, are more likely to obtain higher grades at GCSE.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The provision for information and communication technology (ICT) is satisfactory in lessons where it is taught as a separate subject. But it is unsatisfactory in many subjects of the curriculum.

Strengths:

- Core ICT lessons are taught at good pace.
- ICT work in geography, design and technology, religious studies and French.

Weaknesses:

- ICT is under developed in many subjects at both key stages.
- There are missed opportunities to use open access computers by some subjects.
- Statutory requirements for ICT at Key Stage 4 are not met for most pupils.
- Opportunities for pupils to reach the higher levels of attainment.

159. Standards of attainment at Key Stage 3 are below the national expectation. All pupils study a separate course in ICT at this key stage. Observation of these separate ICT lessons and scrutiny of work indicate that most pupils in Year 9 achieve well, but the lack of systematic provision for ICT in subject teaching, means that this learning is not consolidated and therefore pupils are not on track to reach the expected level.

160. There are no Year 2000 ICT results for the end of Key Stage 4, against which to compare results nationally. Results in 2001, unconfirmed by national comparisons, were above the national average for 2000 at A* to C. Pupils currently following the GCSE course in Year 11 are, overall, reaching the national expectation. In Year 10 pupils are now taught through an intermediate GNVQ course. Pupils in Year 10 are on track to reaching the average level. Their achievement is satisfactory. For example in projects they combine data, images and text from different software. They also successfully use industry standard software programmes such as word processing, data bases, spreadsheets and desktop publishing to help them learn.

161. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are good. In both key stages they work hard in lessons. Relationships between teachers and pupils are positive. Pupils listen carefully and settle down quickly to work. Pupils use computers enthusiastically, as for example when they use them independently in the library. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is good; some use a specialised structured programme to support and extend basic skills.

162. The quality of teaching in separate lessons of ICT is satisfactory at both key stages. However teaching could be improved by better lesson planning, in which the lesson is carefully broken up into distinct parts, improved teacher assessment and more support for higher attaining pupils. Where teaching is good, as in many Year 7 and 8 lessons, a good pace is set and maintained in order to challenge pupils to want to reach the higher levels.

163. Teachers' long term planning is improving through the use of commercial schemes and this is contributing to more effective learning. The National Curriculum programme of study is covered through the ICT course in Key Stage 3, although without further planning, pupils cannot be extended to the higher levels 6 and 7. Pupils' learning in ICT is not consolidated across most subjects however. In Key Stage 4 statutory requirements are not met in ICT. Only a few pupils are formally assessed in the subject and no co-ordinated programme of study in ICT is provided across the curriculum.

164. The use and application of computers across the curriculum in both key stages is unsatisfactory. The school has made slow progress in the development of ICT, a key issue from the last inspection. Computers are, however, used reasonably well in French, religious education, geography and design and technology. In french pupils communicate with pupils in France in order to develop relevant language skills. In geography, pupils research other

countries and in design and technology pupils review project details and ideas on an intranet facility. Good access is also assured in geography, where pupils without computers at home are given priority access in school. History covers statutory requirements but art and design, music, mathematics, science and English do not.

165. The leadership of ICT as a separate subject is satisfactory but co-ordination and monitoring across the curriculum is unsatisfactory. New staff training is gradually being introduced. The technician works very hard to ensure that the school's computer network is serviceable, although this has been a difficult technical challenge at times. The quality of learning resources ranges from very good to below average. Overall it is satisfactory. The ratio of modern computers to pupils is satisfactory at 1:6, which is slightly better than the national average. Greater use could be made of computers at lunchtime clubs, thus extending the access already available. Effective textbooks are used well to support the use of software.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Strengths:

- Teaching of French at both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 is good.
- Pupils achieve well and attainment is close to national expectations, with abler pupils reaching above average standards in listening skills.
- Pupils have a positive attitude to their studies and respond well to teachers' high expectations. They make good progress.
- There is strong leadership of a department of well qualified teachers.

Areas for improvement:

- Inadequate provision of a foreign language at Key Stage 4.
- Majority of pupils lack sufficient confidence in spoken French.
- No formal monitoring of teaching and learning by head of department.

166. At Key Stage 3, assessment by teachers of pupils at the end of Year 9 indicates that attainment is close to national expectations and this is reflected in similar levels of attainment observed in lessons, though in top sets in Year 9 standards are often above average. Listening skills are well developed and there is evidence that pupils have a sound grasp of tenses by the end of the key stage and that abler pupils use extended language in speaking and writing. Pronunciation is usually good.

167. Recent results at GCSE have shown an improvement since the last inspection and results at grades A*-C are above the national average for all and for similar schools, although this is based on a small number of mixed ability entrants.

168. At Key Stage 4, pupils' levels of attainment also reflect the national average, with strengths in listening and reading comprehension. Spoken language is weaker in that pupils rarely initiate French without prompting. Pupils do, however, have a good knowledge of grammar.

169. At both key stages achievement is good. Abler pupils are developing the confidence to broaden their repertoire in written and spoken language. Most pupils write accurately and with good attention to correct spelling. Pupils' attitudes to their studies are usually very positive and in most cases attentiveness and commitment to learning are very high. Pupils collaborate well and effectively in paired and group activities, respond well to questioning but are occasionally too passive and reliant on prompts from their teachers. In most cases behaviour is excellent but a small minority of pupils in Key Stage 3 have low levels of concentration leading to distracting behaviour which impedes learning.

170. Teaching of French is good overall and there is no unsatisfactory teaching. Over a third of teaching observed was very good and sometimes excellent. All teachers have established strong and positive relationships with their pupils and the pace of lessons is almost always brisk, with time well used. Lessons are well planned and teachers use an appropriate range of audio-visual resources. In the best lessons teachers have high expectations of their pupils and pupils respond accordingly by using extended language. They make very good progress in knowledge and skills. In an outstanding Year 9 lesson pupils worked at a brisk pace, had no difficulty in meeting the demands of a lesson conducted solely in French and coped very well with recorded material containing fairly complex language. Where teaching and learning are only satisfactory, there is some unnecessary use of English by the teacher and often limited commitment by the pupils to their learning, resulting in hesitant progress and some non-completion of tasks. All teachers explain the purpose of the lessons to their pupils and provide regular feedback to them and there is widespread use of appropriate praise.

171. The present provision of French at Key Stage 4 does not meet the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum, since the large percentage of pupils not studying a foreign language have not been formally disapplied from study of language. Additionally, the present option system reduces the opportunity for pupils to continue study of French into Key Stage 4. There are, however, opportunities for pupils to undertake visits to France and the department is actively working to re-establish partnerships with French schools for the purpose of correspondence and exchange links.

172. The department is well managed and the head of department is well organised and provides strong leadership to her colleagues. There is a comprehensive and practical scheme of work which meets the requirements of the national curriculum and the GCSE syllabus. The head of department does not, however, conduct formal monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning, but there are good systems for analysing pupils' progress and identifying areas of weakness.

MUSIC

The quality of teaching is **satisfactory**

Strengths:

- Pupils work with interest and commitment.
- Teaching is very methodical, securing a climate in which pupils learn well.
- Pupils show an active interest in the extra opportunities offered by the department.

Areas for improvement:

- Results at GCSE.
- Integration and application of information and communication technology into the work of the department.
- Assessment and reporting procedures and schemes of work do not yet reflect the requirements of recent National Curriculum revisions.

173. Teachers' assessments in 2001 show that pupils' standards in music at the end of Year 9 are a little above the national average. Standards in work seen in Year 9 during the inspection are in line with those expected nationally. Pupils reach satisfactory levels of achievement and pupils with special educational needs achieve well. Pupils work mostly on electronic keyboards, learning to play them with appropriate technique in each hand, and developing a good understanding of the musical facilities which they offer for composing. For example, in a Year 8 lesson pupils played the melody and bass, hands together, of "Fuer Elise" and in a Year 9 lesson they co-ordinated their own riffs to chosen rhythmic accompaniments in various tempi.

They listen well to music of different styles, making musically intelligent observations and are able to relate what they hear to the correct musical vocabulary. They work constructively and responsibly in groups to develop compositions. They participate in class singing, but this is weak. However, Year 9 pupils having individual tuition are highly motivated, confident and technically secure.

174. In 2000 the proportion of pupils achieving A*-C grades in music at GCSE was below the national average for all schools but equated with the average for similar schools. All candidates achieved grade G results or higher, which is above the national average. The results for 2001 were significantly lower than for 2000.

175. In Year 11, standards are in line with the expectation nationally, indicating improvement from previous years and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Pupils are able to mix together simple structural elements (melody, riff, sound effects) using the memory facilities of keyboards. However, many are less successful in refining their compositions to incorporate co-ordinated rhythm or harmonic patterns and extending them through well-gauged contrast and repetition. There is insufficient use of computer-based information and communications technology to develop compositions and to support the prescribed areas of study.

176. Teaching and the quality of learning that it promotes are good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Teachers have appropriate subject knowledge and teach lessons with confidence. The teaching, especially for 11 to 14 year-olds, emphasises each small step in the learning process very carefully and this encourages the pupils to be well-focused in performance and listening work. Both teachers and pupils have high expectations of what can be achieved. Pupils assimilate new skills and knowledge well and respect their own and others' achievements. Listening material is well selected, with a good blend of popular, classical, African, Indian and Chinese styles and this, together with very skilled questioning techniques, contributes to pupils' cultural awareness. In a Year 9 class on riffs, for example, systematic questioning of the musical processes in a popular Michael Jackson song, led pupils to make some quite sophisticated comments in discussion.

177. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are good. They come willingly and punctually to lessons, organise themselves well during lessons and take care of the instruments and facilities available to them. But in Years 10 and 11 the teaching does not adequately identify ways in which pupils can learn from each other. By not having performance and discussion of work in progress at the end of lessons, pupils are less aware of their peers' standards and have little opportunity to learn from their experiences.

178. Teaching makes no use of computer technology. The monitoring and assessment of pupils' work is inconsistent, with little reference to National Curriculum levels. High attainers are not formally identified for more challenging work. Pupils with special educational needs are given good support with the assistance of learning support staff. Homework is generally effective in extending pupils' learning. The six visiting teachers give well organised and good lessons in guitar, keyboard, piano, singing, violin and woodwind to 40 pupils. Although the curriculum for Years 7 to 9 is appropriate, the schemes of work are not based on the current version of the National Curriculum and require urgent revision, reviewing in particular the provision for information and communication technology and singing.

179. Despite these shortcomings, the leadership of the department is good. Improved line management links with the senior management team and governors would ensure greater accountability and better communication. Overall, the subject has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection: standards have risen in Years 7 to 9; accommodation is now adequate; pupil numbers opting for GCSE continue to rise. To secure further improvement, the department should concentrate on raising standards at GCSE, ensure that pupils have access to the learning opportunities in music offered by information and communication technology and fully ensure that all statutory requirements of the National Curriculum are implemented.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths:

- The high levels of participation and involvement of all pupils in lessons.
- Aspects of teaching.
- The day to day organisation and management of the department.

Areas for development:

- Evaluation of pupils' attainment to enable focussed improvement.
- Develop the assessment process to become a more formative system.
- Greater use of peer evaluation in lessons.
- Provide a more consistent structure of grouping of pupils.

180. Standards at the end of Year 9 are average when compared with national standards. By the end of Year 9, pupils understand the reason for a warm up and can play a range of small and full games effectively, taking appropriate notice of rules and safety aspects. Boys show slightly better levels of ball control and understanding of positional play than girls. In gymnastics and dance, both boys and girls have a good spatial awareness and are involved in planning activities. In dance, pupils develop a good sense of timing; their weakness is in maintaining appropriate body tension in performance. There are relatively few opportunities for pupils to plan in games lessons and peer evaluation within activities is underdeveloped. Pupils do not use peer support spontaneously. Overall, pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress and achievement is satisfactory at both key stages.

181. By the end of Year 11, pupils reach the national expectation. They can use more advanced tactics and apply them in games situations, especially in basketball and football. In badminton pupils can maintain a rally and when required they are able to score correctly. In aerobics pupils plan their own routines. In the fitness programme, although pupils understand the general role of the different pieces of equipment they do not understand their specific use. The GCSE course is new and a satisfactory start has been made.

182. There is no significant difference at either key stage in the achievement of different groups of pupils. Pupils use technical terminology within lessons well and oral skills are satisfactory, although listening skills of pupils are weaker. Currently the use of ICT within the department is minimal due to a lack of facilities. Attitudes to physical education are generally good; pupils arrive ready to participate and bring appropriate kit for lessons. Levels of participation are high and those not actively involved in a physical activity also change into kit to take on other roles within the lesson. In games pupils show respect for rules and work well in pairs and groups. For example, during a basketball lesson boys respected the efforts of the girls even though their skills tended to be less well developed.

183. The teaching of physical education is satisfactory overall and no unsatisfactory teaching was observed. Teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Teaching strengths include good subject knowledge and the good management of pupils. Teachers' enthusiasm adds interest and vitality to the lessons. The well planned lessons provide work suitable for pupils of all abilities. Weaker aspects in teaching are the missed opportunities of using peer evaluation and at times, the rather slow start to the lessons, due to the time taken changing. GCSE course work is marked carefully, although specific points and targets by which the work may be improved to reach the next level are not included and marking is not carried out in relation to the relevant GCSE grades.

184. Assessment is satisfactory. National Curriculum levels for assessment are shared with pupils in general terms and at the end of each unit of activity when an assessment is made. Further development of the assessment process is required, so that pupils understand fully their level and what they need to do in order to improve their work to the next level. The department has not been tracking end of Year 9 assessments or analysing the data separately by gender

performance and thus it is unable to measure the way in which attainment levels are changing over a number of years.

185. The curriculum fulfils the National Curriculum requirements, although grouping arrangements are unsatisfactory where teachers share a class and pupils become unclear about where they have got to in their learning. Some dance and gymnastics lessons are only held once every two weeks so that work is sometimes forgotten between lessons. The choice options offered to Year 11 provide a good range of activities for pupils to enhance their experience. The extra curricular provision in physical education is good: a range of activities is on offer during the week and they are open to all pupils. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. All pupils are included in lessons and their individual needs are well catered for.

186. Accommodation for physical education is just satisfactory. Although it does not prevent the teaching of the National Curriculum, it does hinder progress. The height of the ceiling in the gymnasium means that in badminton, basketball and volleyball, the flight of the ball or shuttlecock is impeded and in trampolining care has to be taken to prevent pupils jumping too high. The unsatisfactory maintenance of the fields and length of the grass adversely affects some games, for example hockey. The leadership of the department overall is satisfactory. There is good day-to-day management but areas specifically targeted to raising attainment levels are not monitored closely. New teachers have been effectively monitored, but because arrangements at whole school level are not in place, there is no permanent policy for monitoring teaching.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in religious education is **unsatisfactory**. Teaching is good at Key Stage 3, but most pupils do not study the subject at Key Stage 4.

Strengths:

- Good quality of teaching at Key Stage 3.
- Good teaching of writing at Key Stage 3.

Weaknesses:

- Most pupils do not study religious education at Key Stage 4.

187. Religious education teaching is emerging from a period of significant disruption and during the school year 1999 – 2000 there was no specialist teacher for the subject. The school started a GCSE option course this year for the first time. As a result, the school has very limited information about the standards reached by pupils in religious education over time and no reliable judgement about the trend in pupils' attainments can be made.

188. Based on the work seen and the results of pupils' end-of-unit tests, by the end of Year 9, pupils' attainments in religious education are in line with the expectations of the Kent Agreed Syllabus. Pupils have a good knowledge of key figures in the main world faiths, such as Martin Luther King, Mother Theresa and Mahatma Gandhi, and can link their beliefs and actions. They can discuss some challenging concepts, such as reincarnation and the importance of meditation. Their knowledge and understanding of the different religious beliefs and practices is stronger than their ability to question and discuss issues of religious meaning and purpose. They show a good grasp, for instance, of the culture and traditions associated with Hinduism, but are less secure in tackling the question of whether or not it is a monotheistic faith.

189. Pupils have had a very wide range of experiences of religious education in primary school and many pupils in Year 7 cannot recall much of what they have previously been taught. Against this background they make good progress in Years 7 and 8 in learning about different ideas of the nature of God, and acquire key facts about the major faiths of Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam. They use stories from the Bible well, to develop their knowledge and understanding of Christianity, and they learn about the different places of worship used by different faiths. Pupils with special educational needs show good standards of knowledge and understanding, although their extended writing is weaker than that of pupils generally.

190. Those pupils who have chosen to study GCSE religious education this year show a good grasp of the attitudes taken by different faiths to moral dilemmas such as abortion. They can discuss arguments for the existence of life after death and produce some very good extended writing, as, for instance, in their project work on influential Christians such as Mother Theresa and Martin Luther King. They have only studied religious education since September, so no judgement about the standards they attain by the age of 16 is yet possible.

191. Religious education teaching is good overall, and in some lessons it is very good. Lessons are well planned, with teaching activities such as guided reflection and group discussion appropriately matched both to the topics studied and the interests and aptitudes of pupils. In a particularly effective lesson on the significance of 'near-death' experiences, for instance, the teacher used video in a carefully structured way to make a strong impact on pupils' thinking. Teachers set high standards, in both work and behaviour and manage classes very effectively to keep pupils firmly on task.

192. Literacy skills are developed through the prominent display of key vocabulary and through attention to extended writing skills. Pupils have used a survey of beliefs across the school to produce tally and bar charts. Their interpretation of the charts makes a valuable contribution to their numeracy skills. Good examples were seen of pupils' work which had been word-processed to high standards, and illustrated with pictures taken from the Internet. Homework is used effectively to extend work done in class and to encourage pupils to research new topics. Simplified worksheets are used to help pupils with learning difficulties in Year 7 to record information from a video on Hindu culture in Britain. Assessment is not yet used systematically to help pupils to set targets for their own learning and the school has yet to establish a reliable system for assessing their prior knowledge.

193. Pupils demonstrate very good attitudes to learning in religious education. They show keen interest in and enthusiasm for the subject, and the uptake of the GCSE option in Year 10 exceeded the school's capacity to provide sufficient teachers for the subject. They work with sustained effort, and offer and share their ideas and opinions on religious topics such as abortion with sensitivity and mutual respect. Their behaviour in lessons is very good and they respond to any intervention from teachers promptly and with respect. This was particularly marked in the lessons on Buddhist attitudes to contemplation, where pupils were able to reflect and work in silence across a whole lesson. Their willingness and ability to learn purposefully contribute powerfully to the good progress that they make.

194. The subject is ably led by a very committed and enthusiastic head of department. The school is committed to developing the subject at Key Stage 4 and recognises the important contribution that religious education can make to pupils' spiritual and moral development and to the broader life of the school.

Drama

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

Strengths:

- Good teaching with innovative ideas
- Pupils' positive attitudes to the subject

Areas for improvement:

- More pupils to achieve the highest grades at GCSE

195. By the time pupils reach the end of Year 9 they are, overall, reaching the national expectation and their achievement is good. Pupils can improvise and perform well by this stage. They can, for example, use questions to dramatise dialogue, as they did in a very successful Year 8 lesson where they learnt how to use the professional techniques of Forum Theatre.

196. In 2000 attainment in GCSE for the small group taking the exam was in line with the national average A* to C grades and above average compared to similar schools. This improved in 2001. There were no A grades however in either of the years. Overall, there has been a trend of improvement from below average results in 1998. By the end of Key Stage 4 pupils currently in Year 11 are reaching standards which are in line with the national expectation and overall achievement is satisfactory.

197. Pupils in Year 11 can prepare and present their work well, with a particularly good understanding of how to express character through drama. Pupils have good evaluation skills; most can analyse their work well and identify ways of improving performance. They can also write well about their performance, as they did, for example, as part of coursework for GCSE on *The Tempest*, where they were able to comment intelligently on how a difficult part of the text could be staged. Limitations in written coursework have in the past accounted for the lack of A grades, but there are indications in current coursework that the department is successful in improving this aspect of its work. Another strength is pupils' capacity to use tone of voice and gesture to express character. In a successful Year 10 lesson, for example, pupils were using short improvisations to illustrate the different characters in the play *Billy Liar*.

198. Teaching is good. Teachers have very good knowledge of the subject and often inspire pupils with their own enthusiasm. Pupils respond with energy and commitment. Teachers also manage the class well, with a good variety of well chosen activities developed with pace. Paired work is particularly well used for pupils to try out new techniques before adopting them in larger set pieces. Teachers get pupils to think hard by asking them demanding questions which often promote good discussion with lots of pupils offering ideas. The skill of evaluation is well taught and this is assisted by informative marking which sets targets and asks thought provoking questions. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are good. They co-operate together well by discussing and planning work together. They are highly committed to achieving their best and improving their performance.

199. The department is well managed. A detailed handbook sets out the expectations in all aspects of policy with a good scheme of work. Written plans for lessons are detailed and help to make sure pupils progress well from term to term. The absence of whole school policies on monitoring and evaluation limit the effectiveness of current approaches to monitoring.

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

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

The table below show entry and performance information for courses completed in 2000.

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art	4	100	95.8	75	44.1	8.5	6.4
Chemistry	1	0	89.5	0	42.4	0	5.8
Design & Technology	1	100	90.5	100	28.9	10	5.3
English Literature	7	86	95.6	0	36.4	2.9	5.9
Geography	3	67	92.3	33	37.5	4	5.7
Mathematics	2	50	88.7	0	43.0	3	5.9
History	2	100	88.9	0	34.4	2	5.4
Sociology	4	75	87.7	50	36.8	4.5	5.4

Intermediate vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		Average point distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Business Studies	19	96	94.7	29	41	15	10.78

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The focus was upon mathematics A/As level courses and the A/AS level course in science.

Mathematics

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

Strengths:

- Teachers' knowledge and understanding, planning and management of students.
- Students' attitudes to learning mathematics, especially in Year 12.
- Qualifications of teachers and match of teachers to the curriculum.
- Development of good relationships with students.

Areas for improvement:

- The regularity of marking and addition of helpful comments to the students' work.
- Encouraging students to make extended oral contributions in lessons.
- Teachers should intervene more in lessons to increase the pace of learning.
- Students' use of ICT to enhance teaching and learning
- Encourage students to become better independent learners.

- Diagnosis of students' individual learning needs.

200. Results in A level over the past few years have been well below the national average. Only small numbers of students have been entered for A level examinations and this makes comparisons with national data unreliable. However, no students have managed to achieve the higher A/B grades at all over the last four years. The percentage of passes at grades A/E has also been low, except in 1999. Even then, the average points score was well below the national average. The relative performance indicator shows that mathematics has performed below other subjects in the school. The results in 2001 were unsatisfactory with only one student out of four obtaining a pass.

201. Results in the AS level course at the end of Year 12 in 2001 were also well below expected levels. One student out of six managed a pass at grade D. In the past, some students have been allocated to the mathematics department to study A level without full consultation about their abilities in mathematics. This process has now changed, and students are only accepted onto the AS level course in Year 12 if they have achieved a pass at grades A/B on the higher tier at GCSE.

202. Attainment in Year 13 is below the expected level nationally. In their studies of statistics, students understand how to calculate confidence intervals. When written work is set, students make satisfactory progress through the exercise, showing that they understand the processes. In pure mathematics, students differentiate complex functions with satisfactory confidence. They use scientific calculators sensibly. In Year 12, students show good understanding of the use of tree diagrams in their studies of probability. Given various conditions, students calculate probabilities and confidence in the processes involved improves with practice on examples. Students calculate the mean and variance of distributions and show good understanding in transferring their knowledge to a variety of problems

203. The evidence of work in students' folders shows satisfactory achievement. Good techniques are seen in handling algebraic procedures. Some useful cubic graphs have been drawn, but a few graphs have headings missing. Many examples on trigonometrical addition formulae have been completed. Students in Year 12 solve quadratic equations by using the formula; they show a good appreciation of when roots do not exist. Harder examples on factorisation lead to extension work. The marking of students' work is insufficient; it is not completed regularly enough and does not contain enough detailed comments to enable students to understand what they must do to improve.

204. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Teachers have good subject knowledge and show confidence in the way in which they explain problems. When students require help with examples, teachers immediately and accurately explain the answers to their questions. Teachers plan work satisfactorily, but do not provide students with details of the course to be studied. Teachers have satisfactory methods of presenting new ideas, but the level of challenge in lessons is not high enough. They do not always intervene sufficiently in lessons and pace is sometimes too slow.

205. Teaching methods are largely teacher directed. Lessons consist of recaps of previous work followed by an explanation of new concepts. Teachers explain worked examples well and students then practise using exercises from the textbook. But students have few opportunities to become independent learners and are at times too dependent on their teachers. Some limited longer term assignments are set, to promote independence in learning and these could helpfully be extended. Mathematical vocabulary is well used by teachers and explanations are generally clear and pitched at the correct pace. Students concentrate hard in lessons; they pay very good attention to their teachers and are keen to make progress in their mathematical learning.

206. Leadership and management of the sixth form courses are satisfactory. More emphasis should now be given to the procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress,

including the diagnosis of and provision for individual learning needs. In the future, analysis of examination results should take place to include value-added calculations.

SCIENCE

207. The focus was on the A/AS science courses. Prior to September 2000 the school offered both biology and chemistry courses at 'A' Level with limited success. Following the national changes in post 16 education, the school took the opportunity to move to teaching single science at both AS and 'A' Level.

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

Strengths

- The new courses are more suited to the needs of current students
- Teaching is good and students are well supported
- Relationships in class are very good and students are working hard to succeed.

Areas for improvement

- Students need to use ICT more as an integral part of their course
- Students should be taught to improve their capacity to work independently
- The quality of learning resources is unsatisfactory

208. In July 1999 four students took the A level examination in both biology and chemistry. Three gained pass grades in biology and two in chemistry. In 2000 only chemistry was taught at 'A' Level and only one candidate took the final examination and was ungraded. These were unsatisfactory results. Although not all students did well in the AS level science exams in 2001, this course is generally well matched to the needs of students currently in Year 12.

209. Students in Year 12 are reaching average standards for the AS level course. They are well supported by staff and are achieving satisfactorily. In a very short time they have adjusted to a major change in learning styles. Significant demands are made on their capacity to work independently. Students find this aspect of the course challenging and they have not so far received sufficient help in mastering the necessary skills for independent research.

211. During the inspection, Year 12 students were observed investigating, as part of their coursework, the environmental factors affecting photosynthesis. They had planned their work and ordered the appropriate equipment. As the week progressed they improved their strategies and by the end most had achieved at least 5 readings related to their particular investigation. Most had studied the changes due to light levels, whilst others had focussed on the effect of the carbon dioxide concentration. All had their own ideas about the method to be used. When questioned on the second occasion, earlier practical problems related to their method had largely been ironed out and further more accurate readings were being taken. During the practical sessions, students' concentration and commitment to their work was apparent.

212. The three students in Year 13 who have chosen to carry on to 'A' Level are achieving well. In the first of two good lessons observed, students focussed on infrared spectroscopy. They worked effectively through a number of questions and activities, including putting together models of molecules with different chemical bonds. These students had a range of understanding of the subject matter which was broadly in line with the expectations of the course. In the second lesson each student gave a very confident and informative short presentation on one aspect of the topic, 'Crops grown in Pakistan' using the slides, the information provided earlier and their own research, although the research element of the presentation was more limited. Within the course there are ample opportunities for students to produce evidence of key skills at level 3. Students' attitudes to both courses are very positive and they are committed to their work. When pressed they agree that they often need help to complete an assignment but that help is readily given. Non-contact time could be used more productively: though it is well used when specific assignments and homework are set.

213. Teaching is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and prepare well for their lessons. Lessons are well structured. Teachers work closely with their groups and know the strengths and limitations of their students. Expectations are high and students are questioned regularly to check understanding. The leadership of the two courses is satisfactory and the two teachers involved with each group work well together. Resources are currently inadequate except for biological material. Overall, apparatus requirements need auditing and the library needs supplementing. Despite some good work on the Internet observed in Year 12, insufficient use is made of ICT within the courses.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

The focus was on Design and Technology. This is currently being studied at A and AS level.

The provision for Design and Technology is **very good**.

Strengths:

- Teaching is often excellent.
- Knowledge and skills are taught with pace.
- Students enjoy the complex and varied design challenges.
- Use of computers for making products and modelling ideas.
- Excellent team work between teachers and students.

Areas to improve:

- Hand drawn graphics.
- The detail in written analysis of problems.
- The detail in generating and developing of ideas.

214. One student took the A level exam in 2000 and gained a grade A. Three students gained grade C and 4 grade D in AS level 2001, but at A Level results were unsatisfactory because most students failed to gain a grade. The standard of work seen in the current Year 12 and Year 13 AS and A level groups, is above average and indicates very substantial improvement in the subject compared to previous years. Entry requirements to the subject are now much stricter and all students are now well matched to the design and technology courses they study.

215. Design and make assignments of students currently in Year 13 are above average and highly innovative. The analysis of problems and generation and development of ideas are often good, but sometimes lack sufficient detail in order to raise standards prior to developing product specifications. Some manufacturing processes are limited and lack effective manufacturing techniques matched to industry standards: for example, students design furniture, and this would benefit from greater use of computers. However, some three-dimensional drawings are produced on complex computer aided design software and this helps students generate additional solutions quickly.

216. Students' knowledge of computer-aided manufacture is sound and improving. Structured tasks are completed using good textbooks and teacher support, as a springboard to developing independent learning.

217. Students achieve very well in lessons through a wide range of practical tasks and associated design and theory work. Knowledge is taught very well with appropriate reinforcement being developed through group discussion, independent analysis and research. Such work is often completed effectively by using computers. Students make good progress in using hand and machine tools to manipulate materials. They are quick to learn how tools like lathes work, and understand parts such as gear ratios. Numerical formulae are taught well and are used to calculate resistance; this is applied to new circumstances effectively. Design and

make assignments are very innovative in the main. Excellent work has been celebrated and published in national and local magazines and media. Prestigious competitions have been entered such as The Young Engineer regional finals, with a caravan connector tester. Hand drawn graphics need further development in design folios.

218. The quality of teaching is excellent. There is a good match between high quality teaching and high quality learning. Students' attitudes to learning are very good because teaching is strong. Students show a very keen interest in practical, problem solving activities. They are very eager to compare practical tasks, working efficiently and safely. Concentration rates are very high in lessons. Tools, equipment and accommodation are respected and used well. Lessons in both years have a well-planned structure, which contributes to achievement and student motivation. Teachers' expectations are usually very high.

219. Assessment and marking of work are very good. Teachers set clear targets, which contribute to high gains in learning. Detailed criteria and target setting help students improve their work. Teachers modify their curriculum to best suit the students' special educational needs and changing circumstances. Relationships are very good, providing a secure and exciting environment for learning. Teachers' control of students is very good, keeping them on task and motivating them to want to learn. The teaching of graphics is excellent and computers are used very well to manipulate images. Technicians give very good support. Teachers have developed valuable strategies for supporting literacy through the use of key words.

220. The curriculum provides appropriate learning opportunities for students, including those with special educational needs, who are generally supported well, through following different or modified tasks to suit their needs. High attaining students are supported through some clubs and competitions, but more work involving more complex processes and resources is needed to stretch them further. Students consider design problems with associated moral and cultural issues and this contributes well to their personal development.

221. There is very good leadership of design and technology in the sixth form. There is a strong team spirit between two teachers who build on their respective strengths and teach effective lessons. The new accommodation is very good. Learning resources are well cared for by the staff and students and used well. There has been substantial improvement since the last inspection.

BUSINESS

222. The inspection focused on the advanced vocational certificate of education (AVCE) business course and the intermediate GNVQ business course.

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

Strengths:

- Students achieve well in business education.
- Students acquire good research skills.
- Teaching is good.
- ICT is well used in teaching.
- Effective use is made of drafting, redrafting and refining by students in their assignments.

Areas for improvement:

- Develop schemes of work, a department development plan and procedures for monitoring.
- Ensure greater clarity of learning objectives.
- Ensure that students are clear about their short term objectives in their assignment work.
- Improve key skills particularly in relation to communication skills, oral and written.

223. Results for GNVQ business were well above the national average in 2000, below average in 1999 and very high in 1998. Results for Year 12 and Year 13 AVCE students in the internally and externally assessed units up to the summer of 2001 at the time of writing cannot yet be compared to national benchmarks, although they appear to be in line with the national average.

224. The attainment in lessons and in past work of current Year 13 students is average. Year 13 students achieve well in the light of their prior attainment at GCSE. Attainment in the current Year 12 is currently about average compared with the national expectation, but students are achieving well in the light of their prior attainment. Students have a good knowledge of the basic terminology and key concepts of the subject and higher attaining students can link key concepts to business contexts. Students use ICT well and have good problem solving skills, particularly in practically based work. In the case of some of the weaker students, a limited knowledge of some of the basic concepts prevents them from demonstrating skills of application and progressing further in their work. For example, in one intermediate GNVQ lesson, students' lack of understanding of the concepts of line management and span of control, made it difficult for them to develop an organisation chart for the school.

225. ICT key skills are weak but improving. Some students' oral communication skills are at a low level. Many students have limited learning skills and although they are effective in conducting both primary and secondary research, in their secondary research they seldom use a wide range of source materials.

226. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers plan their lessons well and use appropriate methodologies. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and a good knowledge of ICT, which enables them to plan effective work, involving students in ICT based research work using the Internet. Teachers support the learning needs of students well and are responsive to their needs. Whole class teaching is effective and students respond well to a characteristically fast pace and the enthusiasm of the teacher. Objectives for lessons are defined and students are helped and encouraged to draw upon real business contexts in their work. Teachers use questions effectively. Assessment is generally good. Students benefit from detailed marking which indicates what they have achieved and guides them onto the next stage of learning.

227. Drafting, redrafting and refining work is used well to support learning. For example, students involved in a market research activity, based around the Bluewater Shopping Centre, were encouraged to test out their market research questionnaires on a small sample of people, reflect critically on the strengths and weaknesses highlighted as a result of this activity and refine the questionnaire accordingly. This task challenged students and helped them to develop a real depth of understanding of key marketing issues and make good progress.

228. In some lessons, planning is based around defining subject content to be covered rather than focusing on learning intentions. There are sometimes missed opportunities for teachers to use vocational contexts to support learning and to use students' own knowledge and experience of vocational contexts to apply concepts and theories.

229. Overall, planning of the curriculum is effective. Teaching of particular units is sequenced appropriately to allow maximum flexibility, enabling students to follow shorter or longer versions of the course. There are good internal moderation procedures. Overall department leadership and management are satisfactory. Day to day management is effective but because there are no whole school strategies to promote subject development planning and monitoring, these aspects of management are weak. The department has the will and the capacity to improve, however, building on its current strengths.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

230. The focus was on the information communication technology (ICT) advanced certificate vocational course. This is a new course and there are no examination results. The three unit, one year course, is being taught with an option to extend this further next year.

231. Evidence from sampling the use of ICT in other subjects, indicated that there is good use of computers in design and technology, where students design parts of their coursework with advanced computer aided design and manufacturing software. ICT is also used well in French and geography. In these subjects students with special needs achieve well, but higher attaining students need greater stimulus so as to achieve at higher levels. ICT is not used well in other subjects such as art, mathematics, English and science; neither do all students effectively use it in private study periods.

Provision in the ICT advanced certificate course is **good**.

Strengths:

- Standards of attainment are above average.
- Teaching is good.
- The computer and network quality is good.

Areas for development:

- Students' use of computers in study periods.

232. The standard of attainment of students following the information communication technology (ICT) advanced certificate vocational course, is, at this early stage in the course, in line with expectations nationally. Students confidently construct spreadsheets and are gradually applying this knowledge to detailed user requirements. A brochure design project, which covers the application of different styles of presentation for different audiences, was of high quality; attainment prior to completion of the project was above average.

233. Students achieve well in lessons, developing independent strategies for solving problems. Their independent use of computers is satisfactory. Students have completed successful projects combining data, images and text from different software. Students can make appropriate decisions about appropriate strategies and software use. In two lessons students chose software to solve a problem. The variety of responses within the structured task was better than expected. In the short time since the start of the course, students' achievement in the use of formulae in spreadsheets has been satisfactory but for the more able achievement could be higher.

234. Students have good attitudes to the subject. They work hard and are usually on task for extended periods of time. Relationships between teachers and students are positive. Students are usually very well disciplined; they listen carefully and settle down quickly to work. The quality of teaching is at least satisfactory and is often good. Teachers set a brisk pace and maintain it, as for example in a lesson where students were designing a brochure using a range of programs, integrating text, graphics and data. Individual help for students is a strong feature of teaching in many lessons. Teachers provide good levels of individual support for students and this is a strength in the teaching. Teachers' planning is based around the examination specifications. Further interpretation of the scheme would improve curriculum planning over time.

235. Assessment is sound, but some students are not sufficiently aware of the next stages of development to improve performance and achievement. Examples of work assessed are needed to help set standards and help students understand the examination course challenges. Controlled access to the internet and other large databases (CD ROMs) give students valuable access to recent and relevant multi-cultural information.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

236. A recreational physical education lesson has recently been introduced for pupils in the sixth form but the uptake is small. This course is not formally taught or assessed. It was not possible to observe physical education activity in the sixth form during the inspection.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

237. The focus was on art and design, but the A level theatre studies and media studies courses were also sampled. In theatre studies, A level results in 2001 were below average and three students did not obtain a grade. During the inspection, one Year 12 theatre studies lesson was observed, students were interviewed and course work was scrutinised. This evidence indicates that, overall, students are currently now well matched to the demands of an A level course and are attaining at the average for A/AS level. In the one observed lesson, teaching was good. Students showed they were capable of understanding hidden meanings in a demanding text from an Ibsen play and expressing these meaning through gesture and tone. Students' written evaluations of their work was of good quality.

238. In media studies the quality of provision is satisfactory. This new AS-level course is generating a positive response from students. Teaching and learning are satisfactory.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths:

- Very good teaching leads to very good learning and achievement.
- Very good support for students and the sense of teamwork which exists in the lessons.
- Very good leadership and management in the subject.

Areas for improvement:

- Improve the use of ICT, especially as a tool for creative work
- Secure the support of a departmental technician so that teachers can focus on teaching

239. Over the last three years the school's results at A level have been good, with higher than average proportions of students achieving the higher A and B grades. At the time of the inspection there were no national statistics available for the new Advanced Subsidiary examinations taken at the end of Year 12, but the schools results are very encouraging and in line with Advanced Level expectations.

240. Students' achievement in the sixth form is very good. This is because, throughout Year 12, students are taught well to build on their learning at GCSE. Folders of work, sketchbooks and their work on display in the art rooms show that students quickly develop a good understanding of course objectives and that they make very good gains in their ability to use a range of two and three dimensional media.

241. Students are also encouraged to be self-reliant and to be adventurous. This means that, by the time students reach Year 13, they are equipped to explore independent lines of enquiry; they are able to experiment confidently with unusual materials and they are willing to confront sometimes controversial or provocative themes in their work. A very good example of this was the work of one student who had studied the work of the artist, Jenny Saville. Her application of this new knowledge, together with her visual research and her experiments with materials,

enabled her to create sculptures that were ambitious, technically very well made and challenging to the viewer. Students' sketchbooks and large scale drawings show that they also achieve well in the way they develop and clarify their ideas appropriately in relation to their original intentions.

242. Teachers also provide opportunities for students to work according to their own individual strengths and interests. This was the case in the work of one Year 13 student who had studied the paintings of the French "Pointillist" artists. This had provided him with the knowledge he needed in order to complete his own extensive set of pastel studies of local landscapes. Another Year 13 student used colour and texture and the structure of sea urchins to create an unusual, visually exciting and very well crafted three dimensional textile light of exhibition quality. Students lack insight of the creative applications of ICT in art and design and how it affects related areas of employment and they are below standard in this area of study.

243. The quality of teaching in the sixth form is very good. Teachers provide appropriately high levels of challenge which allows individual students to flourish. They have very good subject knowledge and expertise, which they employ effectively when demonstrating processes. Teachers also extend the learning and experiences of students by providing an after school class in life drawing. This is well attended and students are taught to draw on a large scale in a confident and expressive way.

244. The impact of the high standards of teaching on students' work and on their attitudes is fully apparent in lessons. Most students arrive punctually and they are enthusiastic about their work. Relationships between teachers and students are very good; there is an atmosphere of industry in the lessons and a very good sense of teamwork between the teachers and students. Very good assessment procedures contribute to high standards and are used well to monitor the effectiveness of both teaching and learning. Students particularly liked one teacher's system of attaching "post-it" notes to pages in their sketchbooks after she has marked their work. Another very good feature of the assessment of students' work is the ongoing dialogue between teachers and students.

245. The quality of leadership and management in the subject is very good and this has contributed well to the overall good improvement since the previous inspection. The lack of a departmental technician, identified as a weakness at the time of the previous inspection, limits the amount of time teachers can devote to their main role of teaching. There are good opportunities for visits to art galleries, such as the Tate Modern, and the planned visit to Barcelona. The work of the sixth form students, past and present, which is displayed in the spacious, open plan area, enlivens the accommodation and is an inspiration for younger pupils.

HUMANITIES

246. The focus was on geography, but history was also sampled. Two Year 12 history lessons were observed in which teaching was good in one and very good in the other. In the good lesson, students engaged in sustained analysis of Stuart documentary evidence. This led them to a greater understanding of how the vocabulary and style of documents provide insights into religious opinions. In the very good lesson, careful text reading led to focused discussions that extended understanding of changes in women's roles in Nazi Germany.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths:

- The department is very well led and managed
- A trend of improvement in results since 1998 that is better than the national average
- All the teaching seen was good or very good.
- The residential fieldwork provision in Year 12 is of very high quality.
- Tutorial guidance is effective in guiding and extending learning.

Areas for improvement:

- Fieldwork opportunities should be re-established in Year 13.
- More use by students of the vocabulary and syntax of academic discourse in their oral work.
- Support students in accessing some websites housing academic materials
- The quantity of core textbooks and specialist resources.

247. The number of students that have followed A Level courses has been low but there has been a steady improvement in standards since 1998. Although A level results have been below the national average from 1998-2000, the trend of improvement has been greater than the national average.

248. Standards of work seen in Year 13 are in line with the national average and showed good progress from GCSE and AS Level. Assignments from this small group demonstrated diligence and some breadth of reading, although students rarely ventured beyond the range of texts provided within the department. Students regularly access the Internet but download materials unselectively.

249. Students show limited capacity to respond to detailed tutorial advice and assessed work was characterised by an over-reliance on information that had not been selected to meet the focus of the assignment. There was limited success in those strands that required the use of selected components to support and justify opinions and judgement. Students are not able to use written responses effectively to advance discussion. In their oral work, they show understanding of key interrelationships but do this mostly in response to teacher guidance.

250. In Year 12, students are building effectively on successes achieved at GCSE. Their files show that most are making rapid progress in developing sound note-taking skills, as in one section on hydro-graphics, where information had been taken selectively from a wide variety of sources, including journals and the Internet. Lower attaining students in both years experience difficulty in constructing carefully reasoned and balanced written work. Whilst they have generally good command of the specific vocabulary of particular study units, they lack confidence in using it to construct evaluative or discursive text. The result is that pieces of work become unbalanced or are superficial when it comes to making supported judgements.

251. Good use is made by students of the well resourced specialist teaching accommodation. Students are encouraged to engage in independent learning and many display the degree of focus that this requires. In a lesson on the management of flood-prone areas, Year 12 students kept tightly to their goals and were successful in selecting relevant material and framing it in a concise way. The preparation of overhead transparencies to assist individual presentations was an effective way of developing their awareness of key points. For some in Year 13, the breadth of Internet material encourages passive browsing rather than specific searches. Teachers monitor this work and redirect students' attentions but students in Year 13 were not seen using the ICT opportunities provided to best effect.

252. Students achieve well because of good and often very good teaching. Teachers possess very good subject knowledge and this enriches the quality and range of students' learning. A-B grades at A level have been obtained by some students in most years and this indicates that teaching is encouraging higher attaining students to achieve well. Independent study is actively encouraged. Teachers provide valuable practical advice about the best way to approach tasks. This is often accompanied by carefully structured questions that lead students to a greater understanding of the importance of command words and the qualities of good responses. Teachers respond very rapidly to student needs, as in one lesson where faulty recall by students of their Year 9 and GCSE course materials, immediately resulted in a piece of extension homework that focused specifically on the problem. In Year 12, higher attaining students are already beginning to exercise independent judgements about their own work and can identify how particular assignments can be improved. Careful marking of work and notes, add to the quality of teaching.

253. The department is very well managed. Teachers' subject knowledge, together with modern and challenging learning resources, are well deployed. This contributes directly to the good progress made by students. Fieldwork is very well planned and provides a wealth of practical experience. The ambience and organisation of the department encourage an enthusiasm for geography that accounts for the steady rise in standards and popularity of this subject.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

Two subjects were focussed upon: English A/AS level and AS level french.

English

The overall quality of provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Strengths:

- Results in the 2001 A-level English showing a rising trend in performance.
- Teaching overall is good.
- Students have confidence in their teachers and appreciate the quality of support they give.

Areas for improvement:

- Students should be supported in becoming autonomous readers and independent learners.
- A wider range of teaching strategies could be employed.
- Critical appraisal and structuring written work.

254. Over the last four years, small numbers of students have chosen to study English at advanced level. The number opting for the course rose between 2000-2001. In 2000 seven students took the A-level examination. The pass rate and points scores gained by students from 1998-2000 were well below average. The 2001 results were a significant improvement on previous years' results. The AS examination was taken for the first time in 2001 and all were awarded a grade within the C to E range.

255. Overall, given the low entry requirement for English, the achievement of students is satisfactory and reflects their attainment on entry to the course. Nevertheless, in Year 13, some students compromise their achievement when they do not attend regularly. Year 13 students do not read widely enough as autonomous readers capable of high quality research to increase their knowledge of literary texts. There is a culture of dependency on their teachers and even when homework is set, some do not give it in regularly. Some high attaining students in Year 13, mainly boys, are under-achieving, mainly due to their lack of motivation. These students would benefit from structured guidance on how to improve their grades. The current

standards of students, at the start of the AS literature and language course, are average for most.

256. The standard of work seen in lessons and in students' files confirms that students in Year 13 are over-dependent on their teachers to guide them. The overall quality of their written work is below average, whilst oral communication is good and reading skills are satisfactory. The Year 13 students are more vocal than the Year 12 students and most willingly take part in oral work. Higher attaining students in both year groups articulate their views, as illustrated in the discussion on Stoker's *Dracula*. On the occasions when they make presentations, students present papers confidently, though girls tend to be better presenters; on such occasions, they show a sound command of their subject as they explore themes well, as illustrated in the lesson on Chaucer's *Pilgrims*. Year 12 students by contrast tend to be reticent speakers, partly because they lack the confidence to speak up. They are quiet recipients who have to be prompted to give their views.

257. Attainment in reading is satisfactory for most students. Many understand the historical, social and cultural background of literary works and there is satisfactory evidence of notes from the Internet. Written responses are generally detailed and students make good use of personal notes when discussing texts. However, some average attaining students give overviews and their work lacks depth, as seen in their work on Rice's *Interview with a Vampire*.

258. Students achieve well when discussing literary texts and give well-argued personal responses. However, the incisive oral response is not extended to their written work and many do not recognise the importance of wide reading, even when it is reinforced in lessons. The impact of this is that reading is skimpy: students respond to the surface features of texts, quotations are not well embedded, language is not analysed sufficiently and technical vocabulary is used inaccurately.

259. High attaining Year 12 students write soundly structured essays that include carefully selected quotations. The average attaining students achieve sound standards and show good progress over time as they work on the comments to improve their written work. Most average and lower attaining students experience difficulties expressing their ideas clearly in writing. There are frequent weaknesses of expressions as well as numerous spelling errors, which is a major area of concern. Indeed, sentence construction is weak, vocabulary is often unsophisticated and there are difficulties in organising their ideas into well-shaped paragraphs. During lessons students co-operate well with their teachers. They display good staying power and during discussion, Year 13 students adopt an inquisitive approach to their work.

260. Teaching overall is good. Teachers' high level of expectations pervades lessons and they ensure that students know they want the best for them. Teachers are acutely aware of gaps in students' knowledge and in some lessons encourage them to pursue further reading, but only rarely do students pursue this additional work. They use probing and quickly fired questions as well as a series of secondary questions to encourage students to adopt an enquiring approach. This exposes students' misconceptions and provides the opportunity for teachers to intervene and redirect their thinking. There are insufficient opportunities for seminars and presentations. There is very little use of ICT in the sixth form curriculum. Marking is thorough and students know what they need to do to improve their work.

261. Leadership and management overall are satisfactory, although because there is no whole school approach, monitoring of teaching and learning and analysis of data are not well developed. The accommodation is excellent.

Modern Languages:

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

Strengths:

- Attainment in this new AS course is in line with average expectations.
- Teaching and teacher expertise are strong.
- The subject is well resourced.
- Students make good progress in grammatical knowledge and comprehension skills.

Areas for improvement:

- Students are reluctant to initiate and carry out extended conversation in french.

262. As this is the first year of a new AS course in French, no comparison against previous school or national results can be made. This group of Year 12 students is building upon GCSE attainment in which most achieved a grade A. In lessons, attainment is in line with the national average in listening and reading skills. Spoken french is not as strong as the average however, because students are not sufficiently confident in dealing with open-ended questions and with the challenge to enter discussion using more complex language. Students have a good knowledge of grammar, can extract and summarise information from authentic text and have little difficulty in understanding a range of language spoken at normal speed.

263. Students have a very positive commitment to their work and respond well to the encouragement of their teachers. They are prepared to ask questions and seek help and are beginning to take more responsibility for their learning, though some lack of confidence means that they are still reliant upon structured guidance.

264. Teachers are fully conversant with the requirements of the new course and have very strong subject expertise. Students are well supported and given careful guidance to help them adjust to the rigours of the syllabus. French is used consistently for all instruction and students are expected to commit themselves fully to their studies. Appropriate emphasis is laid upon assimilating grammatical structures and widening students' vocabulary base in order to bridge the gap between GCSE and the requirements of the AS course.

265. Students are making good progress in expanding their knowledge and application of grammar and are also developing a degree of independence in accessing authentic material through the Internet and other sources, as well as in individual note-taking. Whereas students are confident in the passive skills of listening and reading, the majority are reluctant to carry out an extended conversation in French.

266. The new AS course in French in Year 12 reflects the school's concern to expand opportunities for post-16 study. Present students are well informed about the aims and content of the course. The new course has been carefully implemented and adequate resources have been obtained to meet the needs of the students. The head of department has taken appropriate steps to inform herself and her colleagues about the requirements of the new course and has developed a comprehensive scheme of work.