

INSPECTION REPORT

FARMOR'S SCHOOL

Fairford

LEA area: Gloucestershire

Unique reference number: 115728

Headteacher: Mrs. Anne Stokes

Reporting inspector: Linda Humphreys

7956

Dates of inspection: 15 – 18 April 2002

Inspection number: 191115

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils:	11 to 18 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	The Park Fairford Gloucestershire
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs. Barbara Bridges
Date of previous inspection:	January 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities (Sixth Form)	Aspect responsibilities (Sixth Form)
7956	Linda Humphreys	<i>Registered inspector</i>		What sort of school is it? The school's results and students' achievements. How well are students taught?
11041	Marvyn Moore	<i>Lay inspector</i>		Students' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
8756	Pat Hanage	<i>Team inspector</i>	Mathematics; Equality of opportunity.	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students? How well is the school led and managed?
23246	John Mitchell	<i>Team inspector</i>	Chemistry.	How well does the school care for its students?
10361	Frank Evans	<i>Team inspector</i>	English literature.	
24887	Yvonne Salmons	<i>Team inspector</i>	French; English as an additional language.	
18638	Christopher Shaw	<i>Team inspector</i>	Art.	
22042	John Challands	<i>Team inspector</i>	Sports studies.	
19152	Richard Merryfield	<i>Team inspector</i>	History.	
15576	David Nebesnuick	<i>Team inspector</i>	Business studies.	
17279	Denis Barry	<i>Team inspector</i>	Sociology.	
12594	Marina Jeavons	<i>Team inspector</i>		Special educational needs.

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Farmor's School is a mixed comprehensive school for pupils aged 11 to 18, serving the town of Fairford and the surrounding rural area. Recently, a number of pupils from Swindon have joined the school. The school is of average size and is presently oversubscribed after some years of vacancies. When the school was last inspected, it had grown by nearly 300 pupils in the previous four years. There are currently about 164 more pupils on the roll than during the last inspection. The school has had some difficulty in recruiting specialist languages staff this year. The school serves a relatively advantaged community and only 2.8 per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is lower than most schools. There are very few pupils from ethnic minority groups and a very small proportion speaks English as an additional language. The attainment of pupils when they enter the school is above average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs, including those with statements of need, is below average. Since the last inspection the school has gained Investors in People, Investors in Careers, and Sportsmark awards.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school. Standards are well above the national average and pupils achieve well at all stages. Teaching and learning are good and pupils are keen to learn and are well behaved. The school is very well led and well managed. Since the last inspection, standards have been maintained and there are signs of improvement in Years 7 to 9 and the Sixth Form. Income is very low. When account is taken of all these factors, the school provides very good value for money.

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

- Attainment is well above national averages for pupils aged 11 to 16 and above average in the Sixth Form. Pupils and students achieve well.
- Pupils and students have very positive attitudes to school. They are courteous, mature and responsible. Attendance is above average.
- Leadership by the headteacher and senior staff, including the Sixth Form managers, is very good. The school is well managed, although there is some inconsistency between subjects.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- The ethos for learning is strong.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- Provision for information and communication technology is unsatisfactory.
- Accommodation and resources are inadequate in some areas, and the school has had difficulty in providing adequate temporary staffing for Sixth Form Spanish.
- The school does not meet statutory requirements for information and communication technology, religious education in the Sixth Form, and a daily act of collective worship.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since its last inspection in 1997, the school has maintained standards well above national averages at age 16, and above average in the Sixth Form, and the rising trend in results at age 14 is above the national trend. About half of the issues for action identified by the last inspection have been successfully addressed, but Sixth Form students still do not have enough time for religious education and the school does not provide a daily act of collective worship. Some progress has been made with providing information and communication technology to pupils aged 11 to 14, but provision for all older pupils remains inadequate.

STANDARDS

The table below shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 11 and Sixth Form students at the end of Year 13 based on average point scores in GCSE and A Level/AS Level examinations.

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

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

GCSE results in 2001 are well above the national average and in line with results in similar schools. However, despite a high proportion of A* and A grades, a smaller proportion of pupils gained A*-C grades than in similar schools. Results in AS and A Level examinations are broadly average. Over the past few years the school has maintained results at this high standard. Sixth Form work seen during the inspection indicates an improvement in standards. Standards at age 14 are well above average, and the upward trend in these results is above the national rising trend. Pupils and students at all stages achieve well. The school sets ambitious targets, which have proved to be unrealistic, and failed to reach the GCSE target in 2001.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils enjoy school, are keen to learn, and are prepared to work hard.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is good.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils grow into courteous, mature and responsible young people. Relationships are very good.
Attendance	Attendance is better than in most schools.

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.

The teaching of English, mathematics and science for pupils aged 11 to 16 is good. This includes good teaching of literacy and numeracy, and these are further developed in other subjects. The result is that pupils use language with accuracy and discrimination and have the numeracy skills required to cope with the mathematical problems they encounter in subjects. The strengths of teaching are teachers’ knowledge of their subjects, planning, the use of questioning, relationships, high expectations and effective use of resources. The school meets the varying needs of pupils well, and all make good progress. Pupils acquire new knowledge and skills at a good rate and are encouraged to develop thinking in order to gain deeper understanding.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Pupils’ needs are identified and good provision is made to support them, with the result that they make good progress.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	A very small number of pupils speak English as an additional language. They are well supported by specialist support staff where necessary, and make good progress.
Provision for pupils’ personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory, and provision for other aspects of pupils’ personal development is good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Care and support for pupils is good.

The curriculum provides adequately for pupils’ needs but there is only one vocational course in the 14 to 16 curriculum. Pupils have the opportunity to take part in trips to exciting parts of the world. The school’s provision for information and communication technology does not meet statutory requirements: there are not enough computers or curriculum time for the subject. The progress review system supports pupils well, but assessment practice is not consistently effective in all subjects.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Leadership by the headteacher and senior managers is very good, and management is good.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors fulfil their responsibilities effectively.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Strong in some areas, but some middle managers are not sufficiently focused on monitoring overall performance and planning for improvement.
The strategic use of resources	The school has a Licensed Deficit Agreement with the local education authority to clear the deficit in two years. The school is therefore operating within tight financial constraints.

Whilst management is good overall there are areas which are not managed as effectively as others. The school applies the principles of best value satisfactorily: in the current financial situation the emphasis is on managing within tight constraints, with little leeway for spending.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school. • Their children make good progress. • The school is well led and managed. • The school's high expectations. • The school is approachable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behaviour. • The amount of homework set. • Communications with the school. • How closely the school works with parents • The range of extracurricular activities.

Inspection findings confirm parents' positive views. During the inspection behaviour was good, although the school agrees that a few pupils sometimes behave badly. There is inconsistency in the way in which different teachers set homework. The school's means of communicating with parents are adequate, but reports are not as informative as they could be. The provision of extracurricular activities is very good, but parents may not always be aware of what is available. The school should explore ways of improving this.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

Farmor's School Sixth Form is about the same size as in most schools, with 79 students in Year 12 and 64 in Year 13. This is much the same as when the school was last inspected. Most pupils choose to continue into the Sixth Form that offers AS and A Level courses. Most seeking vocational courses go on to local further education colleges, which offer a wide range of courses. The students in the Sixth Form reflect the nature of the school population as a whole. Attainment when students begin Sixth Form courses is in line with national averages for similar programmes. A high proportion of students continue into higher education.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

This is a good Sixth Form. It maintains standards of attainment which are above average, and students achieve well. This is because teaching and learning are good, and students' needs are well met by the range of courses available and by the effective procedures for supporting students. The Sixth Form is very well led and is cost effective, despite a small subsidy from the remainder of the school.

STRENGTHS

- Standards of work are above average and achievement is good.
- Attendance is very good.
- Students are confident, mature and responsible, and play an influential part in the life of the school.
- Relationships between students and teachers are very good.
- Teaching and learning are good and students develop good independent learning skills.
- The Sixth Form is very well led by the Sixth Form management team, and by the headteacher and senior managers, and is well managed.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- Provision for information and communication technology is unsatisfactory.
- Accommodation and resources are inadequate in some areas, and the school has had difficulty in providing adequate temporary staffing for Sixth Form Spanish.
- The school does not meet statutory requirements for religious education in the Sixth Form, and for a daily act of collective worship.

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Satisfactory. Standards are in line with national averages. Achievement is satisfactory overall, and good for higher attainers. Teaching and learning are good, and this is shown in rising standards. Students enjoy mathematics, and work hard.
Chemistry	Satisfactory. Standards are above national averages and achievement is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are good and students have very positive attitudes.
Business studies	Good. Standards are above average and achievement is good. Teaching and learning are very good. Students have very positive attitudes to learning. Relationships are very good. There is insufficient access to information and communication technology resources.
Sports studies	Very good. Standards in examinations are well above average and teaching is very good. Students have excellent attitudes, and this, combined with very good relationships with staff, results in very effective learning.
Art and design	Good. The school achieves high standards in A Level work. The curriculum is stimulating and imaginative. Teaching, learning and students' achievement are good. There are weaknesses in resources, information and communication technology and development planning.
History	Good. Good teaching builds on students' very positive attitudes to enable them to reach above average standards, and achievement is good.
Sociology	Good. Good teaching and learning result in above average standards. Students' attitudes and their achievement are both good.
English literature	Very good. Teaching is very good and students reach well above average standards. Their achievement is very good.
French	Very good. Standards are above average and teaching is good. Students have very good attitudes to learning as a result of the very good advice, support and guidance given by teachers.

Standards in the other subjects are similar to those inspected in depth. Teaching and learning were good in all the lessons sampled in these subjects. Standards in Spanish are generally above average in listening and speaking, and average in writing and reading. Staffing difficulties, due to temporary absence, have resulted in there being a lack of continuity in learning and limited time made available for examination preparation. Although all the temporary teachers have a very good knowledge of Spanish, and the lesson observed was good, overall provision for Spanish is unsatisfactory.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	The advice, guidance and support provided for students are good. There is a good induction programme. Support from tutors and subject teachers, and formal progress reviews, help students to know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Advice on choosing courses in Year 12 and on higher education is good. Students would like more opportunities for advice about specific careers, and careers interviews.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the Sixth Form	Leadership of the Sixth Form is very good, and management is good. The new head of Sixth Form has already made a strong impact through an audit and evaluation of current provision, including taking students' views into account. Management of subject courses is good overall, but varies in quality: it is outstanding in English, and satisfactory in chemistry and mathematics.

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"> • Teachers know them well and provide very good support. • Relationships are very good. • They are taught well and expected to work hard, and there is a purposeful atmosphere for learning. • The range of opportunities to take a responsible part in the life of the school. • Good induction, and advice and information on courses to study in the Sixth Form. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources in some subjects, and access to more information and communication technology. • Staffing in Spanish. • More career-specific advice and interviews. • Many students do not like having to study key skills.

Students are very positive about the Sixth Form, the range of courses available to them and the guidance and support they receive. The strengths identified by students are well founded. Students have many opportunities to play a key role in school life. Many students would prefer to spend the time allocated to key skills in a different way. However, the key skills programme is well organised and co-ordinated, and well taught by specialist staff. Inspectors agreed that resources are limited in some courses, and that there is not enough access to information and communication technology. Provision in Spanish is unsatisfactory. Advice and information on courses available in the Sixth Form, and on choice of higher education institutions, is good. There are not enough opportunities for students to have career specific advice and interviews, which is partly due to the limited time available to the school from careers specialists.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Attainment is well above national averages in Key Stages 3 and 4 and above average in the Sixth Form, and pupils and students achieve well.

1. Standards of work in both Key Stages 3 and 4 are well above national averages, and standards in the Sixth Form are above average. The key factors which enable the school to attain such standards are the good teaching and pupils' diligence and eagerness to work.
2. Results in 2001 national tests at age 14 in English, mathematics and science are well above the national average, and also well above the average in schools in similar economic circumstances. The rising trend in results since 1997 has been above the national trend. However, a marked change in 2001 is that boys' results are better than those of girls in mathematics and science. This is particularly remarkable because tests administered to these pupils in Year 7 indicated a smaller proportion of boys with high scores. The school made efforts to improve the performance of boys last year, and these were successful. Results in foundation subjects are also well above national averages, and again, in some subjects, but not all, boys' results are better than those of girls. These differences were less evident in the work seen during the inspection, but inspection evidence indicates similar standards of attainment to last year's results.
3. Pupils' attainment when they enter the school is above average. Their interest in and enthusiasm for work, complemented by good teaching, enables them to achieve standards well above average by age 14, and achievement is good.
4. For the last three years the school's GCSE results have remained well above the national average. However, these results have been fairly static, and have not risen as fast as results have improved nationally. In addition, for the whole of this period, girls have done increasingly better than boys: in 2001, girls' average total points score exceeded the girls' national average by 10.2 points, compared with boys' 5.8 points above the boys' national average. The school believes that the efforts to improve boys' attainment, which were successful in Key Stage 3 last year, will also bear fruit in this year's GCSE results.
5. When this school's results are compared with those gained in schools in similar circumstances, the proportions of pupils gaining five or more grades A*-G and one grade A*-G are average, as are pupils' average points scores. However, the proportion of pupils gaining five or more A*-C grades is below average. In comparison with schools where pupils gained similar scores in Key Stage 3 tests in 1999, once again the school's results are about average for most measures, but the proportion of pupils gaining five grades A*-C is below average. Pupils achieve a high proportion of grades A* and A, but fewer pupils gain B and C grades than in other similar schools.
6. Although results overall are well above the national average, the proportion of grades A*-C in mathematics is only just above average, and the proportions in art and French are below average. The school believes that the results obtained were influenced by a misunderstanding of examination requirements in art, and by staffing difficulties in mathematics. Results in mock GCSE examinations this year show a significant improvement in these two subjects. Work seen during the inspection indicates that standards are well above average in general. Here, too, pupils' keenness to work and good teaching make for good achievement for most pupils.

7. In the Sixth Form, results in Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE), Advanced Subsidiary (AS) and Advanced (A) Level examinations in 2001 are broadly average. However, standards of work seen during the inspection are somewhat higher than some of last summer's results and are above average. When students enter the Sixth Form, their attainment in GCSE examinations is above average. Good teaching and their own very positive attitudes to work enable them to make good progress over each year, and they achieve well.

8. In all key stages, the very small number of pupils from ethnic minorities achieve as well as their peers. Pupils with special needs, and pupils with particular gifts and talents, also achieve well.

Pupils and students have very positive attitudes to school. They are courteous, mature and responsible. Attendance is above average.

9. Pupils and students are eager to learn and come to school prepared to work hard and make the most of the opportunities the school offers. Attendance is good and it is very good in the Sixth Form.

10. Behaviour is good. A small number of parents expressed concern about the behaviour of a minority of pupils. The school's procedures for promoting good behaviour include an internal suspension unit, as well as the use of temporary exclusion, with re-admission on negotiated terms, for poor behaviour. During the inspection, no unsatisfactory behaviour was seen, either in lessons or around the school.

11. Pupils are courteous, mature and well mannered. They appear happy and secure in school, and enjoy the challenge of work, as well as the other activities in which they may take part. Relationships between pupils, and between pupils and staff, are very good, and this is an important factor which contributes to good learning. Pupils with special educational needs, and those who speak English as an additional language, feel well integrated into school life.

12. In lessons, pupils arrive expecting to work hard. They are good humoured and co-operative. They work well together in pairs and groups, and are equally capable of working well on their own. They enjoy the stimulus of the challenges set them. Pupils also respond well when they are given the chance to take on responsibility, such as participating in the school council, or in litter duty.

Leadership by the headteacher and senior staff, including the Sixth Form managers, is very good. The school is well managed, although there is some inconsistency between subjects.

13. The leadership of the headteacher and senior managers is very good. This leadership team has been at full strength since September 2001, with the appointment of a new assistant head and a new head of Sixth Form. The roles of different team members are clearly understood and reflect the priorities for development of the school. Governors and members of the senior management team place a high value on valuing and encouraging all members of the school community, and this is reflected in staff morale and in the positive atmosphere and strong ethos for learning in the school. This approach is acknowledged in the recent successful review of the school's commitment to the Investors in People standard. The school actively promotes equal opportunities and inclusion.

14. The management of some parts of the school's work is also very good; other parts are good or satisfactory. The Sixth Form is very well managed, as are some departments, such as English. In these strong areas, there is a clear focus on evaluating current provision and then deciding what action should be taken to improve standards and the overall quality of education. For example, the recognition of boys' relative underachievement, and the development of strategies to deal with this, led to a big improvement in their Key Stage 3 results in 2001. In some departments, middle managers have not, as yet, become sufficiently focused on monitoring overall performance and planning for improvement.

15. At whole school level there has been a much sharper focus this year on using a range of assessment data to monitor both individual and departmental progress and identify areas for improvement. As a result of the work of a newly appointed assistant headteacher, a much wider range of assessment and comparative data is now available to help middle and senior managers with this task.

16. At the time of the inspection there was a budget deficit from 2001-2 of about £75,000, which represents about three per cent of the school's expenditure. The school has a licensed deficit agreement with the local education authority (LEA) to deal with this situation. An action plan, agreed with the LEA after the last audit in January 2002, should result in this deficit being cleared in two years. However, this means the school is operating within tight financial constraints, and this is shown in the low level of resources in many areas.

17. As part of the action plan, the school is adapting its management information reports for governors to make it easier for them to get an accurate picture of the school's financial health. The chairman of the governors' finance committee, the finance officer, and the headteacher are playing key roles in developing these reports.

18. The school applies the principles of best value satisfactorily. When financial decisions are being taken, comparisons are made with practice in other local schools, and competitive prices obtained. However, in the current financial situation the emphasis is on managing within tight constraints, with little leeway for spending other than on committed items.

19. The school now analyses the income and expenditure related to the Sixth Form, an improvement since the last inspection. This shows that there is currently a small subsidy to the Sixth Form from the rest of the school. This situation is improving as numbers of students increase. Group sizes are carefully monitored and action taken if they become too small. The Sixth Form is viable, and cost effectiveness is satisfactory.

Teaching and learning are good.

20. Teaching and learning are good. Overall, nearly all teaching is at least satisfactory: only one unsatisfactory lesson was observed. Moreover, 90 per cent of teaching is at least good: 66 per cent is good, 21 per cent very good, and three per cent excellent. The profile of the quality of teaching and learning is much the same in each key stage, although the quality of teaching and learning in the Sixth Form is slightly higher than in the other years.

21. The strengths of teaching in this school, including the Sixth Form, are teachers' knowledge of their subjects, good planning, the use of questioning, the quality of relationships, teachers' high expectations, and the effective use of resources.

22. Teachers' knowledge of their subjects is effective in a number of ways. In some cases, it enables teachers to provide very clear explanations. In an English lesson about

Macbeth's character, the teacher's explanations brought the character alive for the pupils. In a mathematics lesson in Year 7, the teacher's expertise prompted him to insist on pupils explaining their methods, which helped them to clarify their thinking and led to deeper understanding. In a Year 11 art lesson, the teacher used a wide range of vocabulary and imagery to inspire pupils to work to even higher standards. Most of the teachers of modern foreign languages use the foreign language throughout lessons, which enables pupils to improve their listening and speaking skills.

23. The school was inspected at the beginning of the summer term, and Year 11 and Sixth Form classes were revising for examinations. Teachers have very thorough knowledge of examination requirements. In many of the lessons seen, teachers emphasised how pupils might answer examination questions to best effect, so that pupils learned how to maximise their chances of good grades.

24. Lessons are well planned. In Year 11 classes, lessons were planned to revise work and to enable pupils to identify any gaps in their knowledge and understanding. In geography, history and mathematics, for example, there was frequent reference to examination techniques and the skills required for particular papers. In a Year 11 personal and social education (PSE) lesson, in contrast, a good range of activities helped pupils to consider homelessness from different viewpoints. An art lesson on designing interiors and fashion included an exciting and interesting set of topics aimed at extending individual learning skills. Opportunities for pair work in a French lesson allowed pupils to develop social skills as well as giving them an opportunity to creatively use the language they knew in describing their own houses.

25. Very good relationships in nearly all classes are an important factor promoting good learning. Relationships between pupils, and between pupils and staff, are easy and respectful, yet purposeful and motivating. Pupils feel at ease, and are confident to take part in what is sometimes very active learning. This is important when one of the effective characteristics of teaching here is the use of questioning. Questioning is often used to check that pupils' knowledge is complete and secure, and also to explore the degree of their understanding. Pupils enjoy displaying what they know, and are not afraid to reveal any gaps. Most teachers are adept at ensuring that all pupils are involved, so that all make progress. They know their pupils' needs well, and this ensures that pupils with special educational needs generally learn well. Support staff make an effective contribution to their learning. However, not all teachers use pupils' individual education plans to provide work at an appropriate level.

26. Teachers have high expectations of pupils, and pupils are delighted to respond. Questioning often pushes pupils to think hard, and discussions demand that pupils clarify their thinking and back up their assertions with evidence, for example from English set texts or from historical sources. In a Year 11 mathematics lesson, a starter activity on the nature of proof set a fast pace and high expectations of pupils' thinking, and this interested and motivated students, so that they were keen to volunteer ideas. A brisk geography lesson on an earthquake, with a well-prepared range of resources and activities, challenged pupils to draw on the knowledge they had acquired earlier to make deductions.

27. In several lessons, well chosen resources provided pupils with clear information. Videos in history and religious education (RE) presented facts about the home front in Britain and on the Jewish faith, in an informative and lively way. In the art lesson on design, a very good range of books and magazines enabled pupils to carry out research.

28. A few minor shortcomings were observed in otherwise satisfactory lessons. In one case, the content of a video had not been well enough selected and time was wasted

watching irrelevant sections. A computer demonstration covered too much ground, too quickly, for average and lower attaining students to follow. Some questions are not well enough structured to drive on pupils' thinking. In the unsatisfactory lesson, poor planning and inappropriate teaching methods set out expectations which were at times too demanding for some pupils, and at other times too simple, and the teacher did not monitor pupils' work carefully enough during the lesson.

The ethos for learning is strong.

29. The ethos in this school is one where all work together in harmony to a common goal. Pupils' desire to learn is matched by teachers' expertise and enthusiasm for their subjects. Good relationships, and the way the school takes care of pupils, create the atmosphere in which pupils enjoy their work and make good progress. Strong leadership and good management underpin the school's work effectively.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Provision for information and communication technology is unsatisfactory.

30. The school has less equipment for information and communication technology (ICT) than most other secondary schools. The ratio of computers to pupils is 14 to one, compared with the national average of about seven to one. This shortage of equipment is the major factor whereby pupils have insufficient time for ICT in both Key Stages 3 and 4, and Sixth Form students do not have the constant access to facilities which their studies require. In consequence of this, the school does not meet the statutory requirements for ICT in either Key Stage 3 or Key Stage 4.

31. The school has planned very carefully to give all pupils in Key Stage 3 as much experience of ICT as is possible in the situation. The scheme of work for this key stage covers all the required areas. In each year, however, pupils have little time devoted to discrete ICT lessons, and other subjects do not provide enough opportunities to consolidate and extend what pupils learn in these lessons. Pupils may only have one experience of a particular activity, which is not enough to ensure that they are capable of using the skills independently by the end of the key stage, nor that they progress to higher levels of knowledge, skill and understanding as they move from Year 7 to Year 9. The department tracks pupils' experience accurately and assigns National Curriculum Levels to the items of work which pupils produce. However, the small quantity of work, and the fact that the ICT work completed in many subjects is at a relatively low level, makes reliable assessment difficult.

32. In Key Stage 4, at present, pupils have no discrete ICT lessons and their access to ICT varies according to what different subjects provide within their teaching programmes. Taken overall, subjects do not provide enough opportunities for all pupils to learn about and use ICT to meet National Curriculum requirements. However, the school plans to introduce accredited courses in ICT for all Key Stage 4 pupils from the beginning of the next school year.

33. Sixth Form students do not have easy access to computers. In particular, business studies students are not taught in an environment which reflects the nature of the subject and the level of equipment normally found in the business world. The school does its best to make computers available: for example, senior staff allow students to use their own computers as often as possible, and Sixth Form students may work in the school's computer room while younger pupils are being taught.

34. This situation is much the same as that noted when the school was last inspected, and little progress has been made, except the new Key Stage 3 scheme of work and the appointment of a network manager to free the ICT co-ordinator from technical preoccupations. The school has made plans to improve the curriculum provision in Key Stage 4 next year. However, the main constraint on improvement is the inadequate equipment, and in the school's current financial situation it is hard to see how this can be easily rectified.

Accommodation and resources are inadequate in some areas, and the school has had difficulty in providing adequate staffing for Sixth Form Spanish.

35. In Spanish, staffing difficulties due to temporary absence have resulted in there being a lack of continuity in learning. Although all the temporary teachers have a very good knowledge of Spanish, the temporary timetable is fragmented and inadequate, and it does not ensure that students are fully prepared for examinations.

36. The school is set on a pleasant campus, and in recent years there have been additions to facilities in response to the school's growing numbers of pupils. However, the recent increase in numbers has put additional pressure on the available accommodation, and many subjects do not have enough dedicated rooms. The hall is inadequate for the needs of the school, and because it also serves as a dining room many pupils have to eat their lunch in classrooms. There is no area large enough to hold a whole school assembly. The school plans to build four extra classrooms, including one ICT room, in the next school year.

37. On the whole, resources are adequate, but not good, in most subjects, although some older students buy books and materials to help them study more effectively. The major shortfall in resources is provision for ICT. The single computer room is mostly used for discrete ICT lessons, and although some departments have a small number of computers they are rarely able to plan to use the computer room for a whole class. Many subjects are unable to provide for the ICT component of their National Curriculum work. The school is aware of the inadequacy of ICT resources and has given priority to ICT resources in its financial planning for the next school year.

38. However, at the time of the inspection, the school had a budget deficit from 2001-2 of about £75,000. The school has a Licensed Deficit Agreement with the LEA to deal with this situation. An action plan, agreed with the LEA after the last audit in January 2002, should result in this deficit being cleared in two years. This means, however, that the school is operating within tight financial constraints, and this allows little leeway for spending other than on committed items.

The school does not meet statutory requirements for ICT, religious education in the Sixth Form, and a daily act of collective worship.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

39. In order to further improve standards and the quality of education, governors should:

- Improve provision for ICT by:
(*Paragraph numbers: 30-34, 43, 55, 76, 78, 80-82, 89, 106, 115, 128, 136*)
 - * increasing the number of computers, as finances permit;
 - * increasing the time allowed for ICT lessons in Key Stage 3;
 - * implementing plans for all pupils in Key Stage 4 to follow a course in ICT from September 2002;
 - * ensuring that all subjects give pupils the ICT opportunities set out in the National Curriculum for that subject.

- As finances permit, improve accommodation and resources where there are inadequacies.
(*Paragraph numbers: 16, 18, 30-34, 36-38, 43, 55, 76-77, 80-82, 89, 98, 106-107, 115, 124, 128, 130, 136*)

- Ensure that statutory requirements for ICT, RE in the Sixth Form and a daily act of collective worship are met.
(*Paragraph numbers: 30, 57, 61, 77*)

- Explore ways of keeping parents informed about the extracurricular activities available.
(*Response to parents' comments in parents' summary*)

Sixth Form

- As finances permit, increase the number of computers.
(*Paragraph numbers: 30-34, 55, 76-77, 80-82, 89, 106, 115, 128, 136*)

- Review arrangements for recruiting staff and for timetabling to cover long-term absence of teachers.
(*Paragraph numbers: 37, 78, 137*)

- As finances permit, improve accommodation and resources where there are inadequacies.
(*Paragraph numbers: 16, 18, 30-34, 36-38, 55, 76-77, 80-82, 89, 98, 106-107, 115, 124, 128, 130, 136*)

- Ensure that provision for RE is increased to meet statutory requirements.
(*Paragraph numbers: 57, 61*)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	34
	Sixth Form	43
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		67

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
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Years 7–11

Number	1	6	21	5	1	0	0
Percentage	2.9	17.7	61.8	14.7	2.9	0	0

Sixth Form

Number	1	10	30	2	0	0	0
Percentage	2.3	23.3	70	4.7	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting the percentages for Years 7–11 and the Sixth Form as each lesson represents more than one percentage point.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7–Y11	Sixth Form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	827	144
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	23	2

Special educational needs	Y7–Y11	Sixth Form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	11	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	96	0

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	8

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	32
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	35

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.9
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	81	78	159

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	72	75	74
	Girls	71	66	64
	Total	143	141	138
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	90(72)	89 (81)	87 (75)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	62 (44)	65 (63)	50 (56)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	63	79	75
	Girls	70	71	68
	Total	133	150	143
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	84 (84)	94 (81)	90 (75)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	57 (53)	78 (63)	53 (47)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	81	66	147

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* - C	5 or more grades A* - G	1 or more grades A* - G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	43	78	78
	Girls	47	64	67
	Total	90	142	145
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	61 (62)	97 (94)	99 (96)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	46.5
	National	39.0

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	11	82
	National		

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 / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations:	Year	Male	Female	Total
	2001	23	33	56

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	29	37	66
	Average point score per candidate	14.1	18.1	16.3
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	18	17.5

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	23	33	56	12	5	17
	Average point score per candidate	12.3	18.2	15.8	10.3	13.2	11.2
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.9	17.4	9.8	11.4	10.6

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	3
Black – other	3
Indian	2
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	3
White	944
Any other minority ethnic group	15

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	6	2
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes:

Y7–Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	56.1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.3

Education support staff:

Y7–Y13

Total number of education support staff	14
Total aggregate hours worked per week	365

Deployment of teachers:

Y7–Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	77
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Average teaching group size:

Y7–Y11

Key Stage 3	27.6
Key Stage 4	22.5

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000-2001
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	£
Total income	2,349,363.00
Total expenditure	2,359,860.00
Expenditure per pupil	2679.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	-57,000.00
Balance carried forward to next year	-67,497.00

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years.	13.6
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years.	15.2

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.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	881
Number of questionnaires returned	265

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	38	55	5	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	45	48	3	2	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	20	51	17	5	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	20	50	20	8	2
The teaching is good.	29	59	6	2	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	29	49	16	5	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	48	43	5	2	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	49	42	5	2	1
The school works closely with parents.	23	48	21	5	4
The school is well led and managed.	35	46	9	2	8
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	34	53	8	2	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	23	40	17	8	13

Other issues raised by parents

A few parents expressed concern about the number of pupils joining the school from another county. However, the school was undersubscribed when these pupils applied for admission, and was obliged to admit applicants.

PART D: THE SIXTH FORM

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

40. Results in AVCE, AS and A Level examinations in 2001 are broadly average. However, standards of work seen during the inspection are somewhat higher than some of last summer's results and are above average. This is a more accurate reflection of the school's results averaged over several years. The varying numbers of students taking examinations in different years makes it difficult to compare results, but in general the school is maintaining standards somewhat above the national average.

41. The average points scored in AVCE, AS and A Level examinations in 2001 are broadly in line with national averages, taken overall. However, there are significant differences between results in different subjects. Results in art, business studies, English literature, French and sports studies are well above average, and results in history are above average. In all other subjects results are average, except for mathematics, where they are below average, and chemistry, where results are well below average. In over half of subjects, all students gained a pass grade. However, standards of the work seen during the inspection are somewhat higher than some of last summer's results. Standards are above average in art, business studies, chemistry, French, history, and sociology. Standards in English, and in sports studies in Year 13, are well above average. In mathematics, standards are rising and are now in line with the national average.

42. When students enter the Sixth Form, their attainment in GCSE examinations is above average. Good teaching and their own very positive attitudes to work enable them to make good progress over each year, and they achieve well. The rates of retention of students are good, both within the academic year and from Year 12 to Year 13.

43. Students have good skills of literacy and oral expression. These skills are well developed before students enter the Sixth Form, and they are provided with good opportunities to continue to develop them in the course of their Sixth Form studies. Students can express themselves fluently and cogently in discussion, and develop good use of specialist language for different subjects. They make good notes, whether in response to teacher's presentations in class or when reading and researching themselves. They write good quality essays, and make electronic presentations of work. Their ICT skills support many of these activities. Students use computers to word process work, to make presentations and to research from the Internet. Most students have computers at home which helps to compensate for the limited access in school. Students' numeracy skills support work in several subjects very well.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

44. A strength of the school, and a key factor in the standards attained at ages 14 and 16, is pupils' attitudes to work. This strength continues to be equally significant in the Sixth Form.

45. Students have very positive attitudes to their education, and are keen to learn and prepared to work hard. Together with good teaching, these are important factors in how the school attains high standards in the Sixth Form.

46. Students' enthusiasm for learning is seen in the very good levels of attendance. Students arrive promptly at lessons and expect to be fully engaged throughout them. Very good relationships are an important factor in promoting good learning. Students feel secure and confident to contribute opinions to discussions and to explore unfamiliar ideas and situations, and this makes a significant contribution to their learning. For example, in a chemistry revision lesson, students' willingness to offer answers, to admit to weaknesses, and to ask questions for clarification enabled them to consolidate their knowledge and understanding. The atmosphere is easy and good-humoured, yet students and teachers alike have rigorous expectations of performance. Students work very well together, whether making marketing presentations in business studies, for example, or contributing to heartfelt debate about the forced feeding of suffragettes.

47. Students are friendly and helpful. Their behaviour is mature and sensible, and provides a good role model for younger pupils. Students respond very well to opportunities to show initiative, to lead activities and to serve the school community. For example, students lead the school houses and organise a variety of activities. Some train and encourage younger pupils in debating skills. A significant number undertake training and become counsellors working in school. Students appreciate the way the school encourages them to have a say in decision making through the school council and the Sixth Form 'soviet'.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

48. There is no unsatisfactory teaching in the Sixth Form. Over 95 per cent of teaching is at least good: 4.7 per cent is satisfactory, 69.8 per cent is good, 23.3 per cent is very good; there was also one example of excellent teaching, which represents 2.3 per cent of the lessons seen.

49. The strengths of teaching in this Sixth Form are teachers' knowledge of their subject and of the examination requirements, their planning, their use of questions, and the good relationships in lessons. Students are interested in study, keen to learn and willing to work hard. Their enthusiasm is matched by that of their teachers, which makes for a stimulating atmosphere in nearly all classes. As a result, relationships are very good, as all work together towards the common objective, and students feel comfortable to ask questions and to discuss and explore unfamiliar ideas. They develop good knowledge, understanding and skills, as well as the ability to think independently, to pursue lines of enquiry, and to consider the 'what if' questions.

50. Teachers have good knowledge of their subjects and of the requirements of both the syllabus for examinations and the assessment criteria. They use this knowledge to promote students' knowledge, and also to develop their understanding of how to attain good grades. Often, teachers' good knowledge is evident in their clear explanations. In a mathematics lesson on the impact of a particle on a fixed surface, the clarity of the teacher's explanation, together with very good support for individuals, helped students to learn at a good rate. In an art lesson, the teacher's knowledge and expertise was evident in how she introduced and explained the methods of colouring students' sculptures, and students acquired the new techniques. Teachers emphasise the use of technical terms, as, for example, in a business education lesson where the theory of marketing was linked with students' applied knowledge. In a physics lesson on electromagnetic induction, the teacher's uncompromising use of scientific vocabulary helped consolidate students' knowledge of specialist language during the demonstration and subsequent discussion. In modern language lessons, teachers' language skills are well used to present good models to students, so that they develop good listening and speaking skills.

51. The school was inspected at the beginning of the summer term, when many lessons took the form of revision. Some lessons were planned to focus on specific examination questions, so that students understood exactly what is required. A lesson revising Victorian poetry illustrated the balance of content required for examination questions. In a lesson on mass spectrometry, a revision question had been carefully selected to illustrate specific points about what is required in an examination answer on the topic.

52. Lessons are well planned and well structured, and sometimes this includes a good range of activities. An example is in sports studies theory lessons, where a variety of activities is routinely planned, including video, whole class and small group work, the use of case studies, discussion, and question and answer sessions. This structure maintains students' interest and keeps them focused, so that they learn at a good rate. An English lesson on Chaucer was successfully planned to realise the objective of developing students' powers of analysis and interpretation. Some lessons are very carefully planned to cater for the varying needs of the students within the group. One very effective example of this was a chemistry lesson revising the Born-Haber cycle, in which groups of students, of differing attainment, were provided with tasks of varying difficulty, chosen so that each group had a good chance of successfully completing the task. The stronger students supported the weaker ones, and all worked very well. The teacher's feedback provided immediate support and direction to their learning, and all experienced a considerable sense of achievement as they consolidated their knowledge and understanding of the topic. This structured planning, together with some teachers' demanding expectations, often leads to a good pace in lessons, so that students make progress at a good rate.

53. Teachers plan and use discussion and questioning very well to develop students' knowledge, and in particular their understanding. A history lesson on women's suffrage used discussion well to illustrate the arguments between historians. In a Year 13 physics lesson, the teacher picked up on students' GCSE knowledge of the topic as a basis to develop the more sophisticated understanding needed for A Level. Sometimes, questioning is used to check students' recall of previous learning, often targeting individuals to assess their learning and to establish what is needed before the class moves on. Sometimes, probing questions ensure that students clarify their thinking. More formal assessment and feedback also help students to acknowledge their success and understand how to improve their work. Sometimes students are involved in assessing their own work and that of others, which is very effective in helping them to understand the assessment criteria and how to do better. Their mature attitude to evaluating the work of their peers makes them all feel confident to allow their work to be used as examples in lessons.

54. There are examples of resources being used well to support learning, such as a video in a biology lesson on hydrolysis and condensation. Sections were very carefully selected to generate a rapid pace and questions reinforced not only students' knowledge of the subject matter but also their awareness of how to achieve high grades. In a design and technology lesson, photographs of chairs manufactured from different materials prompted a very good discussion in which students gave well thought out reasons for the designs.

55. In some lessons where teaching is satisfactory there are nevertheless some minor shortcomings. The most frequently observed was that a few teachers sometimes dominate lessons and allow too little time or opportunity for students to respond, or to develop their own thoughts or skills. This is in contrast to the good practice in the great majority of lessons, which are carefully planned to progressively develop students' learning, and successfully make students independent thinkers. Other individual shortcomings observed

were too much time allowed for an undemanding task; missed opportunities to develop literacy skills and cultural awareness; and insufficient explanation of new items at an appropriate speed to give students a chance to understand. The school's provision of computers limits the use of ICT, and few examples of its use were observed in lessons.

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

56. There is a good range of AS and A Level courses available to meet the needs and aspirations of students. This range has been gradually extended over the past few years. Subjects include those studied in the main school, such as mathematics and English, together with new ones such as psychology, sociology and sports studies. There is one AVCE course, in business.

57. The school has chosen to offer mainly courses at A Level, as there is complementary alternative provision in local colleges. Students say they receive sufficient information in Year 11 about all the courses available in the area to help them to make appropriate choices. The high staying on rate from Year 12 to 13, and the small number of students changing to different subjects, indicates that those who choose to stay at Farmor's School feel they have made the right decision. Provision for RE has improved since the last inspection, but there are still not enough opportunities for students to cover RE topics in line with statutory requirements.

58. There is a well-planned programme to develop students' key skills, taught by specialist staff. In spite of this, many students feel that they would prefer to use the time in other ways. A number of general topics are covered through separate day conferences, for example one on RE and another on higher education. The assembly programme also covers topics that encourage students to think about moral and social issues. Students feel that these programmes, and guidance from tutors and other members of staff, prepare them well for making further and higher education choices. However, they feel that they do not have enough access to careers specific advice and/or interviews. There is no planned work experience programme for students in Years 12 and 13. At present, no students in the Sixth Form are identified as having special educational needs, although two receive extra time for written examinations.

59. There is a wide range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities, including several sports clubs and a number of musical and drama events. There is an active Sixth Form council. Some students work in a support role for the benefit of pupils lower down the school. For example, the Sixth Form debating society organised a successful debate for Year 8 pupils during the week of the inspection. Sixth Form students have many opportunities to play an influential part in the life of the school and to provide good role models for younger pupils.

60. The provision for students' moral, social and cultural development is good. The provision for their spiritual development is satisfactory.

61. There is provision for spiritual development in some curriculum areas. In English, students learn how writers perceive life and the world. For example, in a Year 13 English lesson, students studying the poetry of William Wordsworth appreciated the way in which the poet looked at nature and, in particular, the way in which he saw natural objects as revealing the 'mind' behind nature. They also understood his association of nature with joy. In a Year 13 theatre studies lesson, students working on a scene from 'The Changeling' gained valuable insights into the way characters thought and acted, which reflected a certain

view of life and actions. In history, students consider the treatment of the Jewish people by the Nazis during the Second World War. In addition, they study the bravery and commitment of the suffragettes in England. Provision for spiritual development is weakened by the lack of provision for RE in the Sixth Form. This year a one-day conference was organised, in which students explored spiritual and moral issues from a Christian perspective. Their evaluations show that all enjoyed the day and that it made them think about the nature and purpose of life. However, no other RE is provided. There is no daily act of collective worship, but there are regular assemblies, where there are sometimes opportunities to consider themes which have a spiritual dimension.

62. Provision for moral and social development is good, and there are clear expectations of students. In lessons, the good relationships between teachers and students create opportunities for students to interact in a mature and responsible manner. They relate very well to each other and to other members of the school community. Students are well rounded individuals, courteous, respectful and thoughtful. Sixth Formers take a share of responsibility for helping the school through their work with the debating society, the school council and mock trials. Students running the debating society take responsibility for training young debaters in Years 7 to 9. The elections for the head boy and head girl involve students in discussions and electioneering and are hotly contested affairs. Students assist with Year 7 forms on a regular basis, and help the heads of year and heads of house. About thirty students work as counsellors in the school. These students, usually from Year 12, are given training by an experienced and fully trained counsellor. Work in many subjects, including art, English, history, sociology and sports studies, supports students' moral and social development.

63. Provision for cultural development is good. Students learn about their own culture through art, English, history, music, sociology and theatre studies. There are many visits to museums, art galleries, theatres and other places of interest. The school provides opportunities for students to take part in visits to France, Spain and Italy as well as further afield to Kenya, Australia and Mexico. Many of these visits are reciprocated by students from these countries visiting Fairford which further enriches students' understanding of other cultures.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

Assessment

64. Procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress are good overall. Last September an assistant headteacher was appointed with responsibility for assessment, and the current head of Sixth Form also took up his post. They have improved assessment procedures in the Sixth Form. A database has been established, using average GCSE points scores and other data, to set minimum target grades which are used by departments to negotiate individual target grades with students. Most subjects have completed this process, with the exception of music and sports studies. The student review system regularly monitors students' progress towards these targets. This is conducted by Sixth Form tutors who share the results with parents. Students say they find the system helpful. Similar methods were used retrospectively to analyse last year's AS and A Level results. The aim was to raise departmental heads' awareness of the value of the analysis, to familiarise them with the process, and to begin to identify variations in the performance of different subjects.

65. The use of assessment data varies between subjects. For example, in English, assessment is very well used to produce analyses of students' progress, and therefore the value 'added' by the department, and to evaluate the department's performance in relation to that in other schools. In chemistry, however, the department is only just beginning to use data to track students' progress, and assessment data is not used adequately to guide longer term planning. Overall, assessment is well used to improve attainment, and the system has the potential to be a very useful tool once all subjects use data consistently well.

Advice, support and guidance

66. The provision for the care and welfare of students in the Sixth Form is good. The group tutors, many of whom have a lot of experience, deal sensitively and considerately with the students in their charge. Attendance is carefully monitored and absences are followed up. There is some flexibility of attendance and registration requirements, particularly in Year 13. This takes into account the developing maturity of the students, who are strongly encouraged to take a responsible attitude to the use of their time out of lessons. The trust placed in students in this respect is seldom abused.

67. Arrangements for welcoming students into the Sixth Form at the beginning of Year 12 are good. Events are arranged in the summer term to help them choose Sixth Form subjects, and the first day of the new autumn term is given over to activities to help students settle in. The very good relationship which exists between students and tutors is cemented by regular opportunities for both informal and formal discussion between them. The formal interview held once per term has a carefully planned structure, for which students are required to prepare in advance.

68. For students whose progress gives rise to concern there is an effective review board. This meets regularly and is attended by Sixth Form tutors and heads of subject departments to identify where support is needed. Students with personal difficulties can be referred to a school counselling system. There is no timetabled provision for social and personal education, but a programme is planned to start in September 2002. Good and regular contact between staff and parents is encouraged and maintained.

69. Sixth Formers are encouraged to develop their independent learning skills, but there are at present no formal requirements for subject departments to integrate independent learning into their schemes of work. Plans exist to provide training in study skills and time management from September 2002. There are some good opportunities for personal development in taking responsibility. The prefect system is run by Year 11 pupils rather than the Sixth Form, but the school house system is led by Sixth Form students, and the two heads of school are democratically elected annually by staff and students.

70. The Sixth Form council is a good forum in which all students are invited to exchange ideas of interest and to propose actions through tutor group representation. The recent installation of a drinks machine resulted from such discussions. The Sixth Form management team has some very positive ideas about how to further develop this useful group. It proposes to invite students' views on a wider range of weightier topics, including their perceptions of methods of teaching and learning in the Sixth Form.

71. The school has a well-planned programme of careers advice for Sixth Form students, and tutors play a large part in its operation. Although a very large proportion of students go on to higher education, tutors are sensitive to the needs of the minority who do not and this small group receives good support. Tutors have a good deal of responsibility for guiding students through their applications for higher education and the procedures in place are very

effective. Briefing sessions are held as well as individual interviews, and tutors write references for their students on the basis of information gathered from individual subject areas. Students themselves are given training in the writing of their own personal statement and have opportunities for redrafting and refining it. Students feel well supported by this process and appreciate the efforts that their tutors make in ensuring that higher education applications are submitted in good time. Some students would like more chances to get information about specific careers, and more interviews with careers officers. The school's access to careers specialists is limited.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

Leadership and management

72. Leadership and management are very good. The aims of the Sixth Form are clear. The school wants all students to attain the best results of which they are capable. Good relationships are valued and the result is a purposeful, hard working, inclusive community, with a clear emphasis on meeting the needs of all students. There is mutual respect between students and teachers. Governors are well informed about the Sixth Form, and, together with senior staff in the school, contribute to its ethos and direction.

73. A new head and assistant head of Sixth Form have been in post since the beginning of the current school year. They have made a very good start on evaluating the work of the Sixth Form and identifying key priorities for action. One of these was the need to look more closely at the relative progress students make on different courses, and systems to do this have already been introduced. Data analysis is being used to good effect to set precise targets for individuals, and to monitor overall performance in subject areas. The effective tutorial and subject teachers' support to individuals has been underpinned by good monitoring systems.

74. The Post 16 development plan is clearly written, enabling progress to be easily monitored. Responsibilities for action and resources needed are identified, and good progress has been made towards the targets set. The development plan reflects the school's priorities for development to improve standards and the quality of teaching and learning. Students' views of the quality of their Sixth Form experience have been taken into account through a questionnaire earlier in the year.

75. Departmental plans relating to Post 16 development are more varied in quality. Some lack precision in setting targets and in details of how monitoring will track progress and improve standards. The management of Post 16 programmes by heads of department is generally good, and it is outstanding in the case of English.

76. The school now analyses the income and expenditure related to the Sixth Form, an improvement since the last inspection. The analysis shows that there is currently a small subsidy to the Sixth Form from the rest of the school. This situation is improving as numbers of students increase. Group sizes are carefully monitored and action is taken if they become too small. The Sixth Form is viable, and cost effectiveness is satisfactory. When financial decisions are being taken, comparisons are made with practice in other local schools, and competitive prices for purchases are obtained. However, in the current financial situation in the school as a whole, the emphasis is on managing within tight constraints, with little leeway for spending other than on committed items. The impact of this is seen in inadequate resources in some areas, particularly in ICT.

77. Since the school was last inspected, high standards have been maintained in the Sixth Form. There is still insufficient RE, the school does not meet the requirement for a daily act of worship, and provision for ICT remains unsatisfactory.

78. The provision of teaching staff is good overall. There are sufficient specialist staff to meet the requirements of the Sixth Form curriculum. The recent appointments of an information technology systems manager and an assistant headteacher with responsibility for ICT are the initial steps in addressing the school's need to improve provision for ICT, including in the Sixth Form. In Spanish, staffing is currently unsatisfactory and adversely affects students' learning in both Year 12 and Year 13. Part-time specialist Spanish teachers have been recruited, including a native speaker, but the temporary timetable is fragmented and inadequate. Teachers do not have enough time to fully monitor and support students' progress, and to ensure students' full preparation for the AS and A Level examinations.

79. The school has achieved and retained Investor in People status since 1997 as a result of its continued good practice in the training and development of staff. The evidence of the inspection supports this. All staff are well supported in their professional development by a well structured programme and annual review with senior staff. The school provides good training opportunities for Sixth Form teachers, giving them priority for attendance at information meetings and courses on developments in Sixth Form education. Information and skills are shared; teachers are required to evaluate the training they receive and feed back to their colleagues on courses they have attended. The outcomes of the performance management programme often determine the content of subsequent staff in-service training. The programme is flexible, and supplementary guidance and monitoring is available as required. The whole school policy of monitoring and evaluating teaching is consistently implemented throughout the school, and clear records are kept. The induction of new teachers, including those who are newly qualified, is well planned and ensures them effective support. Work with initial training students is also well organised and clearly documented. School mentors for initial teacher training receive appropriate training with the University of Gloucester. In mathematics, the skills of trainee teachers are well used to support students' learning in Sixth Form lessons.

80. Accommodation is satisfactory overall. The school is set on a pleasant campus, and in recent years there have been additions to facilities in response to the school's growing numbers of pupils. Additions include extensions to the design and technology block, the new arts theatre and studio, and the Sixth Form centre. The new learning resource centre is spacious and provides a very good environment for private study and whole class project work. Accommodation in some other areas is unsatisfactory and adversely affects students' education. For example, business studies lacks specialist furniture and display space, and there is just one specialist ICT room, so access to ICT facilities is restricted for many subjects. The school is continually responding to the growing accommodation needs in its financial planning. Four extra classrooms, including one ICT room, are planned for construction in the next school year.

Resources

81. The provision of resources is unsatisfactory overall. The major inadequacy is the provision of computers. Most subjects find it difficult to gain sufficient access to computers, and this is a particular problem in mathematics and business studies. Other resources are broadly satisfactory, although there are some deficiencies in particular subjects. There are not enough books in some subjects, and students buy their own copies. They also supplement resources by buying their own study guides. In art, students pay for their own

large boards and canvasses, and their oil paint, as the department is unable to provide adequate supplies. The school's constrained financial situation means that it is unable to greatly improve resources. Priority has been given to ICT resources in financial planning for the next year.

82. The learning resource centre is well stocked and supports students' learning well in many subjects. The centre's computers are linked to the Internet and frequently used by students in all subjects for research, for example for authentic materials in modern languages and business studies. However, the number of computers available is too small.

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 shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2001.

GCE AS Level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	1	100	15	100	62	4.00	1.51

GCE A Level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	14	79	87	36	43	4.71	5.80
Chemistry	5	80	90	20	43	3.60	5.90
Biology	6	83	88	33	34	4.33	5.25
Physics	7	86	88	29	40	4.86	5.67
Design and technology	6	83	91	17	30	4.33	5.38
Sports studies	7	100	92	43	25	6.86	5.09
Art and Design	12	100	96	67	46	8.33	6.57
Music	1	100	93	N/A	35	6.00	5.74
Theatre Studies	7	100	93	29	31	5.71	5.53
Geography	9	89	92	33	38	5.56	5.74
History	15	93	88	40	35	5.73	5.45
Religious Studies	4	100	92	25	38	4.50	5.84
Sociology	9	100	86	33	35	5.56	5.32
Psychology	11	100	87	36	34	5.45	5.30
English literature	30	100	95	67	37	7.60	5.91
French	6	100	89	50	38	7.33	5.59
Spanish	3	100	89	33	39	6.67	5.70
Business AVCE	1	100	N/A	0	N/A	4.00	10.45

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

83. The school offers courses in mathematics, chemistry, biology and physics. Mathematics and chemistry were inspected in depth, and biology and physics were sampled. One lesson was seen in each subject. In the physics lesson, the teaching was good, and in the biology lesson it was very good. In both lessons, students and teachers worked very well together in a very positive atmosphere, and learning correspondingly proceeded at a good pace. There is some variation in standards over time in these two subjects but pupils reach A Level results which are above average overall, and well above average in some years.

Mathematics

Overall the provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Students enjoy mathematics, are highly motivated, and work hard.
- Teaching is good, based on strong subject knowledge and understanding.
- There are good relationships between students and teachers, which encourages students' active participation in learning.
- The progress of individual students is tracked well through good use of assessment data.

Areas for improvement

- Standards reached in examinations.
- The use of ICT as a tool for learning.
- Sharper analysis of assessment data at departmental level and of the outcomes from monitoring teaching.

84. The inspection covered the AS and A Level mathematics courses offered by the school. The modular course covers pure mathematics, mechanics and statistics. In Year 12, 27 students follow the AS Level course, and six students in Year 13 follow the A Level course. In most years a small number of students follows a course in further mathematics; currently one female student in Year 13 is doing so.

85. In 1999, A Level results were above national averages. In 2000 and 2001, the trend of results was downward, with results below national averages. The standards of work seen during the inspection, together with module results for the current school year, indicate that standards are rising and are now in line with national averages. A few students reach very high standards. There is no difference in the attainment of boys and girls in the work seen. More male students than female students follow mathematics courses. Sometimes male students get better results; in other years female students do.

86. The retention rate from Year 12 AS Level courses to Year 13 A Level courses in September 2001 was poor. Some of those students who decided not to carry on with mathematics had received pass grades in the module examinations, and some had not. However, numbers taking AS mathematics in the current Year 12 have increased. A recent

survey shows that over 80 per cent of these students intend to study mathematics in Year 13. In the past few years, the mathematics curriculum has been widened to appeal to the more diverse mathematical backgrounds of students taking AS mathematics. Previously, only courses in pure mathematics were offered.

87. Higher attaining students enter Year 12 with a strong foundation in mathematics. They are able to build quickly on this, developing a high level of rigour in their work. These students are able to assimilate new ideas well and apply them to new and more complex situations. These skills, together with a challenging curriculum and good teaching, help them to achieve well and reach high standards in their work. Average attaining students make steady progress, extending their knowledge and skills and developing confidence in their ability to use these in more testing questions. Their achievement is satisfactory and they reach standards that are in line with national averages. Lower attainers can apply their knowledge and skills to standard situations, with considerable individual help from teachers. These students do not have sufficiently strong algebraic skills when they enter Year 12. Additional work outside class helps them to improve. The class work and homework of these students indicates that most should achieve a pass grade. Strong individual support from teachers, inside and outside lessons, is a key factor in their satisfactory achievement.

88. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers' enthusiasm for mathematics is infectious. In a Year 12 class, this enthusiasm, linked to very good subject knowledge and clarity of explanations, encouraged students to take part in a discussion on the nature of proof, exploring difficult ideas such as proof by contradiction. Students tackle problems by referring to their notes and discussing possible methods of solution with each other before asking for help from the teacher. Their learning skills are good. Lessons are structured with an appropriate mix of activities and input from the teacher, so a good pace is maintained. Sometimes lesson planning does not take the needs of lower attaining students into account, other than through providing individual support.

89. In a Year 13 class, a computer model was used effectively, and quickly, to demonstrate how the movement of a bouncing ball was affected by changes in its initial height and elasticity. This helped students to learn successfully by reinforcing previous work on the topic. However, there is not enough access to ICT resources for these to become a regular tool in teaching and learning.

90. Students' work is marked regularly to examination criteria. In addition to written marking, strategies for improvement are provided through oral feedback in class and the use of model solutions. Students' individual progress is carefully tracked, and compared with their individual targets and predicted outcomes. This enables students to know how well they are doing. They also appreciate the considerable additional time given by teachers, outside lessons, which helps them make progress. Students' attitudes to mathematics are very good. They are highly motivated, work hard and enjoy their mathematical studies.

91. The leadership and management of an experienced, enthusiastic team of specialist teachers are satisfactory. Teachers work well together, and their subject knowledge and good relationships with students provide a strong mathematical environment for learning. There is now a good range of departmental performance data, including examination and school assessment data. However, not enough use is made of this information, and of the outcomes of lesson observations, to identify which groups of students may be under achieving and which are the most effective strategies to help them make progress. No issues about mathematics Post 16 were raised in the last inspection report.

Chemistry

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

Strengths

- Standards are above average.
- Teaching, by the well-qualified and enthusiastic specialist staff, is good.
- Students are mature and keen to learn.
- Relationships between students and teachers are excellent.

Areas for improvement

- Schemes of work give insufficient guidance and lack rigour.
- The analysis of assessment data is not used in a focused way to guide curriculum planning and to develop teaching and learning, in order to improve standards.

92. Twenty-one students follow the chemistry course in Year 12, and six in Year 13. By the end of Year 13, standards in chemistry are above average. Although the results in the A Level examination in 2001 were significantly below average, the number taking the examination was very small and the results not typical of recent years. Averaged over several earlier years, results have been above the national average, with more than half of students achieving at least grades A or B and almost all students achieving at least a pass grade. There is no discernible difference between the performance of boys and girls.

93. In the AS Level examinations, taken for the first time in 2001, all but one of the 12 students passed and about one-third reached grade A or B. There is considerable variation in different years in the numbers taking chemistry and also in the numbers completing the course. Half of the 12 students who took the AS examination in 2001 have continued to the second year of the course. The 22 students in the current Year 12 is the highest number for many years, which has resulted in the formation of two teaching groups, and a recent student poll indicates that the majority expect to continue their chemistry studies next year.

94. The standard of work seen during the inspection is above average overall, but covers a wide range. The work of some high attaining students in Year 13 is well above average. For example, some have a thorough understanding of the Born-Haber cycle and can untangle challenging problems on its use and present their answers to the rest of the class. At the other end of the scale, some students with low attainment lack confidence in their own knowledge of fundamental chemistry, such as types of bonding, and are not confident to take part in class discussions. Higher attaining students in Year 12 effectively used their knowledge of basic principles developed during the course so far to take part in a lively debate on how physical changes affected the forward and reverse rates of a reaction in equilibrium. In another lesson, some students with lower attainment showed less secure knowledge of activation energy diagrams, and they needed prompting to distinguish between the diagrams for exothermic and endothermic reactions.

95. Students' achievement is satisfactory. Those who take chemistry in the Sixth Form generally begin their course with grades B and above in their GCSE examinations, and most achieve results in line with this starting position. Major factors contributing to achievement are the good classroom teaching and, particularly, the positive attitude and commitment of the students themselves. The current schemes of work, which lack detail, do not focus sufficiently on learning for achievement to become good rather than satisfactory.

96. Teaching is good overall, with some very good features, and students learn well as a result. Teachers have extremely good knowledge of chemistry, and this and their great enthusiasm for the subject are very effectively communicated to students, who themselves work with enthusiasm. Lessons are well planned, and teachers' high expectations lead to learning opportunities which offer the students challenge. Where learning is very good, teachers constantly use sharply focussed questions which challenge students to develop their understanding of fundamental principles. For example, the simple device of using revision questions to make students think about the underlying chemistry was used very effectively. This supported high and low attaining students alike by focussing on each of the alternative answers in turn. Good use is made of students' willingness to contribute to their own learning by presenting their own ideas and answers. For example, in a lesson on the Born-Haber cycle, the division of the class into groups of similar prior attainment gave the chance for all to demonstrate very good learning at different levels. Sometimes a limited range of activities is provided, which does not maintain the flow of learning quite so effectively. For example, not all the students in a large group had the opportunity or the confidence to make an effective contribution. Most of the marking of work gives students feedback on what they have to do to improve.

97. Students make a very significant contribution to their own learning with their excellent attitudes and relationships with their teachers. They arrive at lessons keen to learn and tackle the work with enthusiasm, and there is a sense of enjoyment in the lessons. They are confident and articulate speakers in discussion, and a strong atmosphere of mutual respect is a characteristic of all lessons seen. They are very willing to work together in groups in a very co-operative spirit. For example, in a lesson on mass spectrometry, groups took it in turns to prepare answers to questions on relative abundance and present their results in pairs to the rest of the class. Students also work well independently when given the opportunity to do so, such as in a project on pollution of the environment.

98. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The very experienced and enthusiastic head of chemistry is keen to maintain and improve standards in the department. However, schemes of work for the relatively new courses are not well enough developed and give little guidance on how learning objectives are to be achieved. Some opportunities for students to learn independently by researching topics are evident, but these are not clearly identified in the scheme of work. Analysis of examination performance is very informal and does not lead to focussed planning of how to develop teaching and learning in order to drive up standards and improve achievement. Provision of ICT hardware is inadequate, which means that the use of ICT in chemistry is not well developed. Resources for the subject are adequate but limited, and students supplement the books issued to them by buying their own course guides.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

99. The school offers AS and A Level courses in design and technology. These courses were not inspected in depth. A Level results in 2001 are below average. In the one lesson observed, teaching was good and students attained above average standards.

BUSINESS

100. The school offers AVCE in business studies. This was inspected in depth.

Business studies

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

Strengths

- Standards are well above average.
- Teachers have good business experience and secure subject knowledge, and they plan lessons effectively. Independent learning is strongly developed.
- Students have a positive attitude to their learning and work well together.
- Teachers and students have very good relationships.
- The department is very well led.

Areas for improvement

- Access to ICT.
- The accommodation has an adverse impact on the quality of the learning environment.

101. Standards in the 2001 Advanced GNVQ examination are well above average. The average points score was 13.29, compared with the national average of 10.45, and 43 per cent of students achieved distinction. There has been a steady improvement over the past three years. Girls gain higher grades than boys, although the gap in attainment is reducing slightly. Recruitment has remained fairly constant with more boys than girls in most years. There are 11 students in Year 12 and 13 in Year 13: the Year 12 group consists of 10 boys and one girl. The retention rate has remained high, with only one student failing to complete the course in 2001. In the AS VCE examination, 30 per cent gained an A-B pass. Students have achieved well in business studies since its introduction in 1997.

102. The standards of students' written work and levels of understanding seen during the inspection were above average and consistent with the good results achieved in recent years. Students make good progress throughout the two years, and achievement is good. In Year 12, AS students are confident in making a PowerPoint demonstration, and are able to use theoretical models to illustrate marketing research into real companies. They argue their points of view with confidence and with a high level of understanding. They also listen critically to each presentation and analyse effectively the significant features of the research. Year 13 students are able to analyse case study material, to work under pressure and to work well in pairs and groups. They also identify key customer service issues from visual material. Students work with considerable focus and excellent concentration. Teamwork is also particularly effective.

103. Teaching is very good overall. This enables students to learn very well and achieve good results. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, which is rooted in their business experience. The majority of the course modules are based on real case studies with local companies. Both the modules and the lessons are planned effectively to enable students to develop knowledge and understanding of the business world. Teachers' expectations of the students are very high. The students are constantly challenged to identify, research and solve business issues, and the initiative for learning rests with them, which they welcome. They have a mature approach to their studies and, from early in Year 12, they develop very good independent learning skills. They have to make early contact with a firm of their choice in order to write their first assignment, and this pattern is strengthened through the course.

104. The pace of learning is considerable and the students enjoy the challenge that is offered to them. The teachers' expertise and enthusiasm about the subject produces a high level of enthusiasm amongst the students. Relationships are also very good and there is a high degree of mutual respect. This creates a very positive environment for learning.

105. The monitoring and assessment of students' work is very thorough and every student is aware of what has to be done to strengthen his or her portfolio. Students are well prepared for the modules and examinations and are provided with well-planned revision material and with lunchtime study sessions. They have a very high regard for the quality of the support that they receive. Many of the students continue their study of business at university.

106. Students have confident ICT skills and use them to enhance both the presentation and content of their work. However, the availability and provision of computers both within the department and the wider school are inadequate. Students commented on the difficulties they often face in finding a computer for their coursework.

107. The very good teaching and learning result from the department being very well led and managed. In recent years, a number of developments have been introduced. The range of courses has been modified, a scheme of work introduced, and revision packs created. Procedures for assessment have been improved, and the range of guest speakers invited to school has been extended. A business library has been developed and an interactive whiteboard purchased. At present the accommodation does not provide a modern business environment and detracts from the quality of students' learning experience. This needs to be improved as soon as possible, in particular the provision of display space, the television unit, and the availability of computers.

108. The head of department has a clear vision of how the subject can develop still further, and a GCSE course will be introduced into Year 10 in the next school year. Areas for future development need to include extending the range and number of company visits and encouraging more students to take up the subject in Year 12, particularly girls.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

109. No courses are run in this area.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

110. AS and A Level courses in sports studies are offered. This subject was inspected in depth.

Sports studies

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

Strengths

- Well above average standards.
- The excellent attitude of students, and the very good relationship between students and staff.
- Very good teaching.

Areas for improvement

- Planning for more use of information technology.
- A sharper focus on individual learning goals, with clear targets and strategies for improvement, informed by analysis of students' achievements.
- More informative marking.

111. In 2001, as for the last three years, results in A Level examinations are well above the national average. Students performed at least as well in sports studies as they did in their other A Level subjects. In the AS Level examination, over 80 per cent of students attained at least a B grade, and over 50 per cent gained grade A. In Year 12, standards are above average, but in Year 13, where students' prior attainment in GCSE examinations was higher, standards are well above average. Achievement is good. The factors which help students make good progress are the very good relationships between staff and students, and effective, well-organised teaching which has a clear focus on what students will learn. Students' attitudes to work are another important factor: the particularly mature, focused and business-like approach of Year 13 students is crucial in the high standards they attain. There are 12 students in each year, and all last year's Year 12 students continued with the course into Year 13.

112. Students in Year 12 have a sound knowledge and understanding of factors affecting participation in sport and are able to use this understanding to develop discussion on the effects of racism in sport. In Year 13, students' prior knowledge of how equal opportunities issues affect participation and achievement in sport at grass roots level is applied very successfully in units of work about how such equality issues affect performance at the elite level. Students also have a good knowledge of anatomy and physiology, and of the psychological factors which affect performance. The written work of most students shows a good understanding of the ground covered and includes very comprehensive notes for all units of work. In one instance a very interesting project on the importance of motivation to the improvement of performance demonstrated the student's good understanding of the psychology of sport and learning theory. However, students are not given enough opportunities to present their knowledge and understanding in regular assessed assignments or in practice answers to examination questions.

113. Teaching is very good and students learn very well as a result. The strengths of the teaching include clear objectives, good planning and very good relationships with the students. Teachers' very good subject knowledge is evident in their expositions and in question and answer sessions with students, who are thus enabled to extend their own knowledge and understanding. Students are given very good opportunities to work independently, to take responsibility for their own learning and to help others in the group to improve their performance. This helps them to develop individual learning skills, as well as to clarify and reinforce their understanding. For example, this was a feature of a well

structured and organised lesson where Year 13 students worked together to analyse how a range of equal opportunities issues might affect the experience and progress of elite sportsmen and women. Discussion was of a high quality and students made good use of a wide range of relevant vocabulary.

114. Students' attitudes to learning also ensure that they learn very well. They are co-operative and attentive. They work well in groups, supporting each other and listening well to each other's ideas. They respond well to the supportive teaching and different learning styles they experience. Most are confident in offering their ideas and respond well when given responsibility for their own learning. Retention is very good: the vast majority of students complete the course.

115. The good teaching and learning in the subject are supported by very effective leadership and management. Day-to-day organisation is very good. There is a clear commitment to improving standards, and the department is keen to build on the good start that has been made in the new courses. Staff have a clear picture of the potential of individual students. Marking is generally rigorous, but does not consistently and clearly identify specific targets for improvement. Students do not have enough work assessed by examination requirements and standards. The department does not use enough information about students' attainment in setting longer term targets for them, and the targets set do not focus sharply enough on specific learning goals. Students do not have enough opportunities to use ICT.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

116. No courses are offered in this area.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

117. AS and A Level courses are offered in art and design, music and music technology, and theatre studies. Art and design was inspected in depth. A Level results in 2001 in theatre studies are broadly average. One lesson was seen, in which teaching and learning were good. One candidate followed the A Level music course in 2001, and obtained a pass. One music technology lesson was seen, in which careful planning of challenging tasks and students' commitment led to good learning.

Art and design

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

Strengths

- The school achieves high standards in A Level examinations.
- The curriculum is stimulating and imaginative: the students' work provides a powerful incentive to pupils in the main school.

Areas for improvement

- There are insufficient resources, which limits students' choice of media.
- The department's long-term development planning is not based on a sufficiently objective analysis of results and achievements.

118. Results in the A Level examination in 2001 are well above average. Two-thirds of the students gained a grade A or B, and all students passed. Results have been consistently above average over the last four years, and sometimes have been well above average. Generally, boys do less well than girls, although the gap is narrowing. However, the small number involved reduces the significance of this comparison. In the 2001 examination at the end of Year 12, those students who 'cashed in' their AS Level results gained grade A or B. Although about half of the cohort did not continue their studies to A Level, this was unusual, as generally most students stay on. Equally, students rarely drop out mid-term. There are currently 12 students in Year 12, and four in Year 13.

119. Students' achievement is good. They come from a range of starting points; for example, students do not always have a high grade in GCSE. They have a range of interests and a high proportion of them are studying sciences as well as art. The art department makes good use of this in its planning and teaching, and develops individual learning well.

120. The work seen during the inspection was above average. The best work is lively and engaging, and it shows a range of influences and ideas pursued in depth. All the work has a strong basis of observation and recording, which shows the emphasis the department places on basic skills. This enables students to develop their projects effectively through careful research and presentation.

121. Teaching is good, and along with the imaginative and challenging curriculum it plays an important part in the students' success. When the school was inspected, Year 13 students were preparing for examinations, and therefore students were consolidating their knowledge and understanding rather than learning new things. Nevertheless, it was clear that the teachers had taught students well. Great attention is paid to individual needs, and the course is very well planned. Students have a clear idea of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Teachers encourage and develop individual strengths, and have very high expectations. This is evident in the enthusiasm and commitment of all the students, who work many hours outside school to meet the firm and clear deadlines set by the teachers.

122. In one lesson, a gifted Year 13 student had made five separate paintings in response to a piece of music, and had analysed the effectiveness of their imagery and emotional expression. The student confidently discussed evidence of the influence of African and Arabic imagery and the episodic nature of film scores. In an AS Level lesson, students with no previous experience of ceramics learned how to apply colouring and bronzing to large dramatic figurative sculptures which they had made. The teacher shared her very good technical knowledge of surface treatments, set clear objectives, and provided appropriate resources. This enabled all students to make good progress in the techniques, and by the end of the lesson their sculptures had become very different. Students discussed and evaluated the formal and aesthetic effects of the changes.

123. Students' attitudes are very good. Students are mature, friendly and keen to work. They enjoy the art course and many use it to broaden their creative experience, rather than necessarily as an entry to arts courses in higher education. Some current students are aiming at marine biology, acoustic engineering and geography, as well as those who intend to be artists and designers. The work of the A Level students is an inspiration to younger pupils. The tradition of bold figurative painting and sculpture, and the exploration of aspects of other times and cultures, as well as contemporary social issues, provides an important incentive for younger pupils.

124. The leadership and management of the department are good. The head of department is enthusiastic and committed, and rightly proud of the examination success which the department achieves. The art department cares for students well. Assessment of students' work is used effectively to raise attainment and to inform individual learning needs. The head of department is beginning to use the school's analysis of data on past performance in art to discover how well students are achieving in relation to their previous attainment. This is a new development, and this information, along with data from monitoring teaching and learning, is not yet being examined objectively enough to inform future planning. There is not a clear link between the department's current development plan and these data. The department's examination success is achieved in spite of unsatisfactory resources, which limit the students' choice of media and involve them in considerable expense in, for example, buying boards or canvasses and oil paint. The department has not fully considered whether this situation can be maintained.

125. The school has maintained all aspects of the provision for art since the last inspection, with the exception of resources. The new examination structure has been introduced successfully.

HUMANITIES

126. The school offers AS and A Level courses in geography, history, religious studies, sociology and psychology. History and sociology were inspected in depth. All four candidates entered for the examination passed religious studies in 2001, and one of these students obtained a higher grade. Results in geography and psychology are broadly average. Lessons were seen in geography and religious studies, in which teaching and learning were good.

History

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

Strengths

- Standards are above average and students achieve well.
- Students are mature and responsible and develop into independent learners.
- Teaching and learning are good.

Areas for improvement

- Access to ICT.
- The range of teaching and learning styles.
- The quality and extent of comment on students' work.

127. The proportion of students obtaining a pass grade in A Level examinations has been consistently above the national average over recent years. Students' average points scores, when the past four years are considered together, are also above average. Results in 2001 are above national averages. In the 2001 AS Level examination, the proportion of students obtaining grades A and B is well above the national average, and all but two of this quite large group of 19 have continued with the subject in Year 13. There are 30 students studying history in Year 12.

128. Standards are above average, and students' achievement is good. Students handle sources well, analyse them accurately and offer reasoned evaluations. For example, in a revision lesson on the struggle for women's suffrage, all students analysed sources accurately and offered reasoned evaluations. However, lower attaining students confused Sylvia and Christabel Pankhurst, and only the most able noted that the photograph of mother and daughter in prison attire was staged for public relations purposes. In a coursework essay on whether Lyndon Johnson's war in Vietnam was a noble cause, most students displayed good skills in terms of constructing a chain of logical argument, supporting it with appropriate evidence and pursuing it to a consistent conclusion. Higher attaining students commented on the evocative nature of the language used in some of the sources and reflected speculatively on the concept of nobility. Students' standards of literacy are above average, and this is significant in their attainment. They acquire a thorough knowledge of subject-specific terminology and use it appropriately and confidently. They express themselves fluently both orally and in writing, and demonstrate good communication and independent research skills. Most students make good use of ICT in carrying out their personal studies. The lack of access to computers in school means that the department cannot plan ICT-based lessons, and students are principally reliant on facilities at home.

129. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers' very good subject knowledge and thorough planning help students to acquire a detailed understanding of topics such as poverty in 19th and 20th century Britain, and to assess the extent to which progress was made in the arrangements for its alleviation. Teachers make good use of AS exemplar material to heighten students' understanding of examiners' expectations of essay writing at this level. Lessons are briskly paced, and resources carefully chosen and deployed so that students improve their source handling skills and understand the concept of different interpretations of history. A significant contribution to the quality of learning is made by students' very positive attitudes to the subject. They approach and organise their work in a mature and responsible way, and use their initiative well in becoming effective independent learners. In a revision lesson on the American Civil Rights movement, question and answer was well used to probe, extend and challenge students' knowledge and understanding, and to underline the point that historical events may be interpreted in a variety of ways. When the department was inspected, only revision lessons could be observed, and some lessons take place outside the history area. In the lessons seen, there was a heavy dependence on photocopied sheets. Students also feel that the range of teaching and learning styles is not wide enough at other times. Examination and assignment work is carefully analysed, but teachers do not give enough diagnostic and evaluative comment in their day-to-day marking to help students understand how to improve their work.

130. The subject is well led and managed, and is attracting a growing number of students. The newly qualified member of the department has been well supported and satisfactory improvement has been maintained in all aspects. The head of department is committed to further raising attainment. Examination results are carefully analysed and students were consulted before the present syllabus options were selected. However, the development plan does not set out how the department aims to further raise attainment. Current financial constraints mean that students have to buy their own textbooks, which is unsatisfactory.

Sociology

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

Strengths

- Standards are above average.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- The head of department provides good leadership and manages the department effectively.
- Students are interested and keen to learn: they take an active part in their learning.

Areas for improvement

- Improving the provision for ICT in the teaching and learning of sociology.
- Recruitment of boys to sociology.

131. In 2001, A Level results in sociology are slightly above national averages. All but one student gained a pass grade, and 40 per cent gained the higher grades A-B. Taking the average over the past four years, the points score gained by students is above average. In 2001 all students entered for AS Sociology were successful and gained an equal distribution of grades A-C. Retention rate during this period has been good. The majority of students studying sociology at present are girls, and this has also been the case in most recent years. There are 12 students in Year 12, and 12 in Year 13. Many students go on from GCSE sociology to study the subject in the Sixth Form, where retention is satisfactory.

132. Standards of attainment seen during the inspection were above average, and students' achievement is good. Year 12 students have a good understanding of different theoretical perspectives, and are gaining confidence in communicating key concepts such as culture and socialisation, in the context of studies of the mass media and religion. Students' critical skills are emerging and all students have a broad understanding of the range and variety of sociological research.

133. Year 13 students have a good grasp of the theoretical features of the subject and can apply this to research studies of education, crime and deviance. Their written work, which includes extensive notes and essays of good quality, reveals a substantial depth of sociological knowledge. This is also expressed in classroom discussion and oral presentations of sociological studies. Students gather data effectively, and reach balanced conclusions in their note making and essays.

134. Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are well planned and focus on engaging students to express their views and demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the subject. For example, in a lesson on the social implications of technology developments in the media, the teacher skilfully directed an analytical discussion in which students developed good understanding of the social consequences of cable and satellite television and the Internet. This led to a timed task which enabled students to consolidate their knowledge and understanding of the topic, as well as clarifying examination requirements. Key sociological language is stressed, so that students learn to use it accurately. Subject specific information is fluently conveyed and skilfully managed to stimulate students' interest. Teachers intervene sensitively to gently push students to offer more of their understanding of the topics studied.

135. In response to this good teaching, students show positive attitudes to learning. They are co-operative and generous with their time and make the effort to share ideas and

support each other when performing group tasks. Students are eager to express their opinions, but they also listen and are tolerant and respectful of the views of others.

136. The head of department provides good leadership and has a clear vision for the development of the subject. The management of the department is good, with clear systems of responsibility and accountability. Schemes of work have been revised and upgraded. Effective assessment and monitoring procedures are in place, and are regularly practised by teachers and understood by students. Resources are satisfactory, except for the provision for ICT.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

137. Courses are offered in English literature, French and Spanish. English literature and French were inspected in depth and Spanish was also sampled. In Spanish, AS and A Level examination results in 2001 are above average. One Year 13 Spanish lesson was observed, student files were sampled, and there were brief discussions with the students taking AS and A Level Spanish. Current standards in Spanish are generally above average in listening and speaking, and average in writing and reading. Staffing difficulties due to temporary absence have resulted in there being a lack of continuity in learning, and limited time made available for examination preparation. Although all the temporary teachers have a very good knowledge of Spanish, and the lesson observed was good, overall provision for Spanish is inadequate.

English literature

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

Strengths

- Standards are high and continuing to improve, and the gap between boys' and girls' results is decreasing.
- Leadership and management of the subject are outstanding.
- Teaching and learning are very good: expectations are high, planning is excellent, and teachers have very clear understanding of examination requirements.
- Students have very good attitudes to learning. They are mature and articulate young people who enjoy literature.

Areas for improvement

- There are no significant areas for improvement.

138. English literature attracts a higher number of students than any other A Level subject. There are 31 students in Year 12, and 41 in Year 13. Retention rates are very high, attendance is very good, and standards are well above average. A Level results in 2001 are well above national averages. Students' average points score is 7.60 compared to the national figure of 5.91. The proportion of students achieving grades A and B is 67 per cent, compared to a national figure of 37 per cent. In the coursework component, students achieve very high marks, so much so that the examination board concerned will be using the school's current coursework as a national exemplar. Over the past four years, students' average points score has been well above the national average. More girls than boys tend to study English literature, and both perform better than girls and boys nationally. Girls achieve better than boys, but the gap between them is narrowing. Data produced by the school shows that A Level results are improving year on year. In AS Level examinations in 2001, all

but one of 33 students gained a pass grade, and two thirds of students attained grades A or B.

139. The standard of work is well above average. Students in Year 12 have a good knowledge of 'The Wife of Bath's Prologue' and use mature and sophisticated language confidently when discussing each other's essays. They share their critical and appreciative comments with the teacher and each other, and understand how the use of a precise vocabulary underpins sound criticism and improves their response. Students in Year 13 have a clear grasp of Wordsworth's poetry. In particular, they understand how the poet sees nature as revealing the mind behind nature and his association of nature with joy. In their written work, students show continuous improvement, and a maturity and economy of style. For example, in an excellent essay on the work of Edgar Allan Poe, a combination of unusual and detailed depth of knowledge and an excellent prose style gained maximum marks. Students enjoy the subject and rise to the challenge of the lessons. They are very good at assessing their own writing against the grade criteria.

140. The achievement of AS and A Level students is very good. Students' listening and speaking skills are well above average. The quality of their written work improves during their time in the Sixth Form, and is of a high standard by Year 13. It shows a detailed knowledge of texts, and very accomplished skills of analysis and interpretation. This, together with a sophisticated use of the language of criticism, and teaching that is very clearly targeted to the demands of the examination specification, ensures that students achieve high grades.

141. Teaching and learning are very good. In the six English literature lessons observed, teaching was good in half, and very good in one third, with one excellent lesson. Students respond enthusiastically to this high quality teaching. They are thoughtful, serious and articulate, and enjoy sharing their ideas with each other. They work hard and develop as very determined independent learners.

142. Teachers know their subject very well. In addition to deep and thorough knowledge of set texts and literary criticism, teachers understand examination requirements very well. Planning is excellent. Teachers direct all learning towards the demands of the examination, but they do so in such a way that learning becomes a shared and enjoyable experience between teacher and student. This motivates students to gain greater familiarity with texts and to develop their powers of analysis. The quality of discussion in lessons is high. By the skilful use of questions, teachers prompt students to think and refocus their ideas. Students respond very positively to this and so develop and deepen their understanding and appreciation of literature, as well as their critical thinking. This was a key feature in the excellent lesson. Students, working in three groups, discussed the work of three Victorian poets. They had prepared well for the lesson, using a variety of materials. Carefully structured, scholarly and persistent questioning reinforced and developed students' knowledge and understanding of text, style, language and context. Each group of students got to the heart of their poet, expressing their views in thoughtful and mature critical language. It is this blend of subject knowledge and rigorous enquiry, seen in all lessons, that contributes to the high standards students achieve.

143. Leadership and management of the subject are outstanding. The head of department is outstandingly effective in leading a team of dedicated and well informed teachers, who have in common a clear view of what constitutes excellence. They share good practice, so that the approach to teaching is consistent across all lessons. This promotes high standards and develops key skills. Marking is excellent. Close attention is paid to developing the students' prose style, with the result that the quality of students' writing is very

high. The department has a very good and thorough system of assessment, monitoring and target setting, and makes very good use of data produced by the school.

French

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

Strengths

- Standards which are above average.
- Teachers' excellent subject knowledge.
- The very good teaching of French literature.
- The comprehensive advice, guidance and learning support students receive from teachers.
- Students' very good attitudes.

Areas for improvement

- Opportunities for students to use their own language creatively in lessons.
- Redrafting of written language to ensure full understanding of basic or persistent errors.
- The recruitment of boys to the subject.

144. A Level results in French in 2001 are above average, with all five candidates obtaining pass grades and three gaining A or B grades. This continues a trend of improvement in French results overall, and of A and B grades over the past three years. These results are in line with what might be expected from students' prior attainment, and achievement is satisfactory. AS Level results in 2001 are above average. All seven students passed and the proportion of A and B grades is above average. Student numbers in the current Year 12 show a slight decrease: there are six students in this year, and five students have continued their study of French in Year 13. Retention rates over the past three years have been generally good. Few boys have been recently recruited to French courses.

145. Standards are above average, and achievement is satisfactory. Standards in listening are well above average. Students understand teachers' rapid French and respond quickly to questioning. Standards in speaking are also above average, and this includes a wide range of vocabulary and confident expression of opinions. Students speak with good French accents and handle the language of argument competently within prepared situations on a range of topics, but some students lack confidence in using language naturally in unpredictable situations. In writing, standards are above average. Most students can incorporate authentic language into written assignments, and demonstrate a wide specialist vocabulary in essays on, for example, drug abuse, crime and the environment. Almost all students can use a wide range of verb tenses and grammatical structures confidently, and with reasonable accuracy, although in the case of the weaker students, some basic errors of grammar and verb usage persist. Reading comprehension skills are good. Students' ability to scan texts for information is evident in written work, and in their very good response in lessons to teachers' questions, particularly on literary texts.

146. The French course contributes substantially to the development of students' communication skills. Most make effective use of their ICT skills in personal research on the Internet for topic information, and some use word processing well in preparing and presenting their French assignments. Students are able to take responsibility for their own learning through efficient use of self-study listening and reading packs, particularly in Year 13.

147. Students have very good attitudes to learning. They are well motivated and have very good relationships with teachers. Year 12 and Year 13 students expressed warmly their appreciation of their teachers' commitment to their examination success.

148. Teaching and learning are good overall, and the teaching of French literature is very good. Teachers and the language assistant have excellent subject knowledge, all being native or fluent speakers of the language, and consequently students develop very good listening skills through consistently hearing authentic French in lessons. For example, in a Year 12 lesson, the teacher gave a commentary in French while reinforcing on the board the answers to a listening exercise. Well-structured questioning enables students to develop their oral responses on prepared topics. However, in the lessons observed, too small a proportion of time was given for students to use the language naturally and creatively in less formal communication situations, such as in pairs, or in the form of student presentations. This means that they do not develop enough independent use of language. Teachers use the board very well to support learning, reinforcing or demonstrating points clearly. A very good example was seen in a Year 13 literature lesson, in which the teacher clearly demonstrated the structure of an essay through a diagram, skilfully using students' contributions. Teachers provide very useful language support sheets and information on examination requirements, so that students' learning is well directed and supported. For example, in a Year 13 literature lesson, the students' prior preparation of the text, with very clear guidance sheets, enabled them to understand and reuse the appropriate language confidently. Students appreciate this provision very much. Teachers support students very well with frequent and thorough marking of assignments, which they also grade according to examination criteria. This helps students understand examination requirements. However, most students do not routinely redraft their written work following correction by their teacher, and as a result some basic errors or misunderstandings often persist.

149. Leadership and management are good and there is a particularly strong team commitment to students' achievement. Departmental documentation is professional, comprehensive and thorough, and teachers have good opportunities to enhance their knowledge of post-16 issues through attendance at guidance meetings.