

INSPECTION REPORT

PENSBY HIGH SCHOOL FOR BOYS

Heswall

LEA area: Wirral

Unique reference number: 105100

Headteacher: Mr M L Jones

Reporting inspector: Alan Haigh
2630

Dates of inspection: 11th – 15th February 2002

Inspection number: 191232

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

© Crown copyright 2002

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Modern (non-selective) deemed all ability
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 - 19
Gender of pupils:	Male
School address:	Irby Road Heswall Wirral
Postcode:	CH61 6XN
Telephone number:	(0151) 648 2111
Fax number:	(0151) 648 3128
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr G L Sale
Date of previous inspection:	November 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
2630	Alan Haigh	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it? Results and achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
13448	Dawn Lloyd	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
30576	Peter Bannon	Team inspector	Mathematics	How good are curricular and other opportunities?
3758	Anthony Barringer	Team inspector	English	
2491	Doug Beaumont	Team inspector	Design and technology	
4922	Michael Driver	Team inspector	Science	
2628	Jim Edwards	Team inspector	Physical education	How well does the school care for its pupils?
10448	Michael Elson	Team inspector	Religious education	
8873	Charlotte Evers	Team inspector	History Equal opportunities	
31981	Eric Forster	Team inspector	Art	
12470	Brian Greasley	Team inspector	Geography	
20619	Jenny Hazlewood	Team inspector	Business studies	
7958	Gina Lewis	Team inspector	Media studies	
20767	Jerry Royle	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Music	
3937	John Seed	Team inspector	Biology	
28002	Sue Taylor	Team inspector	Special educational needs	
31644	Viv Walker	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	

The inspection contractor was:

PPI Group Ltd
7 Hill Street
Bristol
BS1 5RW

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Complaints Manager
Inspection Quality Division
The Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

REPORT CONTENTS

Page

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

4 - 8

Information about the school
How good the school is
What the school does well
What could be improved
How the school has improved since its last inspection
Standards
Pupils' attitudes and values
Teaching and learning
Other aspects of the school
How well the school is led and managed
Parents' and carers' views of the school

ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM

9 - 11

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

12 - 14

The school's results and pupils' achievements
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

15 - 17

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

17 - 19

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

19 - 21

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

21 - 22

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

22 - 25

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

25 - 26

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

27 - 31

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

32 - 54

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

55 - 67

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Pensby High School for Boys is a little smaller than average, catering for 816 boys aged 11-18 years, including 101 sixth formers. Although now designated 'all ability' it is essentially a secondary modern school. The number of pupils has remained steady in recent years. Ninety-nine per cent of pupils are from white ethnic backgrounds and no pupils speak English as an additional language. About 13 per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals, a figure that is broadly average. About 14 per cent of the pupils are on the special educational needs register and this figure is below average. About three per cent have statements of special educational needs; this figure is a little above average. Most of these pupils are dyslexic or have general learning difficulties. The school houses a designated special educational needs unit for visually impaired pupils; this is supporting three boys at present. The school opened in 1953 and is situated in a relatively affluent part of the Wirral. It takes boys from about 35 primary schools. Attainment at entry is below average overall as most of the higher attaining boys in the area choose to attend selective schools and the school recruits very few pupils from the upper third of the ability range. The school experiences difficulties in recruiting teachers, especially in design and technology and religious education and also in finding suitable temporary replacements for vacancies or absent teachers. The school participates in and benefits from the Excellence in Cities initiative.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school has clear strengths but some areas in need of much improvement; it is broadly effective. The GCSE results are better than those in similar schools but below the national average. Sixth form results are above average in vocational subjects but below average in others. Work is generally of a below average standard but the boys achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. Teaching and learning are good. Although leadership and management are satisfactory overall, aspects of them are not. These mainly relate to the inadequate school improvement planning. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Compared with similar schools, the Year 9 national test science results were above average and the mathematics results were well above average in 2001.
- The proportion of boys achieving GCSE passes (A* to G) was better than that in similar schools in 2001.
- The GCSE results in 2001 in English language, business studies and food technology were above average. The media studies results were above average at all levels.
- Teaching is consistently very good in food technology and a little is very good or better in English, mathematics, media studies, modern foreign languages, music, physical education and personal and social education.
- The boys are keen to come to school, showing much enthusiasm for learning. Attendance is very good.
- Pupils learn in a safe, secure and very caring environment. Relationships are very good; pupils and teachers get on well together.

What could be improved

- The GCSE results are not improving as quickly as results nationally and fell well below the school's targets in 2001.
- Standards are not high enough in the resistant materials and graphic products aspects of design and technology and in religious education for boys aged 11 - 16 and in art for boys aged 11 - 14.
- Teaching is not good enough in the aspects of design and technology just listed and in religious education.
- The school's provision for the boys' spiritual development is unsatisfactory.
- The strategic use of resources is unsatisfactory as school improvement planning is inadequate and educational direction is lacking. School improvement is taking place too slowly.
- The accommodation is unsatisfactory and resourcing is poor; the library is totally inadequate.
- There is too little use of information and communication technology in many subjects.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in November 1996. It has not made sufficient progress since that time. Standards have risen for 14 year olds. The GCSE results have been mixed, being very good in 1999, poor in 2000 and sound in 2001. The slight upward trend is slower than the national trend. Teaching is a little better but not yet good enough. The teaching of music is much better and some improvements have been made in art. Pupils' movement around the school is no longer a problem. The punctuality, of older pupils especially, is poor and many sixth formers arrive very late for lessons. There is no longer-term school improvement plan and this seriously hinders progress in many areas. The monitoring and evaluating of teaching are much better than they were but more staff development is still needed to help weaker teachers. The curricular coordination and assessment practices are much better and this is helping raise pupils' standards. Spending on resources remains low but improvements have been made to accommodation and more are planned. There is still no religious education for sixth formers.

STANDARDS

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

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

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

The results in the national tests taken by 14-year-olds in summer 2001 in English and science were below the national average. Those in mathematics were in line with it. When compared with similar schools (secondary moderns with the same proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals) the English results are average, the science results are above average and the mathematics results are well above average. The overall trend in these results in recent years is upwards and they are improving more quickly than results nationally. The upward trend is most obvious in mathematics but less clear in English.

The GCSE results, based on the average total GCSE points score per pupil, were below the national average in 2001. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more A* to C grades at GCSE was, at 31 per cent, better than that in similar schools. The proportions achieving five or more A* to G passes was above the average for similar schools and close to the national average. Overall GCSE results, based on average points scores, were above the national average for similar schools in 2001. The upward trend, however, is below the national trend at this level. The school's GCSE results in 2001 fell well short of its targets. Those in English language, business studies and food technology were above average. The media studies results were above average at all levels. The strongest GCSE subjects in 2001 in *value-added* terms were English language and literature, food technology and French. Boys did less well in mathematics, science, geography and history than in most of their other subjects. Results in the resistant materials and the graphic products aspects of design and technology were low. The standard of work seen, including that in English, mathematics and science, was generally below average for 11-16 year olds. Boys achieve well at all levels, however, making good progress and doing better in the main than their prior attainment would indicate. Boys with special educational needs make more modest progress, as do the gifted and talented pupils. Standards of literacy and numeracy are close to average but the boys' competence in the use of information and communication technology across the curriculum is below average.

The results in the A/AS level examinations in 2000 and 2001 were well below average. In 2001 the results were average in chemistry, below average in biology, general studies and mathematics and well below average in business studies, English literature, geography, history, and sports/PE studies. Results in 80

per cent of all entries were grade E or better and 18 per cent grade A or B. All students taking art and design, design and technology, English literature, physics and religious studies obtained at least a grade E. The GNVQ intermediate and advanced level results were above average and all students gained at least a pass grade. Students retaking GCSE subjects obtained well above average results. Standards of work seen were close to average in the sixth form and the boys are making good progress in the main.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	These are good. Pupils show a lot of enthusiasm about coming to school and much interest in what they do.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	This is good overall. There is very little oppressive behaviour, bullying, racism or sexism.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are very good and the boys' personal development is good, reflecting the high level of care shown by the school for them.
Attendance	This is very good; unauthorised absence is low. Punctuality is satisfactory.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11	Years 12 – 13
Quality of teaching	Good	Satisfactory	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 overall quality of teaching and learning is good. Teaching is good with pupils aged 11 - 14 and those in the sixth form and satisfactory with boys aged 14 - 16. The teaching of English and mathematics is good overall and science teaching is good with 11 - 14 year olds and satisfactory with 14 -16 year olds but good in the sixth form. One in ten of the 192 lessons observed were less than satisfactory and temporary teachers, sometimes working outside their own specialism, taught a high proportion of these. Many of the weaknesses are in subjects where the school is experiencing recruitment problems. Most teachers manage the pupils very effectively and this is a key strength of much of the teaching. A small number have poor class control. Teachers have good knowledge of their subjects and most assess the pupils well enabling them to make good progress. Teaching methods are a little more effective with 11 - 14 year olds than 14 - 16 year olds. Numeracy is taught well and literacy is taught soundly. Teachers ensure that the needs of most pupils are met well. The boys with special educational needs generally make sound progress and in several subjects make good progress. The gifted and talented boys also learn and progress soundly. The boys' acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding is good and most make much effort to learn well. Many sustain concentration well but independent learning is not good enough, limited by poor facilities and insufficient use of information and communication technology across the curriculum.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	These are good overall. The boys' needs are met well with a curriculum that has good breadth and balance. The strategies for teaching literacy are sound and those for numeracy are good. The school provides the boys with a good range of extra-curricular activities. The statutory requirements for collective worship are not met and sixth formers do not all study religious education.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	This is satisfactory overall. The assessment and monitoring of pupils' needs and their progress are effective. Links with parents and subject departments are good. Insufficient in-class support is provided. In the majority of subjects, work is rarely matched closely to the needs of pupils. The boys with visual impairment are very well looked after and receive a very good education.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	This is sound overall. The boys' social development is well provided for and their moral and cultural development is satisfactory. The provision for their spiritual development is unsatisfactory as opportunities for this are missed in many subjects.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares very well for its pupils. The boys receive very good educational and personal support and guidance. The pastoral system is very effective. The monitoring of boys' progress is developing well.

The school works well with parents and is very approachable and caring. School reports are not informative enough but much of the other information provided for parents is of a good quality.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	These are satisfactory overall but there is no clear educational direction and very inadequate school improvement planning. The caring aspect of the school's aims is very successfully achieved. Equality of opportunity is strong. Senior staff have a clear commitment to improvement.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors fulfil most of their responsibilities well, except in relation to collective worship and sixth form religious education. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses but play too small a part in shaping the direction of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	This is satisfactory and is improving. More data is gathered and analysed now. All teachers' lessons are observed regularly and performance management arrangements are satisfactory.
The strategic use of resources	This is unsatisfactory; there is no link between the budget and the school's aims. Accommodation is inadequate and learning resources, especially the library, are poor. The principles of best value are applied satisfactorily.

The match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum is just satisfactory. The school experiences difficulties in recruiting teachers, especially in design and technology and religious education, and also in finding suitable temporary replacements for vacancies or absent teachers. There are too few support assistants for boys with special educational needs.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• They think the school expects their sons to work hard and do their best.• They find the school approachable.• They consider their sons are making good progress.• They think the teaching is good.• They say their sons like school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There is either too much or too little homework.• They are not well enough informed about how their sons are getting on.• The school does not work closely enough with them.

Inspectors found that most teachers expect the boys to work hard but a significant minority do not expect enough of the boys, especially the lower attaining ones. The school is friendly and approachable and the vast majority of boys say they like coming to school. Teaching and progress are good. Amounts of homework do vary too much. School reports are not informative enough. The school tries hard to work with parents, providing some good quality information for them.

ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM

PENSBY HIGH SCHOOL FOR BOYS

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

There are 101 students in the sixth form and it is smaller than average. Numbers at present are significantly lower than in recent years. Sixth form provision is shared with the girls' school on the adjacent site and this increases the range of courses offered. Just over half of the Year 11 boys in 2001 continued in the sixth form. A small number (four this year) join the school from other schools. The socio-economic background of boys entering the sixth form is a little above average. There are two sixth formers on the school's register of special educational needs. There are no minimum requirements for entry into the sixth form. There are GCE AS and A2-level courses and also vocational courses leading to intermediate and advanced qualifications. Students are able to retake GCSE courses in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Eight students undertake student-apprenticeship schemes operating in cooperation with a local engineering training organisation. The proportion of Year 13 students entering higher education has risen significantly from about one in three in 1999 to well over a half in 2001.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form is effective and enables the needs of most boys to be well met by its appropriate range of courses. The good teaching results in students achieving well; their learning is good. The results in vocational courses are above the national average and although results in A and AS courses are below average they are better than the students' prior attainment would predict. There is an upward trend in post-16 results. A small number of students have indifferent attitudes to their studies, arriving very late for lessons, for example. The leadership is satisfactory and management of the sixth form is good. Accommodation and learning resources are inadequate; the facilities for independent study are poor. Some groups are small but the cost effectiveness of the sixth form is satisfactory.

Strengths

- Most students achieve well in the majority of subjects in relation to their earlier attainment. This is most obvious in mathematics, biology, business studies, information technology and media studies.
- Teaching is good generally and some in English, mathematics, biology and business studies is very good.
- Results in the vocational subjects were significantly better than results nationally in 2001.
- The good curriculum is especially successful in providing for individual needs and ensuring equal opportunities for all students.

What could be improved

- Standards in work seen in geography and religious education are not high enough.
- The attitudes of a significant minority of boys to their studies are not good enough and punctuality to lessons is unsatisfactory.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory. The social area is very small and the facilities for independent study are inadequate. The library is especially inadequate and access to information and communication technology is poor.

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	Good. Whilst standards are below the national average, they are improving. Teaching and learning are good and leadership and management are very good. There is too little use of resources, information and communication technology especially.
Biology	Good. Students attain average standards and achieve well in relation to prior attainment. GCE results are a little below average and are improving. Teaching and learning are good and the subject is well managed.
Business studies	Good. Attainment is above average in the vocational courses and average in academic courses. Achievement is improving because of the very good teaching and its positive impact on learning. Management is satisfactory and a strong team is developing.
Information and communication technology	Good. GCE results are below average but standards are improving and are now average. Students achieve well because of the good teaching and learning. Management is good.
Art	Satisfactory. GCE results are below average. Attainment in practical work is average and students achieve satisfactorily. Students draw and paint well. Teaching and learning are sound. Management is satisfactory. Information and communication technology is underused.
Geography	Satisfactory. Attainment is well below average but most students achieve appropriately. They use resource material well. Teaching and learning are satisfactory but work is not challenging enough. Management is sound.
History	Satisfactory. Standards are average and students achieve satisfactorily. Their knowledge and understanding of the past are strong but interpreting sources is weak. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Management is sound but long-term planning and the use of information and communication technology are not good enough.
English	Good. The A level results are below average but current standards are close to average and students achieve soundly showing a good understanding of the set texts. Teaching and learning and subject management are good.
Media studies	Good. The GCE results and current standards are above average with students achieving well in relation to prior attainment. Students do research work in groups well. Teaching and learning are good. The subject is managed well.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Support and guidance are good. Sixth form induction is organised well with a successful residential element for boys and girls. The boys' progress is monitored carefully in most subjects. Careers, college and university advice is good.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Leadership is satisfactory and management is good. The sixth form's aims are achieved largely but there is no long-term planning. Equality of opportunity is ensured for all students. The sixth form is cost effective.

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">• They find the teachers accessible to help them with their work.• They consider the teaching is good.• They appreciate the information that is provided about their courses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The school does not listen enough or respond to their views.• There are too few enrichment activities outside their main subjects.• They are not well enough advised on careers and other post-school options.• They are not well enough informed about their progress.

The inspectors fully endorse the students' positive views and consider that the school provides a satisfactory range of activities to enhance the curriculum together with a well-planned programme of information and advice about careers and higher education. Most departments ensure that the boys are aware of their academic progress. The school could do more to take account of sixth formers' views.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. The results in the national tests taken by 14-year-olds in summer 2001 in English and science were below the national average. Those in mathematics were in line with it. When compared with similar schools (secondary moderns with the same proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals) the English results were average, the science results were above average and the mathematics results were well above average. The overall trend in these results in recent years is upwards and they are improving more quickly than results nationally. The upward trend is most obvious in mathematics but less clear in English.
2. The teachers assess pupils' standards at the age of 14 against national criteria and in summer 2001 they said standards were generally below the national average in most subjects. Exceptions were geography, information and communication technology, and mathematics, where standards were considered to be in line with those in most schools.
3. The GCSE results, based on the average total GCSE points score per pupil, were below the national average in 2001. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more A* to C grades at GCSE was, at 31 per cent, above that in similar schools. The proportion achieving five or more A* to G passes was above the average for similar schools and close to the national average. Overall GCSE results, based on average points scores, were close to the national average for similar schools in 2001 and have been so for several years.
4. There is a small upward trend in GCSE results. The upward trend, however, is below the national trend at this level and the picture in recent years has been very mixed. In 1999 the GCSE results were much higher than those in similar schools. In 2000 they were much lower. There is sound evidence that the 2001 improvement will be maintained as analysis of data about pupils' attainments is now more thorough and the monitoring of pupils' progress is undertaken more rigorously.
5. The school's GCSE results in 2001 fell well short of its targets. However, the targets were set with an insecure evidence base of what the pupils might achieve. The GCSE results in 2001 in English language, business studies, food technology and media studies were above average. The strongest GCSE subjects in 2001 *in value-added* terms were English language and English literature, food technology and French. Boys did less well in mathematics, science, geography and history than in most of their other subjects. Results in the resistant materials and graphic products aspects of design and technology were low.
6. The standard of work seen, including that in mathematics and science, was generally below average for 16 year olds. Standards in English were average at that age. The 14 year olds are, however, attaining average standards in science, reflecting new teaching and assessment approaches in that subject, but below average standards in English and mathematics. Boys' achievements and progress in these three subjects are generally good, with standards of work being higher than might be expected when their prior attainment is considered. However, the 14 year olds achieve as expected in English and the 16 year olds do likewise in science.
7. Attainment in food studies, geography, information and communication technology, modern foreign languages, music and physical education is similar to that seen in most schools for 14 year olds. Attainment in art, in design and technology and in history is below average and that in religious education is well below average. Boys aged 16 achieve well in most subjects, making good progress and doing better in the main than their prior attainment would indicate.
8. Boys with special educational needs make more modest but still satisfactory overall progress, largely accounted for by the shortage of special needs support assistants. They do, however, make good progress in English, design and technology, and modern foreign languages. In these subjects good

use is made of individual education plans and work is well matched to the needs of individual pupils. The small number of boys with visual impairment make good progress and receive close support. There is an effective partnership between teachers and the specialist support staff. The gifted and talented pupils are identified well but often they are not pushed on enough and so make only satisfactory progress.

9. Standards of literacy are average. Pupils read and write well in the main but written work in geography, history and religious education is generally unsatisfactory. Many boys speak well, defending opinions and views sensibly. Oral work is often confident and is strong in English and media studies. Boys listen well in the vast majority of subjects. Standards of numeracy are close to average, reflecting the solid foundations provided by the mathematics department. The boys' competence in the use of information and communication technology across the curriculum is below average. Mathematics, media studies and modern foreign languages make sound use of information and communication technology but other subjects do not.

Sixth form

10. The results in the A/AS level examinations in 2000 and 2001 were well below average for students entered for two or more A levels and for those entered for less than two A levels or AS equivalents. In 2001 for those subjects where comparisons can be made with national data, the results were average in chemistry, below average in biology, general studies and mathematics and well below average in business studies, English literature, geography, history, and sports/PE studies.
11. There was a total of 107 A level entries in 16 subjects in 2001. Of these entries 80 per cent were grade E or better and 18 per cent grade A or B. These outcomes are consistent with the prior attainment of the boys. All students taking art and design, design technology, English literature, media studies, physics and religious studies obtained at least a grade E. The GNVQ intermediate and advanced level results were above average and all students gained at least a pass grade. Students retaking GCSE subjects obtained well above average results.
12. Standards of work seen are above average in media studies and close to average in English, art, biology, history, and information and communication technology. Standards are below average in mathematics and geography and well below in religious education.
13. The sixth form boys are making good progress in the main. Their achievements are satisfactory in English and good in mathematics, biology, business studies, information and communication technology and media studies with outcomes generally being above what would be expected taking their prior attainment into account. Current achievements are generally better than recent exam results suggest, with improved sixth form teaching. They understand their set English texts well and the high attainers write well at length. Standards of numeracy are good and the sixth form mathematicians think logically. They are not good at estimation work, however. Biology practical skills are at the expected level but boys are less successful at evaluating information and data in that subject. Boys following the vocational course in business studies have a strong knowledge of finance. Project work in information and communication technology is of a good quality. The boys do good quality research tasks in media studies.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

14. Most pupils have good attitudes to their work; they behave well in lessons and around the school. Their relationships with one another and with their teachers are very good and their attendance is above average. The positive motivation and good behaviour seen at the last inspection have been maintained and contribute well to their good progress.
15. Boys are proud of their school and rate it highly. They enjoy coming to school, and show this in their high level of attendance. There is a very low rate of unauthorised absence; such absences are quickly identified by the school's monitoring systems and dealt with appropriately. Punctuality is satisfactory.

16. Attitudes to learning are almost always good, and sometimes very good or excellent. Pupils settle quickly to their work and show high levels of interest and concentration. They listen carefully, answer questions readily and are keen to participate in discussions and activities. Their lively enthusiasm is seen in the way they enter into the spirit of their lessons, for example, a Year 9 class were engrossed in working out their monthly income and expenditure as architects, engineers and estate agents in a role play exercise.
17. Behaviour outside lessons is usually good, although there were isolated examples of pupils noisily rushing round the school, thoughtlessly leaving doors to swing into those coming behind them. Most pupils move around the building in an orderly, if somewhat haphazard, fashion. In the dining hall, behaviour is civilised and controlled. Standards of behaviour around the school have improved since the last inspection.
18. Instances of very poor behaviour are rare, so the school has seldom had to use its ultimate sanction of exclusion. Numbers of exclusions in the past year were low and the arrangements for dealing with them are thoughtful and effective. Governors consider circumstances very carefully before agreeing to exclude a pupil, and make sure that proper support from staff and parents is in place when an excluded pupil returns to school.
19. Relationships amongst pupils and between pupils and adults are very good. Pupils say that the school is a friendly place, that they get on well with their teachers and that there is hardly any bullying. There is no evidence of racism or sexism. In the most successful lessons, the very good relationships that have been established create a positive learning environment in which pupils respond well to teachers' expectations. Boys co-operate well together when asked to work in pairs or groups, taking turns fairly, for example, when sharing keyboards in music lessons or computers in other lessons, and helping one another appropriately. There is a clear link between the quality of teaching and pupils' behaviour. They behave better in lessons that are well prepared and stimulating than in those where the teacher fails to motivate them.
20. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated into all activities. These pupils generally have a positive attitude to their work, are keen, and work hard. Those with visual impairments appreciate the level of specialist support given to them and are well motivated.
21. Pupils' developing maturity is seen in the confident and sensible way they express their opinions and take a full part in school activities. In lessons, they are confident to give their views and to demonstrate in front of the class; for example, a Year 8 group in a drama lesson were not at all self conscious about performing their prepared scenes. Boys are polite, friendly and helpful to visitors and very willing to discuss and explain their work. They respond well to the limited opportunities that exist for them to take on responsibility, such as helping in the library, looking after the animals and acting as helpers at the reception desk.

Sixth form

22. The positive attitudes and good behaviour seen in the main school are also evident in many of the sixth form students. Most are enthusiastic, attentive and hard working. They are actively involved in their learning, co-operate well with one another and have good relationships with their teachers. Some, however, do not show a serious commitment to school and are half hearted in their application to work. Attendance in the sixth form is mainly good, but drops significantly when students are in their final year. The students are, however, encouraged to study at home as the school's facilities for this are inadequate. Punctuality is not good enough, with some students arriving up to 15 minutes late for lessons.
23. Students who completed the pre-inspection questionnaire (about a half of them did so) say that staff are accessible to help them with their work, believe that teaching is good and that they have been provided with good information about the courses available in the sixth form. Students' concerns were expressed about the school's response to their views, the quality of advice on future paths, the lack of curriculum enrichment and the quality of information they receive about their academic progress. Only half would recommend the sixth form to others. Inspectors found that the school provides a suitable

range of activities to enhance the curriculum and a clearly planned programme of information and advice about careers and higher education for students in their final year. Most departments ensure that students are aware of their academic progress. The school could do more to take the views of sixth formers into account.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

24. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. Teaching is good with pupils aged 11 - 14 and those in the sixth form and satisfactory with boys aged 14 - 16. More than half the lessons in the main school (11 - 16) and two thirds of those in the sixth form were good or better. One fifth of the main school lessons were very good or excellent and a quarter of the sixth form lessons fell into this category. One in ten of the 154 main school lessons observed were less than satisfactory and temporary teachers, sometimes working outside their own specialism, taught a high proportion of these.
25. The teaching of English and mathematics was good overall and science teaching was good with 11 - 14 year olds and sixth formers and satisfactory with 14 - 16 year olds. In the main school, English teaching was all at least satisfactory and much was good. The teaching of English to small withdrawal groups was unsatisfactory partly because the pupils were not clear enough about what they were doing and also because some lessons were not organised sufficiently well to keep the boys on task. All the mathematics teaching was at least satisfactory and almost a half was very good or excellent. The best lessons were lively, demanding and interesting. In the main school, a little science teaching was very good and a little unsatisfactory. Methodology has been improved and new assessment methods brought in; these are visibly raising standards in science.
26. Teaching was very good in food studies, especially in Years 7 to 9. The detailed planning and the very effective use of time by the knowledgeable teachers ensured a high level of interest and good learning. All the teaching in art was satisfactory, a clear improvement since the last inspection. Music teaching was good; none was unsatisfactory and a little was very good - a significant improvement since the last inspection. Music is now a successful subject where pupils learn well, try hard and show much enthusiasm to get on. All the teaching of information and communication technology and physical education was at least satisfactory and more than a third in the latter subject was very good or excellent. Some of the work in information and communication technology was not challenging enough.
27. The teaching of modern foreign languages was good overall; a half was good or better; a little was excellent and a little unsatisfactory. The geography teaching was satisfactory; a little was very good and a little was unsatisfactory. Much of the geography work lacked challenge, however. History teaching was satisfactory overall also; a little was unsatisfactory, much was good.
28. Many of the weaknesses are in subjects where the school is experiencing recruitment problems, notably design and technology and religious education. The teaching of resistant materials and graphic design was unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9 as was that of religious education in Years 7 to 11. The learning in these subjects was consequently also unsatisfactory. Pupils were not acquiring the necessary skills and made insufficient effort. Their pace of work was often sluggish and assessment of their progress in religious education was poor.
29. Most teachers manage the pupils very effectively and this is a key strength of much of the effective teaching, learning and progress. A small number have poor class control. Teachers have good knowledge of their subjects in the main and most assess the pupils well, enabling them to make good progress.
30. The teaching of personal and social education was good overall; a little was very good. In Year 9 pupils were given the opportunity to calculate a monthly budget. Teaching was enthusiastic and pupils' responses were good. In a citizenship lesson, pupils in Year 9 explored human rights and the entitlement of individuals. Some made references to the recent prisoners captured in the war in

Afghanistan. They explored the website of Amnesty International with interest, demonstrating good skills in the use of information and communication technology. The teacher used group work effectively, consolidating pupils' own knowledge of the topic. Behaviour was very good and pupils were motivated to complete tasks set by the teacher. In Year 11, pupils discussed whether cannabis should be legalised. They understood that there was a need to control legalised drugs and that some drugs have a positive use in relieving pain, such as with multiple sclerosis. All pupils adopted a mature attitude to the topic in a lesson where teaching was of a brisk pace.

31. The quality of careers teaching is good. Some Year 10 pupils explored the various health and safety issues that may arise when they are taking part in work experience. They understood that they have a responsibility, as does the employer, in the work place. The teacher's planning was thorough and pupils were on task throughout the lesson with interest and enthusiasm.
32. Teaching methods are generally a little more effective with 11 - 14 year olds than 14 - 16 year olds. A significant minority of teachers have not taught in any other school and have too little knowledge of up-to-date methodology. Numeracy is taught well and literacy is taught soundly. Teachers ensure that the needs of most pupils are met well.
33. The assessment of pupils' progress is at least satisfactorily in all subjects except religious education where it is poor. Assessment practice is very good in mathematics and good in English, science, food studies and media studies. Homework is used soundly in the main to support learning and progress. It is used well in mathematics, business studies, media studies, modern foreign languages and physical education. It does not sufficiently support learning in religious education. Information and communication technology is used satisfactorily to support learning in mathematics, media studies and modern foreign languages. Other subjects make too little use of it.
34. The boys' learning is good overall in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. The boys' acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding is good in the main and most make much effort to learn well. Many sustain concentration well but independent learning is not good enough; it is limited by poor facilities and insufficient use of information and communication technology across the curriculum.
35. The quality of teaching of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. In a minority of subjects, full use is made of individual education plans, and teachers have a good knowledge of the variety of strategies available to provide well-targeted support for the difficulties experienced by individual pupils. In one lesson in food studies, for example, pupils with special educational needs were provided with a framework that enabled them to write a well-structured evaluation of their work. In other subjects, however, teachers rely on attempting to support pupils in class and do not provide suitable materials to enable pupils to make sufficient progress.
36. The quality of work of support assistants from the special educational needs department working in the classroom is good. In Spanish, for instance, one pupil made very good progress as the support assistant was very well prepared and encouraged and challenged the pupil to achieve a higher level of work. When pupils are withdrawn from lessons the quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, but a little is unsatisfactory. Teachers are generally well prepared and lessons are well planned with a variety of carefully structured activities. The best lessons are delivered at a brisk pace and teachers have high expectations. Where lessons are unsatisfactory pupils are not sufficiently motivated and become disruptive, so that progress is slow.
37. Pupils with visual impairments are supported very well through the effective partnership between teachers and the specialist support staff. The specialist staff have very good knowledge and understanding of individual needs, plan very effectively, and provide a wide range of equipment and appropriate strategies to aid learning. The positive and very supportive approach means that pupils cope well within lessons and make good progress.

Sixth form

38. The quality of teaching in the sixth form is good. Of the 37 lessons observed two thirds were good or better and one quarter were very good or excellent. One lesson was unsatisfactory. The quality of teaching was very good in business studies and was good in all other subjects inspected except art, history and geography, where it was satisfactory. A key skills lesson on the importance of research skills was particularly well taught, arising in part from the energetic, lively style and the very positive working relationships.
39. Teachers know their subject well and most make their lessons interesting and challenging. They know individuals very well and constructive relationships are established. This gives students confidence and positive attitudes to learning. Lessons are usually well planned and meet the needs of the students. There was some excellent teaching and learning in a business studies lesson. The teacher made excellent use of personal experiences and discussed objectives for the lesson and ones to follow. The pace was rapid and there was a good range of appropriate activities.
40. Students are managed well and high concentration and interest levels are maintained. Resources are usually used effectively. However a geography lesson was unsatisfactory because students spent most of the lesson watching a video with little further support, discussion or background information from the teacher. Work is marked well and students are well informed of their progress in biology, English, mathematics and media studies but generally these are satisfactory in other subjects. Time and resources are not used well in history. Opportunities for independent study are inadequate. The library is poor and the information technology resources are not always readily available.

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

41. Curricular provision is good. The curriculum fully reflects the very good equal opportunities policy of the school. A wide range of opportunities is provided that meet the needs of all pupils and fulfils statutory requirements throughout Years 7 to 11. Apart from a good range of GCSE courses in Years 10 and 11, there is a work-related alternative for those not able to study the full range of National Curriculum subjects. There is the opportunity for able and keen linguists to study two languages to GCSE level and for less able students to retain their interest by completing a well-structured Certificate of Achievement course. The school makes a determined effort to include all of its pupils meaningfully and is improving rapidly in its provision for the gifted and talented.
42. Since the previous inspection, the school has not addressed the issue of too little physical education for the more able pupils in Year 9 who begin the study of a second modern foreign language. However, it plans to address this problem from September 2002. The carousel arrangement in Years 10 and 11 that includes provision for religious education, physical education, personal, social and health education, information and communication technology as well as the work-related curriculum, still forms a slightly disjointed experience for pupils. However, it does ensure not only statutory provision for religious education and information and communication technology, but also provides a short-course GCSE in both. The school makes good use of the two-week timetable of 25 hours each week.
43. There are effective setting arrangements for pupils throughout the school so that in all subjects there is provision for work to be targeted at the most suitable levels. Information and communication technology is taught suitably as a discrete subject throughout the school. Personal, social and health education is taught for two lessons each three weeks in a carousel arrangement with drama in Years 7 and 8. This is adequate provision for both but it is improved in Year 9 with one lesson per week in each subject. Careers education is of good quality and begins in Year 9. There is insufficient time for science in Year 7.
44. In Years 10 and 11, the range of subjects on offer covers the compulsory curriculum and makes effective use of the carousel arrangement referred to previously. Some pupils with special educational needs follow a foundation level GNVQ course in Construction and the Built Environment. Good links are made with partner institutions. Pupils spend half a day at the local Heritage Centre and half a day at Wirral Metropolitan College. They are suitably disapplied from modern foreign languages and

design and technology. The school has received national commendation for the quality of this enterprise. However, no other vocational courses are on offer to pupils in Years 10 and 11.

45. The school has a sound policy for teaching literacy skills. The development of literacy is no more than satisfactory in subjects other than English, although there is some good speaking practice in mathematics. Numeracy is taught well in the mathematics department. There is good numeracy practice in design and technology using scale drawings of buildings, and there are budgeting tasks in media studies to calculate the number of separate drawings needed to make a cartoon film. Pupils also use their numeracy skills well in media studies. In geography, GCSE pupils accurately use a variety of graphs, including scatter graphs, for coursework.
46. The school makes good provision for extra-curricular activities. Despite below-average facilities in physical education, there is good provision for table tennis, soccer, tennis and seasonal provision for golf and sailing. There are popular daily clubs in animal welfare, information and communication technology and chess as well as a homework club four evenings each week. A quiz club is held once a week and a twice-weekly GCSE support club for Spanish conversation is held in which older students help younger ones. Music and drama also feature strongly in after-school clubs. There is useful community use of the school in these performing arts areas, which also involves pupils from the school. Apart from this, however, and the use of local firms for work placements, the school's links with the community need to be extended.
47. The school uses finance from the Excellence in Cities initiative to provide mentors for Year 11 pupils who are on the C/D grade GCSE border in most subjects. They also identify gifted and talented pupils in every year group and monitor their progress and involvement in selected activities. This work is still at an early stage. Whilst departments have not yet clearly identified differentiated activities for gifted and talented pupils, the enthusiasm, organisational skills and energy of both the co-ordinator for Excellence in Cities and her colleague for Gifted and Talented are beginning to bear fruit.
48. The individual education plans provided for pupils with special educational needs are carefully prepared. They fully reflect the requirements of the statements of need. The targets are discussed fully with pupils and parents, ensuring they are fully understood. The majority of subjects provide their own targets and so match the work more effectively to the individual needs of the pupils.
49. Additional support for pupils with special educational needs is provided by support assistants from the special educational needs department, and is well organised and effective. The amount of this support is insufficient to meet the needs of all the pupils, particularly in mixed attainment classes. An appropriate programme of withdrawing a minority of pupils in greatest need to work in small groups and receive further support is well organised.
50. There is very little additional help, for example, from specialist teachers from outside agencies working with pupils with specific needs in school. A very successfully organised reading club meets for twenty minutes during form tutors' time on three mornings each week. Teachers and support assistants work with small groups of pupils to develop reading skills.
51. The specialist staff from the visual impairment unit undertake a programme of work with Year 7 pupils and sixth form students to raise their awareness of the range of difficulties that blind and partially sighted people face. Their work is very well received and as a consequence pupils with visual impairments are very well integrated into all aspects of school life.
52. Personal, social and health education is of good quality. A well-organised programme includes sex education and drugs awareness, supported by cross-curricular themes such as Environmental Education, Economic and Industrial Understanding and Citizenship. The school is making satisfactory progress for the introduction of Citizenship into the curriculum in September 2002, but it needs to ensure that there is adequate time available to cover the three strands of citizenship as a new National Curriculum subject.
53. Careers education and guidance is taught as a discrete subject from Year 9 when pupils choose option courses leading to their GCSE examination. It forms part of a carousel arrangement with other

subjects and it occurs on a six-week cycle. This is unsatisfactory, as there is too long between lessons for sufficient consolidation of previous work. The school makes positive use of a range of outside speakers to support lessons. Pupils and parents report that they are pleased with the support given by the school.

54. A careers adviser gives very good support to the school and interviews pupils when the opportunity arises. Work experience takes place in Year 11 for one week only and this is insufficient for pupils to gain valuable experience of the world of work. The school monitors pupils well on their work experience and recent links with the Greater Merseyside Connexions Service are good in helping to find placements for pupils. The careers library is sparse but pupils have access to a range of computer software and supportive materials. A Careers Convention takes place every two years that helps to guide pupils on desired career pathways. Mock interviews take place using Rotary Club volunteers who make a valuable contribution to the school.
55. Provision for the boys' social development is good. Pupils have frequent opportunities in most subjects to develop skills of cooperation through work in pairs or groups. The programme of personal, social and health education is good and includes other cooperative activities such as role-play. The school offers a wide range of sporting and outdoor activities. Pupils in Year 7 and students in Year 12 have the benefit of residential experience.
56. Provision for moral and cultural development is satisfactory. History includes study of the rights and wrongs of the conflict in Northern Ireland. In geography, pupils consider questions of sustainability and the environment, for example, in regard to the Amazonian rain forest. English, drama, music and media studies provide well for cultural development but other subjects could do more to prepare pupils for the ethnic and cultural diversity of life.
57. Provision for spiritual development is unsatisfactory. Assemblies frequently include a prayer or a moment of silent reflection but the school does not meet its obligation to give pupils the opportunity for a daily act of collective worship. Drama is particularly good at developing personal sensitivity and awareness of other people's needs but most teachers miss opportunities in other subjects, including religious education, and in tutorial time.
58. Overall, provision for pupils' personal development is satisfactory. Since the last inspection the contribution of personal, social and health education has improved but that of religious education has declined. Most subjects, including mathematics, science, and design and technology, have not planned personal development into their teaching programmes. The school needs to plan and monitor its provision better, especially that for pupils' spiritual development.

Sixth form

59. Overall, curricular provision is good. Access is open to students from either the boys' or girls' school who would benefit from participation in any particular course. There are rarely students from other schools who join the sixth form, as there is much competition for students in the area.
60. Courses are well matched to the needs of students and build well on their prior attainment. There is a reasonable range of 16 academic courses, all of which are jointly taught, but this does not cover psychology, sociology or law. Provision for these at Wirral Metropolitan College has recently rarely been taken up mainly because of problems with transport that have never been resolved. The boys' school offers intermediate GNVQs in science and business education as well as AVCE in business education. A very good feature of the provision are the two student apprenticeship schemes in engineering and information technology that involve attendance at the Laird Foundation on four days a week and one day in school. This leads to an NVQ qualification. Whilst the girls' school offers other intermediate and advanced vocational courses, the take-up by boys to these courses is small.
61. Students are given the opportunity to improve their grades in English, mathematics and science by resitting GCSEs. There is also good timetabled provision for all students in the key skills of communication, information and communication technology and the application of number, although the latter is to become optional.

62. Whilst opportunities for the gifted and talented have only just begun with a recent master class in a local university, the provision for extra-curricular activities in the form of sports activities, music and drama is good. There is also good study support for students on an informal basis. There is a good programme of tutorial guidance on career and higher education opportunities. The statutory requirement to provide religious education has still not been met. Appropriate arrangements are made to support and monitor the progress of students with special educational needs.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

63. The pastoral care of pupils is very good and there have been some improvements since the last inspection. Form tutors and heads of year support pupils jointly; they now work together well. A recently-appointed deputy headteacher has overall responsibility for monitoring the pastoral work throughout the school. New pupils benefit from a well-organised induction programme and pupils report that they are pleased with the support they get in settling into their new school. Form tutors remain with pupils until Year 11. Heads of year and form tutors know their pupils well as a result of this continuity. Tutors meet pupils for daily registration but this time is not used effectively by all tutors.
64. Tutors and subject teachers monitor pupils' academic progress satisfactorily and all pupils have a mentor to discuss targets for improvement. Most tutors check homework diaries regularly and most parents sign them. Parents are able to comment on their son's progress. Individual award slips encourage pupils to work harder and merit awards and 'colours' are used to recognise pupils' achievements. Teachers now consistently apply rewards and sanctions. The use of the National Record of Achievement has improved but it is not yet established throughout the school.
65. Procedures for monitoring attendance are in place and have resulted in an improvement in attendance. The disciplinary system is clearly understood by pupils. The few incidents of bullying and harassment are dealt with successfully. Child protection procedures are in place. Support from Social Services is satisfactory. First aid arrangements have improved and are good.
66. Arrangements for health and safety are good. There is a detailed school policy and there are no current issues for attention. A health and safety committee, involving governors, meets regularly to review any concerns, and risk assessments for all practical subject areas are in place. The corridors tend to be overcrowded during the change over of lessons and there are still no clear rules for pupils' movement around the school. Much of the school is not accessible to people who may need to use a wheelchair. There is no lift. The pupils with visual impairment are assisted by other pupils (as 'buddies') to ensure their safe movement around the building.
67. Whole school assessment systems were identified as a weakness in the 1996 report. Considerable work has been done establishing systems for monitoring academic performance, target setting and the identification of reporting to parents as areas for improvement. There are now fully documented whole-school systems for monitoring and assessing academic performance, which build from data on pupils' attainment grades at the end of Year 6 in the primary schools. The ability profile of each year group is established through objective testing in Year 7. This enables the school to set projected targets for future attainment at GCSE level. Good use has been made of the externally based Yellis system for projecting GCSE grades from Year 10 to Year 11.
68. The new systems have enabled the school to set targets for individual pupils, for departments and for the whole school. The whole school target is linked to the target set by the local education authority. Some departments, for example, mathematics and science, are using the targets and other data very effectively to evaluate their work. In other departments there is more inconsistency amongst teachers in how well they use the information provided. The school has also introduced a formal mentoring system in which all pupils are seen twice in the year to assess progress against set targets. Progress in these areas has been satisfactory.
69. All departments have systems and procedures for assessing pupils' work, but there is still no common whole school approach. Pupils understand the grading system used in each department, but there is inconsistency in use between teachers in several departments.

70. The school has recognised that reports for parents are not helpful enough, but has yet to develop a more rigorous and informative procedure. Currently reports fail to give pupils clear guidance on the National Curriculum level/examination grade being achieved, and what they need to do next in order to improve their quality of work. Assessment is not being used effectively to guide curricular planning at whole school level and in several subject departments.
71. Arrangements for the identification and assessment of the requirements of pupils with special educational needs and visual impairments are good. Appropriate liaison with contributory primary schools and the initial testing provide a sound baseline, and further regular assessments enable teachers to monitor and review the progress of individual pupils. Records of pupils with special educational needs are well maintained. The approach adopted by the school of fully integrating pupils with special educational needs and visual impairments into its life and work is very effective.

Sixth form

Assessment

72. There is a range of strategies for monitoring and assessing pupils in Years 12 and 13. At the start of Year 12 the head of the sixth form collates data on GCSE performance by points score. This is used to give advice on the selection of courses, and to project targets for the end of both one-year and two-year courses. It is also used as a base line for assessing *value added*. The local education authority produces assessment data that the school uses well.
73. Responsibility for monitoring and assessing progress rests largely in the hands of subject teachers who report to the head of sixth form if there are concerns. Data is not stored systematically and there is too little monitoring of students' progress towards their set targets. There is good communication with parents as a result of three reporting sessions per year, followed by parents' evenings. It is through these procedures that concerns or changes to courses are discussed. The process is satisfactory but written reports are often weak. Some reports do not give a clear indication of the level at which a student is working, nor do they give sufficient specific advice on what should be done to raise the standard of work. There is also inconsistency amongst teachers reporting on different aspects of the same course. The use of assessment data for monitoring progress and setting targets is underdeveloped in art and design, business studies, information and communication technology and geography. Assessment is satisfactory overall.

Advice, support and guidance

74. The quality of support and guidance given to students is good and is acknowledged and appreciated by them. There is a comprehensive programme of induction for Year 11 pupils moving into the sixth form. This includes a two-day residential course for the boys and girls before the term starts in September. Each individual is interviewed before he embarks on a course.
75. The form tutors play a key role in monitoring the academic progress and personal development, attendance and punctuality of each student. There is good liaison between tutors and the subject teachers. There are established procedures to detect any concerns and worries. Appropriate action is taken which may lead to parental involvement. There is not enough being done to improve the punctuality and attendance of a small number of students. On occasions there are uncertainties as to the whereabouts of some of them.
76. The quality of sixth form careers education and guidance is good. There are individual interviews with careers advisers from an external agency. Representatives from higher education institutions give talks and a conference on higher education opportunities is organised by a local university. Some tutorial periods are devoted to the completion of university and college applications. Speakers from outside school also give talks about careers. During the inspection week a marketing executive from the local zoo enthusiastically gave an informative talk on career opportunities. Students appreciated it and found it interesting and enlightening. The special educational needs co-ordinator takes care to

ensure that the students concerned receive the appropriate support and guidance. The two students with special needs have extra time allocated when they take examinations.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

77. Overall, the school works well in partnership with parents. Parents, however, have mixed views about the school. Most are very supportive and satisfied with what it offers to their sons, others are concerned about some aspects of provision.
78. Most parents who completed the pre-inspection questionnaire or attended the pre-inspection meeting are pleased with the school's caring approach. They feel comfortable about contacting the school, and think that staff respond well to parents' comments and concerns. They believe that pupils are expected to work hard and to do their best. There is general agreement that boys like school and are making good progress. Parents think that teaching is good and that pupils are developing mature and responsible attitudes.
79. Some parents do not feel well enough informed about the progress their sons are making, do not think that the school works closely with them and are not happy with amounts of homework set. At the meeting, a significant number of parents expressed serious reservations about standards of attainment.
80. The inspection team agrees with the positive views expressed by parents and finds that some of the criticisms are justified. Events that are arranged formally provide ample opportunity for parents to learn about pupils' progress and any individual requests for information are met. However, school reports mainly refer to pupils' attitudes to learning and do not give sufficient detail about what pupils know, understand and can do, nor do they set clear targets for improvement. The school's recently reorganised pastoral system ensures that every effort is made to work closely with parents. Amounts of homework are about right overall, but not all teachers set homework consistently in accordance with the prescribed timetable.
81. Information for parents is generally of good quality, especially the individual letters that are sent to parents to explain any action that the school has taken. Staff make sure that parents are told about boys' achievements as well as about any problems that may arise. Formal meetings are held for each year group, with both short and full reports provided at different times of the year. The majority of parents take advantage of these opportunities to discuss pupils' progress with teachers and those who do not are contacted individually by heads of year so that alternative arrangements can be made for them. There are half-termly newsletters which keep parents up to date with developments in school and the diary system allows parents to oversee what their sons are learning as well as providing a channel of communication between home and school that not all parents use. Personal contacts between members of staff and parents are frequent, ensuring that any issues are dealt with swiftly and effectively.
82. Weaknesses in the information provided by the school concern information and communication technology for pupils aged 11 - 14, where the standard that 14 year-old pupils are expected to achieve nationally is wrongly given as National Curriculum level 4 (rather than level 5), and school reports in Years 10 and 11, which do not contain comments about physical education.
83. A vigorous Parent Teacher Association makes a valuable practical contribution to school life by organising fund raising and social events, which are mainly well supported. Many of these events involve pupils alongside their parents, which helps to create a community spirit. Considerable sums of money are raised for national and international charities, as well as to provide additional resources for the school.
84. Links with parents of pupils with special educational need are good. Parents are kept fully informed of their son's progress and are regularly invited to discuss the needs, targets, and concerns of the pupils. They regularly attend the annual review meetings.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

85. The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory overall. Senior staff are clear and realistic about the school's strengths and weaknesses and have established some ways of securing improvements and raising standards. Most staff share a common purpose and have taken steps to make their work more effective. Governors have a sound grasp of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. However, there is no clearly articulated educational direction and very inadequate school improvement planning.
86. The school's aims are listed in the prospectus. They are realistic but have no specific reference to raising standards of achievement. The aims are reflected very well in much of the work of the school. The caring aspect of the school's aims is very successfully achieved, reflecting a very effective and well-run pastoral team. Equality of opportunity is strong, demonstrating the genuine concern shown by all staff for the pupils. The overview and monitoring of equal opportunities and educational inclusion are satisfactory. The recently updated equal opportunities policy is good, and has strategies for putting policy into practice. A working group is responsible for ensuring departments follow the school policy. The quality of departmental policies, however, is too variable. The school is aware of recent changes in disability legislation that will affect them.
87. The senior management team is unusually large for a school of below-average size. In addition to the two deputy heads, there are three assistant heads. There is also one senior teacher. The headteacher spends too much time on routine, non-management tasks because he has no personal assistant and the two deputy heads are hampered in their management duties by their excessive teaching commitment of 60 per cent. Senior staff have a clear commitment to improvement, nonetheless.
88. The governors fulfil most of their responsibilities well, except in relation to collective worship and sixth form religious education. Additionally reports are not sent to parents on pupils' progress in Years 10 and 11 in physical education. Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses but play too small a part in shaping the direction of the school. Apart from staff governors, only two visit school regularly and some feel that their presence in school, and lessons in particular, is not appropriate, a view that is not shared by senior staff and many teachers.
89. The leadership and management of subject departments are largely satisfactory or better. In history, leadership and management are not satisfactory as there is too little monitoring of the work in the subject.
90. The school's evaluation of its performance is satisfactory and is improving. More data is gathered and analysed now than a year ago. The headteacher produces *value-added* data and the local education authority has provided much support and guidance in the past 18 months, following the poor examination results of summer 2000. The basis of whole-school target setting has been reviewed and current targets are appropriate. There is a move towards monitoring the progress of individual pupils although this is at a very early stage. All teachers' lessons are observed regularly and performance management arrangements are satisfactory.
91. The strategic use of resources is unsatisfactory; there is no link between the budget and the school's aims. The school's planning does not extend beyond 2002 and although senior staff talk confidently about what needs doing to secure improvement, there is no written school improvement plan.
92. The arrangements for supporting the pupils with special educational needs are satisfactory and, for those with visual impairments, are good. They fully meet all statutory requirements. Leadership of the department for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. The department has a clear sense of direction, is well organised, and efficiently and effectively managed. Satisfactory progress has been made since the time of the last inspection. Annual reviews are well organised, and all key staff have the opportunity to contribute.
93. There is good liaison with link teachers from each subject department who meet regularly with the special educational needs co-ordinator. Support teachers are well deployed but there are not enough

to meet the requirements of all pupils with special educational needs especially in mixed attainment classes. The department has sufficient accommodation, but the two rooms are in different parts of the school so departmental liaison and identity are difficult. Resources are adequate, but there is insufficient access to information and communication technology resources. The school has firm plans to resolve this deficiency in the near future.

94. There are sufficient appropriately qualified teachers to meet the demands of the curriculum in almost all subjects. However, there are significant staffing problems in design and technology and in religious education resulting from absences and recruitment difficulties. These problems are having an adverse effect on the quality of teaching and standards. More than one quarter of the teachers have been at the school for fifteen years or more. Approximately one third have been recruited in the last three years and most of these have recently joined the profession. The pupil to teacher ratio is much more favourable than in most secondary schools of this size. The proportion of time which teachers spend teaching is lower than that in similar schools.
95. The clerical and administration staff provide effective support for the day-to-day running of the school but more non-teaching support is needed. The school does not employ a librarian.
96. A performance management policy is operating in accordance with statutory requirements. The school holds the Investors in People award. Professional development has taken place in almost all subject areas during the past year. Training on whole-school issues such as key skills and numeracy has also been provided. Spending on professional development is below that of similar schools. Some weaker teachers have not benefited sufficiently from staff development. Support for newly qualified teachers is good. The trainee teachers from institutions of higher education are looked after well and are introducing fresh ideas and approaches.
97. The accommodation is unsatisfactory overall. The site is clean, except in art where the ceramics studio is very dirty. Despite an ongoing programme of refurbishment, many of the buildings are shabby and many areas suffer badly from penetrating damp. The wide dispersal of English and modern foreign language rooms across the site is inefficient. English rooms are poorly decorated and language rooms suffer from poor acoustics. History has, during the current building programme, no settled base. There is insufficient specialist provision for religious education when more than one group is taught at the same time. Provision for physical education continues to be very poor and this has a detrimental effect on pupils' performance. The sixth form common room is inadequate and there are not enough independent study areas for students.
98. Since the previous inspection there has been progress in providing security fencing, improved kitchen facilities, additional science laboratories and a new studio for drama. There is a new hard surface to support physical education but games continue to be regularly cancelled because of poor drainage on playing surfaces. Work is underway on a new suite of rooms for English that will alleviate some of the problems identified. The school is pursuing sources of funding to address the very poor provision for physical education and games.
99. Spending on learning resources is below average and, although funding in 2002 is slightly improved on that in 2001, there are still significant deficiencies. Shortages of equipment in music, identified in the last report, have been rectified but those in art remain, and still limit the implementation of the National Curriculum. Books are no longer shared in class and pupils are generally allowed to take books away for homework. Some funding from additional sources has been made available to assist in certain departments but provision in many departments is at the minimum. There has been virtually no improvement in the poor quality of the library from which books cannot be borrowed. Both fiction and non-fiction sections are poorly stocked, with many books out of date and in poor condition. As the library is in constant use as a teaching room, other pupils cannot use it. There is no librarian and the overall facilities as a centre for learning are significantly worse than those in the majority of schools. The resource area for whole-school use is very well managed. It has large volume photocopiers, a wide range of videos and facilities to record television programmes. Some use is made of off-site resources through visits to the theatre, and field trips.

100. The school receives funding that is slightly below average, so has little flexibility in allocating its resources. After the main essential costs, such as staffing, have been taken into account, departmental requests are considered and money provided for these where possible. There is no overall strategic plan for funding to be allocated according to defined priorities, to help the school move towards achieving its educational goals. Specific grants are treated in a similar fashion. The school receives additional funding through the Excellence in Cities initiative, Schools in Challenging Circumstances and the Standards Fund. The school adheres to the strict guidelines governing how this money should be spent. Money is spent appropriately on staffing and resources for each initiative, but again, this is done piecemeal, there being no overall plan to see that desired objectives are being achieved. Good use has been made of funding under the social inclusion heading to introduce systems for monitoring attendance.
101. Expenditure is closely monitored and reports presented regularly to the governing body. Routine financial control and administration are efficient and effective. The recent audit report found that systems were satisfactory and made only minor recommendations. However, the resources manager has no clerical support for routine work, which limits the effective use of her skills and experience.
102. Principles of best value are applied in relation to the supply of goods and services. Staff, and sometimes pupils, are consulted about their views, for example, the sixth form's requests for study facilities are a high priority. The school compares its results and costs with those of similar schools and governors examine spending decisions closely. Given the school's overall effectiveness and its slightly below average funding, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

103. Leadership of the sixth form is satisfactory and management is good. The head of sixth form is hard working and conscientious and is supported by an assistant head and a team of tutors. The aims of the sixth form are achieved but there is no long-term planning. The needs of most boys are well met by the appropriate range of courses. Equality of opportunity and educational inclusion are good. There has, however, been no staff training to raise awareness of the different strategies which may be needed to teach successfully the mixed gender groups in the sixth form.
104. The A2 level courses are being implemented well following the successful introduction of the new AS level courses last year. An additional student apprentice scheme has been introduced. A prefect system giving boys more opportunities to take responsibility is now operating. The head of sixth form has regular meetings with her counterpart at the girls' school. Liaison between subject departments in the two schools is at least satisfactory in all subjects apart from one.
105. The income generated by the sixth form boys is slightly less than the costs in terms of teacher periods taught in the boys' school. Consequently the main school subsidises the sixth form by a small amount. Some groups are small but the cost effectiveness of the sixth form is satisfactory.

Resources

106. The low level of resources for the sixth form reflects the overall spending in the school. The A-level students no longer need to buy textbooks but, in media studies, there is insufficient technical apparatus such as, for example, facilities for editing films. The lack of an adequate library and learning centre and the restricted access to information technology resources are especially serious in the sixth form, where independent research forms an essential part of all examination courses.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

107. To improve standards further, the school should now:

- (1) Implement planned and new strategies to improve the GCSE results, including better individual target setting for all 16-year-olds, and closer monitoring of their progress towards the targets, especially the boys on the C/D borderline. (See paragraphs 4, 47, 64, 67, 68 and 90)
- (2) Raise standards of attainment in design and technology and religious education by resolving staffing problems as speedily as possible and so improving the teaching and taking other necessary measures as described in this report. (See paragraphs 28, 33, 94, 157, 158, 215 and 217)
- (3) Improve the provision for the boys' spiritual development by exploiting all reasonable opportunities across the curriculum and ensuring all attend a daily act of collective worship. (See paragraphs 57, 58 and 88)
- (4) Provide a medium and longer-term strategic school improvement plan, indicating what the school stands for and how it will set about raising standards and achieving its objectives. (See paragraphs 85, 86 and 91)
- (5) Continue to seek ways to further improve the accommodation and resources treating the library as a top-class priority. (See paragraphs 97 and 99)
- (6) Increase the use of information and communication technology across the curriculum. (See paragraphs 9, 33, 185 and 186)

Sixth form

- (1) Raise the standards of attainment in geography and in religious education by resolving teaching problems in the latter and increasing teachers' expectations of the students and improving assessment techniques in the former. (See paragraphs 40 and 88)
- (2) Improve students' punctuality to lessons and ensure that all adopt a serious commitment to work. (See paragraphs 22, 226, 253, 261 and 268)
- (3) Improve accommodation and resources for sixth form studies, including the facilities for independent study and for social activities. (See paragraphs 40, 97, 99 and 106)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 - 11	154
	Sixth form	38
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		82

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
--	-----------	-----------	------	--------------	----------------	------	-----------

Years 7 - 11

Number	5	25	58	51	13	2	0
Percentage	3	16	38	33	9	1	0

Sixth form

Number	1	8	16	11	1	0	0
Percentage	3	22	43	30	3	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 the sixth form as each lesson represents more than two, 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	715	101
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	98	5

Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	22	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	108	2

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	23
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	39

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.9
National comparative data	7.7

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)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001	147	-	147

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	85	97	88
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	58 (69)	66 (64)	60 (61)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	15 (26)	38 (32)	22 (21)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	94	95	98
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	65 (55)	65 (60)	67 (61)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	24 (17)	38 (32)	29 (16)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	2001	140	-	140

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A* to G	1 or more grades A* to G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	42	128	136
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	31 (24)	91 (90)	97 (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	33.9 (31.7)
	National	39.0 (38.4)

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

Attainment in the sixth form

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	2001	39	-	39

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for GCE A/AS examination		
	Male	Female	All
School	11	-	11
National	16.9	17.9	17.4

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE VCE/Advanced GNVQ examinations	2001	6	-	6

Average points score per candidate	For candidates entered for GCE VCE/Advanced GNVQ examinations		
	Male	Female	All
School	8	-	8
National	9.8	11.4	10.6

Vocational qualifications 2001		Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or Units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	20	100
	National		76

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	2
Black – other	0
Indian	4
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	3
White	807
Any other minority ethnic group	0

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	53.66
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.2

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	11
Total aggregate hours worked per week	292

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	76.5
---	------

Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	23.8
Key Stage 4	19.5

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/01
----------------	---------

	£
Total income	2,160,557
Total expenditure	2,146,902
Expenditure per pupil	2,670
Balance brought forward from previous year	17,052
Balance carried forward to next year	30,707

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	14
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	19

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	2
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	1.6

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	816
Number of questionnaires returned	207

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	35	55	5	4	0
My child is making good progress in school.	36	55	6	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	23	54	12	3	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	18	51	20	9	1
The teaching is good.	24	66	5	0	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	25	55	21	3	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	51	41	7	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	53	42	3	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	24	50	20	1	5
The school is well led and managed.	34	48	9	0	9
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	33	54	7	1	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	29	50	10	2	10

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

ENGLISH

Overall the quality of provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Teaching is good: lessons are very well planned and teachers have sound knowledge of the subject.
- English language GCSE results are above the national average for boys in all maintained secondary schools.
- Bearing in mind standards of literacy on entry, boys make good progress by the end of Year 11.

Areas for improvement

- Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 are below the national average and also below the average of pupils in similar schools.
- The written work of average and lower attaining pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 contains too many errors in sentence structure and the expression of ideas.

108. Pupils' overall standard of attainment at the end of Year 9 is somewhat below that found nationally. The percentage of pupils achieving at least level 5 and level 6 in national tests at the end of Year 9 was below the national average in 2001. These results were less good than those in 2000 and at the time of the last inspection. Performance was also poorer than that of pupils in similar schools. Results have fluctuated over recent years without a clear trend. Comparing standards at the end of Year 9 with those on entry, pupils make sound progress. Attainment at the end of Year 11 is well in line with that found nationally. Boys' results in the GCSE for English language in 2001 were above the national average of boys in maintained secondary schools. In English literature results matched the national average. Pupils do better in both language and literature than in several of their other subjects in the school including mathematics and science. Standards achieved at the end of Year 11 show marked improvement on those on entry and those in national tests in Year 9, reflecting good progress for 14 - 16 year olds.
109. The quality of oral work at age 14 and at 16 is marginally above that found nationally. Most pupils listen attentively and answer questions willingly and clearly. High attaining pupils in Year 10, for example, gave carefully prepared presentations as part of their study of *An Inspector Calls*. The best performances achieved clear characterisation in both voice and gesture, sustaining the rôle convincingly. Boys work effectively in pairs and small groups, showing patience and tolerance of the views of others. The majority of pupils read aloud fluently and confidently. Pupils in Year 7 made a brave effort in reading from *Romeo and Juliet* and made good sense of unfamiliar language. By the end of Year 11, pupils ask intelligent questions of their own as, for example, boys did when discussing Carol Ann Duffy's poem *Valentine*. Their perceptive comments and interpretations demonstrated close and concentrated reading of the text. When talking to adults, pupils are confident and courteous. The skills of speaking and listening are a comparative strength in the school and they are positively nurtured and developed through the English schemes of work.
110. By the end of Year 9 the level of reading comprehension of the majority of pupils allows them to understand almost all the books and material presented to them. A significant number, however, enter the school with a reading age considerably lower than their chronological age. Such pupils receive intense, skilled support and are occasionally withdrawn from class. Others who find reading difficult are assisted by paired and group reading, guided by senior pupils and members of staff who volunteer for this valuable activity. Boys benefiting from this experience make rapid progress, which is closely monitored. Throughout both key stages pupils study a wide range of literature of high quality. They also look at other forms of media such as video and film, appreciating different sorts of narrative structure. By the end of Year 9 most pupils identify and describe accurately such elements as character, plot and themes in novels and plays. In their study of Blake's poem *The Schoolboy*, boys in Year 8 made good sense of the unfamiliar language of an earlier time. Boys in Year 11 enjoyed

studying a poem written in Glaswegian dialect, entertainingly read for them by the teacher. They made thoughtful comments about the effect of regional variations of language.

111. The general quality of written work at the end of Year 9 is below that expected nationally. In Years 8 and 9 the recently-launched literacy strategy is helping to improve the structure and accuracy of pupils' written work. 'Catch-up' classes for weaker writers are proving successful and are well taught, often by the most experienced teachers. The best of written work in Year 9 is well above average, matching high national curriculum levels. A significant proportion of the writing of average and lower attaining pupils is inaccurate in sentence structure and expression of ideas. These pupils often fail to think clearly what they want to express before putting pen to paper. An encouraging feature is boys' willingness to write at length and with enthusiasm. By the end of Year 11 the overall quality of writing is in line with that found nationally. Some high attaining boys produce assignments of a high quality, matching the highest GCSE grades. The best pieces are usually personal-reflective writing or critical response to set texts. Some essays on *Twelfth Night*, for example, combined imaginative, detailed knowledge of the play with fluent, well-informed and accurately crafted writing. Pupils use word processing effectively in drafting their work. Throughout the main school, boys write for a range of purposes and audiences.
112. The overall standard of behaviour throughout the main school is good. Pupils are generally well motivated and eager to learn. They respond willingly and responsibly. There is, however, a small minority who easily lose concentration and whose behaviour sometimes adversely affects the learning of others. The majority of boys work at a keen pace and relationships in the classroom are mutually respectful. In small groups they collaborate sensibly and productively.
113. The quality of teaching was all satisfactory with whole-class groups and was good in a significant majority of lessons. The quality was less than satisfactory in two lessons with small numbers of pupils who were withdrawn from class. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject are good. They prepare and plan lessons very thoroughly with the result that pupils are clear about tasks and the sequence of their learning. Classroom management is efficient and effective. Teachers use questioning skilfully and constructively to draw detailed answers from boys and to extend their knowledge and understanding. Pupils are prepared carefully for examinations through emphasis upon required techniques. Those with special educational needs are taught with great sensitivity in mainstream classes and are provided with materials of appropriate levels of difficulty. Teachers have consistently high expectations of pupils' behaviour and attainment and use a stimulating range of methods and approaches. There have been marked improvements in this aspect of teaching since the last inspection. In the majority of lessons teachers use an interesting range of language activities, questioning is vigorous, pace is brisk and relationships are positive. Assessment and recording of pupils' progress are thorough and marking is conscientious and constructive.
114. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and is given added breadth by optional choices at the end of Year 9 for GCSE examination courses in media studies and drama. Departmental documentation is thorough and helpful. Most of the issues raised in the last inspection have been remedied and good improvements have been made since then. Schemes of work are extensive and appropriate and the literacy strategy is being integrated effectively into existing practice. Through everyday discussion of themes and actions in great works of literature, pupils experience a variety of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues. The inadequate library and resource area limit severely opportunities for wider reading and research. A new suite of rooms will soon remedy the present unsatisfactory accommodation for the subject. Responsibilities within the department are clearly designated and the subject is skilfully managed and led with energy and enthusiasm. Great care is taken to provide an appropriate range of reading matched to pupils' levels of attainment. Boys are encouraged to read widely but the book stock in the library is poor and the room is a permanent teaching base. During the inspection week there was no facility for boys to borrow books.
115. In other subjects across the curriculum, pupils generally listen attentively. The quality of speaking varies considerably with some boys who are confident and articulate in discussion. When encouraged to do so, as in drama, pupils work very well together in pairs and small groups. Pupils benefit from talk that is built into lessons in mathematics and physical education. In the majority of subjects, however, speaking is still not used as an essential way of learning. Boys are not generally encouraged to use

planned discussion to consolidate their own knowledge and extend their understanding through dialogue with others.

116. The overall standard of reading comprehension in nearly all subjects, history being an exception, is adequate for the great majority of pupils to understand textbooks and printed materials. Widespread use is made in many classrooms of key words in subjects. Reading skills are reinforced well in mathematics lessons. Pupils with special educational needs are encouraged to read aloud, as are boys in history and personal and social education. In media studies, pupils respond to other forms of graphic, visual and aural stimuli. Pupils are encouraged to read more widely for research in history, but the inadequate resources in the library undermine the proper extension of reading in the school.
117. The overall quality of written work is below expectations. Although most boys take great care with handwriting and the general presentation of work, writing is often inaccurate in sentence structure, spelling and punctuation. There is some good extended writing in media studies and personal and social education but little in the humanities where it is usually found. At the moment there is no co-ordinated cross-curricular policy to promote literacy. A member of staff has recently been appointed to take on this important role.

DRAMA

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

Strengths

- Teaching is always good or better.
- Pupils' attitude to the subject and behaviour in the studio are very good.
- Accommodation is good.

Areas for improvement

- Results in GCSE examinations are below the national average.
- In Years 7 and 8 boys study drama in only one term out three. This adversely affects continuity and progress at a crucial stage of pupils' development.

118. The percentage of pupils achieving level A* to C in the GCSE in 2001 was below the national average. After only half a term of drama lessons, pupils in Year 7 reach a high standard of studio discipline, working well in pairs and groups. As a direct result of excellent teaching, they produce work of above-average quality in its pace, concentration and control of movement. In Year 8, pupils studying the commedia dell'arte produced good short performances based upon characters from the Italian tradition, showing a sound grasp of the genre. By the end of Year 9, boys have developed a wide range of skills. They listen attentively; work energetically and quickly; and collaborate well in groups. Pupils show sensitive awareness of space and have good control over body language, gesture and facial expression. The standard of work at the end of Year 9 is above that found nationally.
119. In Years 10 and 11, the comparatively small groups who have opted for the GCSE course show commitment and enthusiasm. Oral work is good and they work together with enthusiasm and energy in preparing presentations. Pupils in Year 11 worked hard to polish projects that were to be assessed in the examination. They tended to develop comic ideas well but were less convincing in conveying more serious presentations. Standards observed were in line with the national average.
120. The quality of teaching is good overall, and a little is very good or excellent. Lessons are carefully planned and the teacher has total command of her subject. This expertise is understood by pupils, who respond energetically and wish to succeed. Management of the pupils in the studio is very positive and relaxed. There is instant and complete control. Considering the short proportion of time given to the subject in Years 7 and 8, the good standard achieved is a tribute to the quality of teaching. Drama makes a powerful contribution to the cultural life of the school. The subject is very well managed.

MEDIA STUDIES

Overall, the quality of provision in Media Studies is **good**.

Strengths

- The high quality of teachers' knowledge of key concepts in media.
- Teachers' enthusiasm for the subject, high standards and expectations.
- Teachers' ability to convey to pupils the wider historical, social, political and economic contexts.
- The quality of coursework produced in Years 10 and 11.
- Supportive guidance for pupils.

Areas for improvement

- Resources for practical work are lacking.
- Provision to support independent research and study in the library is inadequate.

121. Media Studies provides a popular option at the end of Year 9, leading to a GCSE examination course. In the GCSE in 2001 pupils' average points score was close to the national average. All pupils achieved at least a Grade E but few managed high grades. Boys do better in media studies than almost any other subject in the school. Pupils produce good quality coursework which is carefully presented and which reflects the high standard and expectancy of the teacher. Standards of work of 16 year olds are in line with the national average.
122. The quality of teaching in Years 10 and 11 is good overall. Teachers' knowledge of media concepts is good. They draw effectively upon relevant, current examples to enrich their teaching. In Year 10, the teacher identified several different media texts to illustrate use of persuasive language in advertising. Marking of pupils' work is thorough and encouraging, and gives good advice to pupils as to how to improve the quality of their work.
123. Support provided in class by teachers helps any pupils finding work difficult but there is little variation in worksheets to meet individual needs. Pupils are encouraged to work in pairs and small groups. They learn well together and efficiently select examples to fulfil examination criteria.
124. The curriculum is broad and balanced and includes many contemporary issues which contribute to pupils' education in citizenship and supports their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. In a lesson in Year 10, for example, pupils discussed in an ordered and secure environment matters of gender stereotyping and sexuality.
125. Accommodation is unsatisfactory in classrooms not designed for media studies. Basic equipment is available but there are no editing facilities for film or video. Use of information technology is good but there is too little access to central provision and only one computer is available in the media studies room. Most pupils use their own facilities. The management of media studies is good.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Results in National Curriculum tests for pupils at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were in line with the national average and much better than those in similar schools.
- Teaching is good. It is always at least satisfactory and much is very good or excellent.
- Most teachers have widened their range of teaching styles. Numeracy is taught well in the mathematics department.
- Long-term assessment is very good. Pupils are given realistic targets for National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 and GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11. This motivates them to work hard and make good progress.
- The attitudes and behaviour of pupils are good. They are always at least satisfactory and often very good or excellent.
- Leadership and management are very good.

Areas for development

- Results in GCSE examinations are below the national average.
- Overall, standards of attainment in lessons are below national expectations.
- Whilst teaching is always at least satisfactory, some pupils receive too much teaching that is rarely better than this. The good practice of the best teachers needs to be shared to allow all pupils the opportunity to reach their potential.
- Access to information and communication technology needs to be increased to enable teachers to plan more effectively for its use to enhance pupils' learning in mathematics.

126. In 2001, results in National Curriculum tests for pupils at the end of Year 9 were broadly in line with the national average but much better than those in similar schools. In terms of prior attainment, this represented good progress. In 2001, results in GCSE examinations for pupils at the end of Year 11 were below the national average. In terms of prior attainment at the end of Year 9, however, this also represented good progress. In comparison with the previous inspection in 1996, these results overall do not show an improvement. However, since a low in 1999, the results in National Curriculum tests have shown sustained improvement.
127. By the end of Year 9, standards remain below national expectations; however, considering attainment levels on intake this confirms the good progress indicated by examination results. The most able pupils recognise very large numbers in standard form. They accurately multiply and divide such numbers, but despite the teacher's very good focus on a variety of methods to enhance learning, only the very best have a secure understanding of why numbers in standard form with negative powers are very small positive numbers. This reflects the low proportion of higher attaining pupils in the school's intake in Year 7 and indicates good progress overall. Average attaining pupils also progress well. They know how to calculate the total number of degrees in all of the interior angles of polygons with large numbers of sides. They show confidence because, with skilful guidance from the teacher, they have deduced the formula for themselves.
128. The progress of lower attaining pupils in Year 9, many of whom have special educational needs, however, is only satisfactory. They know the equivalent relationships of the simplest fractions to decimals and percentages but have little idea how to estimate others. Rote methods used to calculate others are usually used correctly, but are not securely understood, because the work is not embedded in a real context.
129. Standards in Year 11 confirm that attainment is below national expectations, despite representing mostly good progress overall from the end of Year 9. Higher attaining pupils use computer software satisfactorily to study the effect of how changing algebraic formulae affects the plotting of graphs on a co-ordinate grid. Whilst the majority of the class had a good understanding of the simpler changes, the most able pupils were limited in their learning because the learning opportunities were not matched to their needs. This was mainly because of the need to share computers and the need to

complete the activity within this lesson because of the demand of other classes to use the computer room. Pupils in a middle-ability class draw straight-line graphs accurately. They identify the equations of graphs with the same gradient, yet have difficulty explaining what gradient or equation means.

130. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils in Years 7 to 9 are usually good. They are often very good and are occasionally excellent but are no more than satisfactory when teaching emphasises procedures and skills rather than focusing on deep understanding. Pupils get on well together, but only rarely do teachers use collaboration amongst pupils effectively. Pupils present their work well and relationships with teachers are never less than good and often better. The attitude of pupils towards learning directly reflects the quality of the teaching. Pupils in Year 10 responded sensibly when the teacher formally gave one pupil responsibility for helping the pupil beside him who was struggling.
131. Teaching, overall, is good in Years 7 to 9. It is often very good and occasionally excellent. Too often, however, it is only satisfactory for the same teachers. In the best lessons, teachers build on homework from the lesson before, encourage and demand high standards of literacy and use open-ended questions. In a very good lesson with above-average attaining pupils in Year 7, the teacher skilfully made work on factors, multiples and square numbers interesting and challenging. The pupils had previously been asked to choose numbers between 100 and 200 and find all their factors for homework. They were now given the opportunity to suggest which number had the most factors. They were given very good opportunities to experiment and to build up their own hypotheses on which types of numbers had the most factors. Numeracy skills were enhanced and the completely open sharing of the lesson's objectives with the pupils clearly motivated them to learn very well. In an excellent lesson with the lowest attaining pupils in Year 8, the teacher's very high expectations in rapid calculation using the four rules of number ensured much higher standards of numeracy than could reasonably be expected. This exceptional starter activity stimulated these pupils, who mostly had special educational needs, to make excellent progress throughout the lesson.
132. In the Year 11 lessons seen, the teachers worked very hard using quality resources, including colourful overhead projector diagrams and computers to structure the learning of pupils. However, insufficient attention was given to allowing pupils to write down or discuss openly what they were learning. Whilst teaching in Year 11 is broadly satisfactory, teaching in Year 10 is very good or excellent. In an outstanding lesson on area with lower attaining pupils in Year 10, the teacher very effectively built on her knowledge of the progress of every individual pupil in the class. She addressed this by visiting every pupil near the start of the lesson, focusing rapidly on misunderstandings. The teacher has great presence. She stated clearly what the pupils should achieve by staged activities and they responded superbly. They were required to estimate, to define area clearly and to work together to discuss their progress. In a very good lesson with above average pupils in Year 10, the teacher again built on the results of homework to help pupils calculate the lengths of arcs of a circle. Very good questioning and the use of estimating techniques helped pupils gain a good depth of understanding. Reference to the inverse technique of calculating the lengths of circle radii from the circumference and an emphasis on literacy and the correct usage of terminology also enhanced learning. Teaching overall is good in Year 10 and 11. In the best lessons, teachers focus clearly on a variety of learning techniques, discuss progress with pupils openly and time activities well.
133. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department is a very able teacher who leads by example in the classroom. He analyses standards of pupils on entry and sets realistic targets for pupils. Each teacher's results are analysed and they are all made accountable for the progress of their pupils. Very good use is made of assessment using topic tests and a record card is kept for each pupil. All pupils are made clearly aware of their progress on an ongoing basis and particularly towards their external examination targets.
134. Whilst the monitoring of teaching and learning is good, more needs to be done, however, to focus on those teachers who teach too many lessons that are no more than satisfactory. A greater emphasis on investigation, estimation and the use of a wider range of resources would help their pupils learn more effectively. Staffing deployment is good and resources are used satisfactorily, but access to information and communication technology needs to be increased for all teachers to further enhance the opportunities to help the pupils explore and understand concepts more securely. Numeracy

standards throughout the school are at least satisfactory and often good. Pupils use calculators effectively. Overall, the department has made satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good in a significant proportion of lessons.
- A number of initiatives have been taken in the last year that are having a clear impact upon standards.
- New schemes of work have been produced which are promoting more focused teaching.
- Thorough systems have been established for monitoring pupils' performance and target setting procedures are now in place.
- A modular GCSE course has been introduced, initially in Year 10.

Areas for improvement

- Standards at GCSE have been significantly below average for the last three years.
- The curriculum lacks any extended treatment of spiritual, moral, social, cultural and historical issues and the associated variety of learning opportunities that these would provide.
- There is insufficient emphasis upon investigative and problem solving work; too much practical work is confirmatory.
- There is insufficient use of information and communication technology for datalogging and to enrich pupils' learning.

135. Standards in the National Curriculum tests taken by 14 year olds were below average in 2001. In 1999 and 2000 they were below average and average respectively. Standards at GCSE were significantly below average in 2001. This was also the case in the previous two years. Pupils' results in science were significantly below those in most of their other GCSE subjects in 2001.
136. Standards seen during the inspection were in line with the national average by the age of 14, reflecting the recent changes to the curriculum and approaches to teaching. By the end of Year 9, for example, pupils understand that food webs are made up of a number of food chains and that these relationships can be expressed as a pyramid of numbers. Pupils have a good understanding of basic circuits and appropriate practical skills. Investigative skills are underdeveloped, however. Progress and achievement are, however, good by the age of 14.
137. By age 16, standards are below average, but in Year 10, in particular, there was a marked improvement in standards compared to previous years. Pupils develop appropriate practical skills throughout their course. They follow instructions and work safely. On occasions, however, results are not clearly presented, appropriate graphs are not drawn and there is a lack of precision in practical measurements. By the end of Year 11 pupils, for example, understand the factors affecting the rate of a chemical reaction, although not all can explain this in terms of particle theory, and they recognise the features of exothermic reactions. Many know the nature of the combustion products of hydrocarbons and can name the products of neutralisation reactions. By the age of 16, pupils achieve satisfactorily, having made sound progress over the two years.
138. The pupils' attitudes are nearly always satisfactory and in half the lessons were good or better. Attitudes are better in Years 7 to 10 than in Year 11. Pupils follow instructions well, carry out the tasks set and cooperate together. In the best lessons, where the teacher had high expectations and there was a suitable variety of activity, the pupils responded with enthusiasm and made good progress. In a Year 8 lesson pupils had researched information about bones and different types of joints. They responded well to the teacher's high expectations, showed evident enthusiasm, offered information and asked questions about arthritis, for example. In other lessons, where attitudes were satisfactory, pupils carried out the required tasks and made satisfactory progress but lacked real enthusiasm and commitment. In a Year 11 lesson, pupils followed instructions to mix an acid with an

alkali and measure the temperature change. Many anticipated the result and the activity lacked the challenge to really motivate.

139. Teaching is satisfactory at each key stage. It was sound in the great majority of lessons and good in a significant proportion. There was some unsatisfactory teaching in Year 11. Teachers have good subject knowledge. While pupils' attitudes are generally satisfactory, better teaching is associated with pupils having more positive attitudes and enthusiasm, and this in turn leads to greater progress being made. Good teaching is characterised by good teacher-pupil relationships, effective planning with a variety of activities, high expectations, clear explanations, brisk pace, questioning to ascertain pupils' ideas and links to real-life situations. In one Year 9 lesson about foodchains, the teacher used brisk questioning to recap on key terms. The pupils responded well, showing a knowledge of primary, secondary and tertiary consumers and the pyramid of numbers resulting. The pupils worked with obvious interest, making good progress. The teacher made good use of a pupil's question to bring out further points. In a lower set in Year 10 the teacher gave clear examples and calculations to show how surface area and volume change with the size of an organism and the significance of this for diffusion. Pupils carried out an experiment and developed a good appreciation of the concepts being addressed.
140. Particular weaknesses in the teaching are a tendency to give pupils too much information, rather than getting them to think and drawing out ideas from them through questioning. Also, much of the practical work is directed and confirmatory, with the pupils being told beforehand what will happen. There is a need for more investigative and problem-solving activities. Too much time is spent on low-level tasks such as writing up practicals, when more demanding questions could be set. The range of learning opportunities is too narrow. There were two unsatisfactory lessons in Year 11. In one lesson, a top set showed a lack of enthusiasm for the practical work, made slow progress and showed poor experimental technique. In a second lesson, with a lower set, progress was too slow and the nature of the work was restricted by a lack of resources, in particular information and communication technology. In both lessons there was a lack of clear time-scales.
141. There is insufficient use of information and communication technology across the subject and there is insufficient focus on spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues. The Ideas and Evidence aspect of the National Curriculum is not included clearly enough in the planning. On occasions, pupils' grasp of concepts is not sufficiently consolidated through further examples and calculations. Whilst work is marked regularly there is variation in the quality of feedback to pupils.
142. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall and have improved significantly in the last year. A number of initiatives have been taken which are having a positive impact upon standards. New schemes of work have been developed and this is leading to more focused teaching. The schemes need further attention, however, in order to address the issue highlighted earlier. Thorough systems have been put in place for monitoring pupils' performance and target setting has been introduced. A modular GCSE science course was introduced in September 2001 and this is leading to higher standards. Monitoring of teaching and learning is taking place but at present there is no peer observation in order to promote sharing of expertise and good practice. Accommodation has improved significantly since the last inspection, with the provision of two new laboratories and the refurbishment of two others. There is still a need for one additional laboratory and older laboratories need refurbishing. Development planning is now more detailed and thorough. There are insufficient textbooks for pupils to have their own individual copies.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching.
- The care and support provided for pupils.

Areas for improvement

- Raise standards of drawing and painting in Years 7 to 9.
- Pupils need to form and express opinions and judgements on art.
- Pupils need opportunities to use computers creatively.
- The quality and quantity of craft and learning resources.

143. Standards by the end of Year 9 are below average. In the recent first year of teacher assessment tests, at the end of Year 9 in 2002, the majority of pupils achieved to a level below expectations. The majority of pupils arrive in Year 7 with significantly limited breadth of art experiences. Most have very poor skills in basic observational drawing and produce work to a level well below expectation. They make satisfactory progress, but, by the end of Year 9, the majority continue to perform to a level below national expectation and many show that they have yet to grasp how to use a sketchbook effectively. When drawing from an extensive stock of photographs of local architecture, produced by the teacher, many quickly reach for a ruler, lacking confidence in observational drawing, but others, drawing from carefully chosen still life groups, are beginning to gain discipline in looking and recording accurately. Many use colour with little thought. They are unable to identify primary colours and restrict themselves in painting techniques to simple flat work, often done clumsily, with poor quality paints. Others explore the qualities of watercolour paints and develop a sounder knowledge of how a range of different effects can be achieved.
144. Learning in the larger groups is at times frustrated by a lack of basic equipment. Pupils learn facts about artists from photocopied information sheets but do not have adequate reproductions or books in the studios or library to make them sufficiently aware of historical or contemporary art. They are aware of how different cultures approach art from exploring Aztec design in graphic exercises, from painting in the style of Aboriginal 'Dream' painting or from African mask making. Opportunities to discuss or write about what they see or think are inadequate and this results in pupils not being able to form and express thoughts on art. They can remember and describe the works of Georgia O'Keefe and are introduced to the sculpture of Barbara Hepworth, but awareness of female artists is still very limited. In co-operative group work, with an artist-in-residence, they are able to design and make bold textile wall hangings. Homework is regularly set, but the pupils' response is very variable. Pupils with special educational needs are aided by specific individual action plans for art and make comparable progress. Opportunities for pupils to work with computers to understand how creative artwork can be generated are inadequate.
145. Standards by the end of Year 11 are average, reflecting the recent improvements in teaching. Pupils gain a greater knowledge of art from visits to local art galleries but still do not write or talk about what they see. They are able to use their sketchbooks successfully to record industrial and seafront architecture on study trips to the local docks. They are able to develop their initial pencil and pen drawings into detailed ceramic models and large-scale paintings. In these, colour is better understood and sometimes used expressively, such as in glowering sky effects as they make the best of the poor quality paints available. Much work continues to rely on copying from photographs but standards are closer to expectation for their age and some show individual flair. Opportunities for pupils to work with computers to generate creative artwork continue to be inadequate because of the absence of resources in the studios. Following a visit to a national sculpture park, boys made confident drawings and paintings and some made delightful animal sculptures to a standard comparable with the best.
146. In the most recent GCSE examination, results at grades A* to C are below the national average for similar boys' schools, continuing the previous years' trend. Results indicate that art is a sound subject when compared with national statistics.
147. The boys have satisfactory attitudes to work in all years. They behave sensibly and their personal development is adequately supported by the work they do. Pupils show enthusiasm for the practical activities in art. They stay on task during lessons and cooperate well together in distributing their folders of work and when organising materials at the beginning and end of lessons.
148. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. In all years teachers work very hard to establish good standards. They manage pupils very well in what are often cramped and dirty conditions, particularly in the ceramic area. They are able to grab and hold the attention of pupils and provide them with very clear and extensive instruction at the beginning of lessons. At times, this impinges on the time

available for pupils to rehearse essential craft skills, which is their main need if standards are to improve. Teachers know their subject well. They provide great care and individual support for pupils and this, combined with regular good practical demonstrations, results in pupils learning how to handle materials better. Moral issues are raised in well-crafted lino prints derived from Picasso's images of Guernica. Assessment is accurate and well recorded, although pupils are not familiar with national curriculum levels. Art words are displayed in studios, but obvious opportunities that occur to emphasise the use and meaning of words are rarely taken with the result that, while pupils speak clearly, their use of an art vocabulary remains poor.

149. Leadership is satisfactory. Since the previous report the subject has made sound progress but there is still much to be done, particularly in establishing a sound skill base in the early years. New, well-considered schemes of work have been introduced and these are beginning to have a positive impact. Artists-in-residence have been introduced, teaching has improved and it is now never less than satisfactory and is, at times, good.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Overall the quality of provision is **unsatisfactory**.

Strengths

- The quality of teaching in food technology is always good and often very good.
- Pupils attain standards in food technology similar to those found nationally.
- Pupils with special educational needs and those identified as gifted and talented make good progress in food technology.
- There are very good curriculum plans and appropriate assessment strategies.
- Leadership and management of the department are good.

Areas for improvement

- Urgently review staffing strengths and weaknesses in graphics and resistant materials areas in order to bring the quality of teaching up to the required standard.
- Improve the quality of pupils' design and practical skills in graphics and resistant materials across the whole school.
- Ensure that opportunities for the use of information and communication technology and computer aided design and manufacture are fully implemented.
- Strengthen planned work in systems and control.

150. The standard of work in Year 9 is below average overall. In the past two years, formal teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 have been inconsistent and, in one year, unreliable. The 2001 teacher assessment indicates that attainment is below the national expectation. Inspection evidence confirms that standards are below average, especially in most graphics and resistant materials work. The below average standard is common to all year groups. However, in food technology, standards are high and by the end of Year 9 pupils attain at least the national average. In some aspects of design, such as understanding the role of a specification or the development of ideas, and in practical skill development, boys often produce standards above the national average. Design and practical skills in resistant materials and in graphics are poor in a majority of lessons.

151. The standard of attainment is below average at GCSE level. Overall boys do less well in this subject than in most of their other subjects. There has been a slow downward trend in standards since the last inspection. The fall in standards is due, almost entirely, to poor grades on the graphic products and resistant materials courses. Grades in food technology have continued to be in line with the national average. The standard of work observed in lessons and in the analysis of pupils work folders indicates that grades will follow the pattern of recent years. However, in one group studying the resistant materials course, high quality teaching is producing a much higher standard of work.

152. Attainment levels on GCSE courses in all the material areas reflect the quality of experience in Years 7 to 9. During these years pupils encounter teaching that ranges from very good to poor, as they move through different units of work. Consequently they do not systematically build up the designing

and making skills necessary for success at GCSE level. Pupils do experience good quality teaching but there is little or no transfer of skills learned in one material area, such as food technology, when they move on to another teacher who has very different expectations. These limitations have been compounded by long-term staff absence and difficulties in recruiting suitable supply teachers. Consequently, with the exception of food technology, design and practical skills are underdeveloped. This results in pupils being too dependent on the teacher in Years 10 and 11, when they should be more self-reliant.

153. The most able and talented pupils are producing work of a very high standard in food technology in every year group. Pupils with special educational needs also achieve good grades. These boys are well supported by good teaching that enables them to make good progress, reflecting their ability, interest and enthusiasm.
154. Boys' attitudes, values and personal development within the subject are satisfactory overall. In most classes pupils want to learn and show a commendable degree of interest, even in those classes where their experiences are weak. Behaviour is almost universally good. Personal development is restricted because in a significant number of lessons pupils are not stretched. Where there is good teaching the development of personal standards is good.
155. Since the last inspection there have been frequent and persistent staffing problems that still remain. Consequently standards have fallen and the quality of education has declined across a significant part of the subject. The head of department has put in place all that is needed to take the department forward. Restructured courses, in-service training and external support have been provided. Steps have been taken to monitor and overcome limitations in teaching by some members of staff. Nevertheless, progress since the last inspection is unsatisfactory.
156. The quality of teaching and of learning is satisfactory overall but ranges from very good to poor. There were four unsatisfactory or poor lessons. The food technology teachers, one of whom also teaches a small number of groups in workshops, have very good subject knowledge that comes through continually in their work. For example, they fully understand the need for, and use continually the design specification, to encourage pupils to analyse and evaluate their work. They distinguish clearly between this and a manufacturing specification that would be used to produce products in industry. The lessons are challenging for pupils of all levels of attainment. This is achieved through clearly set out tasks that build and become progressively more demanding. Gifted and talented pupils have key questions to address that can involve additional research, or demand two contrasting solutions to the same design brief. The criteria for assessment at the end of the unit of work are clearly set out. This helps pupils to structure their thinking and planning. These qualities enable all pupils to make good or very good progress in their learning.
157. In much of the work in resistant materials, graphics and electronics, the quality of teaching is at best just satisfactory overall; one third of the lessons were unsatisfactory. Although teachers have sound subject knowledge, they do not know how to exploit this for the benefit of pupils' learning. The planning is weak and learning objectives are rarely clear. Much of the teaching is about working towards finishing the product, rather than what is to be learned through this design and make experience. Design skills, drawing skills and practical skills are all weak. Pupils depend on the teacher to plan the next steps in learning or they press ahead often in inappropriate ways. As a result the quality of the work is poor. Pupils have no pride in their work and some make very little progress in their learning. These weaknesses apply across all year groups, except where a class is taught by one of the talented teachers. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning in these material areas is unsatisfactory.
158. During the past few years the department has had a very difficult period of staffing changes and long-term staff absence. The current head of department is a good manager with a clear vision for the subject. She has made radical changes to the curriculum and has produced excellent long, medium and short term plans for units of work. These are supported by appropriate assessment requirements. A big push has been made to change the image of the department and to gain consistency in working through, for example, the use of a structured approach to all design and make projects. These are well displayed in each room. Staff development opportunities have been provided through the

university and a local design practice. The monitoring of the teaching and learning is carried out regularly and linked to performance management. Further development is needed in setting GCSE targets for each course. The department does not have sufficient up to date computers to develop essential aspects of information and communication technology and to run the CAD/CAM equipment effectively. Work in systems and control needs to be strengthened and fully carried out as planned. The accommodation is very basic and in need of significant refurbishment. The need to overcome limitations in the staff of the department is critical to further development. Most of the other requirements for a significant move forward are already in place.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- There is a well written scheme of work providing a good basis for teaching?
- The attitudes and behaviour of pupils overall are good.

Areas for improvement

- The quality of teaching, with higher expectations and a greater variety of teaching methods needed.
- The system for assessing pupils' work and recording results, and the effective use of assessment data to support individual pupils, are not good enough.
- The provision for fieldwork and the use of information and communication technology in Years 7 to 9 are inadequate.
- There is too little support for the highest attaining pupils and those with special educational needs.

159. Pupils' overall level of attainment by the end of Year 9 is broadly in line with that expected nationally. When teachers assessed pupils' work in 2001 at the end of Year 9, results indicated that standards were broadly average, but few pupils achieved the higher levels. Since 1998, results have shown an improvement in line with that seen nationally.
160. By the end of Year 11, pupils' overall level of attainment is below average. Results in the GCSE examination in 2001 were below the national norm for the subject. Few pupils gained the higher grades. Since 1996 there has been an improvement in results in line with that recorded nationally.
161. All examination results are analysed carefully by the department. A strategy for improvement has been implemented, including additional help with coursework and revision. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress. The materials provided are not matched closely enough to the needs of individual pupils. They receive good support when curriculum support assistants from the special educational needs department work with them in the classroom. Although the higher attaining pupils make satisfactory progress, teachers do not develop sufficient depth of understanding in these pupils through rigorous questions and specifically designed materials.
162. Pupils aged 16 have a satisfactory basic knowledge of how landscapes are formed, how cities grow, and of the natural environment. They find difficulty in explaining how geographical features are formed and why they change. In one lesson, for example, pupils in Year 11 were studying the equatorial rainforest environment. They confidently described the weather, climate and vegetation found in the region but were unsure of the reasons for the features described. Year 8 pupils accurately described the distribution of rainfall in the British Isles but found it difficult to explain why the pattern occurred. Higher attaining pupils have a good understanding of the links between people and their environment, for instance, the effects of tourism on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea.
163. Pupils aged 14 generally have a satisfactory knowledge of geographical terms such as 'birth rate' and 'natural increase' to describe changes in population, but they are rarely used in written work. They have satisfactory mapwork skills. In Year 7, one group successfully matched a photograph and map and correctly identified the main features of their local area. Throughout the school, pupils have a poor knowledge of where places are as they are not encouraged to use atlases regularly enough. Pupils' geographical general knowledge is weak.
164. All pupils extract information effectively from resource material such as videos, textbooks and statistical data. Questions are answered correctly but often answers are too brief. Higher attaining pupils write fluent descriptions, but have little opportunity to develop their skills in writing for a wider range of purposes. Pupils use their numeracy skills well. They draw graphs correctly and generally analyse them accurately. In Years 10 and 11, coursework indicates that pupils have a satisfactory understanding of geographical enquiry and techniques to collect data, but the range of methods of analysing this information is too narrow and the conclusions lack depth.

165. Overall the quality of teaching is satisfactory. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject, the examination requirements and the local area. Explanations are well structured and clear, but pupils are rarely fully involved in rigorous question and answer discussion to develop and reinforce their understanding. Lessons are well prepared and organised and generally proceed at a brisk pace. The best lessons are well planned with clear objectives and a variety of activities that enable pupils to gain knowledge and reinforce their understanding of the topic. In one lesson, for example, pupils in Year 8 were studying weather charts. After a prompt start, and lively review of previous work and homework, the pupils quickly completed an activity enabling them to learn the symbols and patterns found on a weather map. Their understanding was reinforced when they discussed what they had learnt and completed a well thought out exercise, which required them to use their new knowledge to describe the weather on one day in different areas of the British Isles. The lesson finished with a quick review of the work to assess the good progress made.
166. In most lessons, the objectives are not made known to the pupils and there is no concluding review of the work. Although pupils generally work hard, the exercises often consist of copying diagrams or text from the book or board with no opportunity for pupils to use the information being transferred and deepen their understanding of the topic. As such lessons develop, the pupils lose concentration and progress is slow. Teachers have a good relationship with pupils and lessons are often characterised by an industrious and business-like working atmosphere. Expectations of what pupils can achieve, however, are not high enough, as the questions asked during discussion are not sufficiently incisive and often the exercises set are mundane. Lessons generally proceed at a sound pace and move from one activity to another smoothly. The choice of resources is generally appropriate but often teachers fail to grasp the opportunity to exploit them fully by challenging pupils sufficiently through detailed study. Marking is up to date and appropriate homework is set.
167. Pupils learn well and make satisfactory progress. They are generally well motivated, listen carefully to explanations, are confident and willing to make a contribution, present work neatly and maintain books in good order. They quickly assimilate information when their interest is aroused and the teaching is brisk and well focused. Throughout, pupils settle to work quickly, maintain focus and concentration and are well behaved, owing to skilful management and timely intervention by teachers when a minority are becoming restless during lengthy periods of routine work.
168. The scheme of work complies with national requirements, is well sequenced and structured, and underpins teaching effectively. Opportunities for fieldwork in Years 7 to 9 do not sufficiently support the examination coursework in Years 10 and 11, and the use of information and communication technology does not fully exploit pupils' skills. The department has developed a sound programme to assess the levels reached by pupils at the end of Year 9. The system of assessment in Years 7 and 8 is weak. There is no consistent or systematic recording and use of assessment to sufficiently support pupils' progress from Years 7 to 11. Teaching resources are satisfactory, but there is a lack of adequate textbooks and up-to-date atlases in Years 10 and 11.
169. Leadership of the department is satisfactory. The department has a sense of direction and is generally well organised. The issues raised in the previous report, particularly with regard to improving teaching, have not been resolved and so progress since then has been unsatisfactory. Clear direction and rigorous and committed implementation of plans to redress the deficiencies are required to raise standards.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Teachers have good knowledge of the subject.
- Teachers usually manage boys well.
- The attitudes of most boys to the subject are good.

Areas for improvement

- The range of teaching styles is narrow and needs to include more work giving boys responsibility rather than being led by the teacher.
- There are some unnecessary confrontational situations in class between teacher and boys that affect adversely the learning of the whole class.
- The monitoring and evaluation of the teaching in the department are not good enough.

170. By the end of Year 9, boys' attainment overall is below that expected nationally. Only a very small proportion achieve standards that are above average. This is a similar standard to that reported at the time of the last inspection. In 2001, teachers' assessment at the end of Year 9 indicated that just over half of the boys reached the nationally-expected standard. The overall standard of work seen during the inspection was below average, and relatively little was above the average standard. Boys with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. The highest-attaining boys usually make satisfactory progress, although some work set does make sufficient demands on them.
171. The attainment of boys taking the GCSE course has been below average for the past three years. In 2001 it was well below average. Only a very small number of boys have gained A or A* grades in recent years. The proportion of boys gaining a pass grade, however, was close to the national average in 1999 and 2000, although it fell to below average in 2001. For the majority this attainment represents satisfactory achievement from their relatively low attainment in Year 9. The overall standard of work seen during the inspection was below average. The standards reached by pupils with special educational needs are well below average, but their progress is generally satisfactory. The attainment and progress of a small number of pupils are adversely affected by their poor attitudes and lack of commitment to hard work.
172. Many boys in Year 9 have sound knowledge and understanding of the past. Most describe the characteristics of the past competently. They explain the causes of events and changes over time satisfactorily. The Year 9 boys, for example, explained adequately reasons why General Custer lost the Battle of Little Big Horn, and the higher attainers successfully argued which was the most important of the causes. Most described what they could learn about the growth of population from simple bar graphs. The higher-attaining boys understand that people in the past had values and beliefs very different from those of today, as, for example, in work on attitudes towards child labour in the nineteenth century.
173. Most boys use sources adequately to extract information about the past. Although the lowest attainers struggle to see more than simple information in sources, the higher attainers make valid deductions about what the information implies. Boys in a Year 7 group successfully extracted detail from a video about the Colosseum in Rome to build up an account of Roman entertainment. Boys in Year 9 studying Britain in the 1930s used a wide range of sources well to develop their understanding of attitudes to appeasement. For a significant proportion of pupils, low literacy levels lead to low attainment, and frequently restrict their ability to record their knowledge and understanding adequately in writing. There is insufficient support for boys with special educational needs, but where support assistants were present in the lessons, they were effective in keeping boys focused on work, and contributed to the usually satisfactory progress made.
174. By the age of 16, standards remain below the national average. The boys describe events in the past and actions taken, and most explain adequately the reasons behind the actions and events. Boys in Year 10, for example, explained some of the reasons why the League of Nations had difficulty

enforcing its aims in the 1920s and 1930s. In a Year 11 group, boys' oral answers to the teacher's questions about the impact of World War 1 on Germany demonstrated overall average knowledge and understanding of a wide range of political, social and economic effects. Much of the written work was broadly average, but included a significant proportion of below-average standard, with poor presentation and careless errors.

175. The teaching is satisfactory overall, but it is occasionally unsatisfactory. Teachers know their subject well and ensure boys gain at least satisfactory knowledge and understanding about the past. In lessons for Years 7 to 9, there is insufficient planning of appropriately matched work, and although the activities and resources used are usually appropriate for the majority of boys, often they are too complex for the lowest attainers and not sufficiently demanding for the highest. In a small number of lessons, teachers do provide simplified worksheets and textbooks for those boys who need them, but this does not happen often enough. Most lessons are teacher-led, and too little group work was seen during the inspection. In most lessons, boys have little opportunity to discuss and form their own views and opinions. There was, however, some effective whole-class teaching, as, for example, in work with a Year 10 group on the League of Nations in which the teacher made effective use of boys' recall of their work in Year 9 as a base for the new work.
176. In the best lessons teachers used teaching strategies which helped all boys to learn effectively. Boys in Year 9, for example, were asked to work in pairs to use a range of sources about attitudes to appeasement in the 1930s and to say whether the source supported or opposed appeasement. The teacher's clear explanation of the meaning of appeasement in terms that the boys could readily understand, and the pairing of a lower attainer with a higher attainer for the discussion, meant that all boys gained good knowledge and understanding about the topic. Where the teaching was unsatisfactory it was because confrontational situations were created between teacher and boys that affected adversely the learning of the whole class. In the lessons where potentially difficult situations were defused calmly and quietly without attracting the attention of the whole class, the learning was more successful.
177. Teachers expect boys to work hard and behave sensibly. Most boys have a positive approach to their work, and behave well, and these are important contributory factors to their usually satisfactory progress. A small minority in almost every class, however, have a poor attitude to their own work and to that of others. Although teachers work hard to enforce classroom rules, these boys make unsatisfactory progress and, at times, adversely affect the progress of others. Most pupils listen reasonably to teachers' instructions and explanations. Some, however, chatter when they should be listening and as a result are unclear about the work they should do, and this prevents them making sufficient progress. Overall behaviour is good, attitudes to the subject are satisfactory and the boys' personal development is sound.
178. Since the last inspection the department has made satisfactory progress. It has rewritten the schemes of work, and they are now of good quality. Following criticism at the time of the last inspection there is now a satisfactory departmental development plan for the current academic year. There are, however, several weaknesses in the leadership and management of the department which are unsatisfactory overall. The quality of the departmental documentation overall is poor. Many of the policy statements are too brief, and give no clear idea of how the department contributes to whole-school issues such as special educational needs, the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the boys, or the provision of work matched to boys' abilities. There is no long-term planning. The monitoring of teaching in the department is not sufficiently rigorous. The provision of resources is unsatisfactory. The department does not have enough appropriate textbooks for lower attainers in Year 7 to 9. The library provision is very poor. Insufficient use is made of information and communication technology as a learning resource. The accommodation is unsatisfactory. As a result of building work in progress, the department is teaching in a large number of rooms across the school site, many of which are not suitable and restrict the teaching and learning opportunities.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and the overall quality of teaching is good.
- Pupils' attitudes to the subject are good.
- The attainment of 11 to 14 year olds has improved in recent years.

Areas for improvement

- The attainment of pupils aged 14 to 16 is too low.
- The use of information and communication technology across the curriculum is insufficient.
- The e-mail facility is not used enough.
- Pupils understanding of the use of information and communication technology in its wider sense is narrow.

179. Teachers' assessment of 14-year-olds in 2001 showed that standards were similar to the national average. The results of the 2001 GCSE examination were well below average when compared with similar schools. Although the intention of the school to provide all pupils with the opportunity to study a GCSE short course examination is appropriate, the time allocated for the subject is insufficient, preventing pupils attaining high grades; as a consequence there are below-average examination results. Taking the boys' prior attainment into account, their achievements are good at all stages.

180. Pupils enter the school in Year 7 with varied previous experience but they make good progress and by the time they reach 14 years their overall attainment is at the level expected. The reason for this good progress is the recently-adopted schemes of work that are providing continuity and breadth of study. Pupils' understanding of the communication element of the National Curriculum is good, and they use the associated applications independently. Boys have a good understanding of word processing and use it confidently. They enter the text, use the appropriate procedures to correct and edit their work and have a clear grasp of producing a publication to suit a particular audience. This was evident in a Year 9 topic 'Starting a Business' where pupils have produced associated documents to include a business cards with personalised logos and well balanced posters that are designed for a particular audience. Pupils have knowledge of a website, producing a site about the weather with clearly identified *hyperlinks*, a technique used to link pages to select further information to pages that have been downloaded from the Internet. Pupils have sound knowledge of the use of the modelling element of the National Curriculum. Here pupils use their understanding to create a spreadsheet for a tuck shop, using the appropriate formulae for easy mathematical calculations. Higher-attaining pupils calculate averages and percentages. Pupils have a basic understanding of the use of a database. Although pupils are developing a basic understanding of control technology using the *Logo* program (a simple control program), work is in its early stages and there are too few opportunities to experience more sophisticated programs: therefore this element is unsatisfactory. The school is aware of this and it has now been included in the Year 9 programme of study. Attainment at this stage has been maintained since the previous inspection.

181. The overall attainment of 16-year-olds is below average but better in Year 10 than Year 11. A contributory reason for this is the inconsistent teaching for the present Year 11 because of staffing problems in the past. This has now been rectified and the subject is now fully staffed. Pupils' individual projects are of a satisfactory standard and include good examples of data handling. They know how to enter the data into a database but their overall knowledge is too narrow and few are able to use the query facility to select information. Pupils' knowledge of the communication element is better. Using desk-top techniques they have produced leaflets that are well designed, containing the relevant information with added art graphics to enhance their publications. Although pupils have an individual e-mail address at the school to enable them to access their user area, this is generally under used and is still in the developmental stage.

182. Pupils of all ages use the facilities of the Internet with confidence and understand the benefits when researching information for topics and projects. Although pupils are using a range of applications for

their individual assignments, their understanding of use in a wider sense is too narrow and few pupils are able to give examples of where it might be used beyond the school. Pupils with special educational needs and the gifted and talented pupils are clearly identified and make good progress. The attainment of 14 to 16 year olds has declined since the previous inspection, due mainly to staffing problems.

183. The overall quality of teaching is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use their expertise well to demonstrate procedures and guide pupils onto the next stage, leading to good progress. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' conduct, deal well with potential disruptive behaviour, insist on full attention when explaining a procedure; this leads to good learning. Pupils respond positively to this high standard of discipline. They are confident to seek help when required, are anxious to improve and remain attentive during lessons. The planning of work is generally well focused with appropriate worksheets to support learning, but there are occasions when work for higher attaining pupils is not challenging enough and there is a lack of opportunities for independent learning. Learning is better when the objective of the lesson is clearly explained to pupils, combined with careful and well-focused questioning to ascertain pupils' understanding. Although teachers use the *computer tutor* effectively, a system to demonstrate skills to a whole class, there are occasions when too long is spent explaining a procedure, questioning is not probing enough and as a result the pace of the lesson and of learning is slowed. The overall quality of teaching and learning has improved since the previous inspection.
184. The management of the subject is good. The head of department has a considerable workload as subject leader for science and information communication technology; however he has a clear vision about future developments and the need to raise and maintain standards.

The provision of information and communication technology across the curriculum

185. At the last inspection, the provision for the use of information and communication technology across the curriculum was reported to be 'restricted'. Although there has been some improvement, there are still several subjects where information and communication technology is underused to support learning.
186. There was some good use in mathematics using a graph program to draw functions. Effective use was also made in the personal and social education and careers lessons. Pupils use the word processing application and have chosen to use the facility for individual projects. Some use is made in English but mainly for the production of 'best' copies. The geography department encourages pupils to word process their work and there was good use of a database for GCSE projects. Use in history is minimal. Although some use is made of CD-ROMs for research, there is no policy or any planned delivery. A lack of up-to-date equipment and teacher expertise is restricting the use in design and technology, in particular computer-aided design and manufacturing. However, food technology makes good use of information and communication technology and pupils use programs effectively to produce graphs and pie charts to present their findings from a questionnaire. The music department makes effective use of electronic keyboards and facilities to record performances. The department has recently acquired computers, but they are not yet installed and the use of information and communication technology is not incorporated into the schemes of work. Business studies make use of word processing for course work and the Internet for research but there is insufficient planned use. The use in modern foreign languages is satisfactory, with some word processing for drafting and re-drafting. Some pupils have used the e-mail facility. Art, physical education and religious education are all unsatisfactory users, lacking policies and planning. Teachers' lack of confidence and competence are the main reasons for the lack of use. The training of teachers in some departments is still in its early stages but where teachers do have confidence, information and communication technology is contributing to pupils' skills and learning.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Pupils' listening skills in French and Spanish are well developed as a result of the extensive use of those languages by the teachers.
- Teachers have high expectations of achievement and behaviour from their pupils and, as a result, pupils have a positive attitude to language learning and achieve well.
- Teachers are committed to improving standards of achievement and attainment, and plan their lessons carefully so that they motivate and challenge all students.
- Teachers work closely with the special needs staff to ensure that they have a good understanding of the individual needs of these pupils; these boys make good progress as a result.

Areas for improvement

- Pronunciation when reading aloud in French is not good enough.
- Time for the second modern language is insufficient for it to be taught effectively in Year 9.

187. All pupils study either French or Spanish in Years 7 to 9, with higher attainers studying both in Year 9. Results of teachers' assessment of pupils in Year 9 in their first modern foreign language indicate that the standards of attainment are slightly below the national average. However, in the work seen during the inspection, the standards achieved by pupils in both French and Spanish are in line with national expectations and are showing signs of improvement. For example, in a Year 9 Spanish lesson, boys were asked to imagine that they were taking part in the Spanish exchange visit, and staying with a Spanish family. They were practising how to express themselves in this situation, such as asking to telephone home, saying what they would like to do during the visit, and saying what they need. They used present and past tenses easily, and expressed their opinions confidently.

188. The majority of 14 to 16 year old pupils continue to study the first modern foreign language to examination level, either in GCSE or Certificate of Achievement. The pass rate at GCSE grades A* to C is below average in Spanish, but in French, it is in line with boys' results nationally and is showing signs of improving. In both French and Spanish, the 100 per cent pass rate at grades A* to G is above the national average. The pass rate in the Certificate of Achievement is also 100 per cent. In work seen during the inspection, standards were in line with national expectations by the age of 16. For example, in a Year 11 Spanish class, boys were practising the Spanish phrases and expressions they would need to know in order to get out of difficult situations such as missing the bus and needing to find alternative means of transport. By the end of the lesson, they were using these phrases confidently, adapting them to a range of situations. In a Year 10 French lesson, boys expressed their own ideas in an interesting way when talking about their own region, and used a good range of vocabulary, tenses and structures.

189. The quality of teaching is good with boys ages 11 - 14 and satisfactory with boys aged 14 - 16. Pupils learn well and make good progress in Years 7 to 9 and sound progress with satisfactory achievement in Years 10 and 11. Teachers plan their lessons well and have a wide range of activities that ensure that there is a good pace, with lots of opportunity for every pupil to be involved and take part. For example, teachers use team games or small group activities such as short plays. Pupils are keen to take part and achieve well, particularly in spoken work. Teachers use Spanish or French throughout their lessons, and have high expectations that the pupils will try to understand what they are being asked to do. Consequently, pupils have a good level of understanding of spoken French or Spanish. Pupils are clearly used to asking for things or explaining themselves in the foreign language. For example, one boy arriving late to class because he had been in a music lesson was able to explain the reason in good French. Teachers have displayed the most commonly needed phrases on the walls of the classroom and all pupils make use of that support if necessary. Teachers speak excellent French and Spanish and the pupils learn very good pronunciation from them. Boys take pride in the appearance of their written work, which is well organised and set out in such a way that they can learn and revise easily from it. All teachers use the same approach to the way that they expect boys to present their work, and they mark it carefully, with comments that are both encouraging and helpful.

190. Teachers have very good relationships with the pupils, and there is a positive learning atmosphere in the classroom. As a result, the majority of pupils have a positive attitude to learning a foreign language. They are generally confident and prepared to take part in all language activities - speaking, listening, reading and writing. They are respectful and supportive of one another in role-play. Teachers know their students well, and keep detailed records of the progress of each student in the development of their speaking, listening, reading and writing skills, and give appropriate advice to each pupil about how to improve in each skill. Pupils have a good understanding of what they need to do to improve their learning and achievement, and are keen to make that improvement. Language teachers liaise closely with the special needs team, and use this information to set tasks at an appropriate level. The progress of pupils with special needs is good. The boys' overall attitudes to learning, behaviour and personal development are good.
191. The teachers in the team are committed to improving standards of language learning and, under the direction of the highly energetic and committed head of languages, have worked together to evaluate all aspects of their teaching in order to achieve the best possible learning for their pupils. Since the last inspection, there have been significant problems with long term illness, which has hampered progress, but in the last two years, they have made very good progress in all aspects of the team's work and have met the target dates set out in their development plans. From the team's consistency of approach, there is clear evidence that every policy or procedure set out in the team handbook has been fully researched, discussed and agreed upon prior to implementation. The head of modern foreign languages and the head of French are aware of the fact that they now need time to monitor the new practices and evaluate the impact on learning. They now need to develop strategies for moderating attainment.
192. There is provision for learning a second modern language for the two top sets in Year 9. However, the one-hour per week allocated for this is taken from the physical education curriculum, and this has a detrimental effect on the boys' attitude. In addition, the time allocation is not sufficient to make significant progress. There are only three pupils studying two languages in the current Year 10.
193. Resources have improved since the last inspection and there are now sufficient textbooks to support learning. The teachers make good use of a range of audio-visual resources. Their use of small white boards is effective in bringing pace to lessons as well as ensuring that all students are participating. Information and communication technology is used satisfactorily. Accommodation is adequate but far from ideal. The team of six language teachers (two full time, four part time) and two foreign language assistants teach in 12 different rooms in total. This has a detrimental effect on language learning for some groups. For example, one Year 9 group is taught in three different classrooms, one of which has very poor acoustics.
194. Pupils and teachers gain from having French-speaking and Spanish-speaking assistants because it gives them direct access to authentic and up-to-date language and cultural information. However, there is room to improve the way in which they are deployed in the classroom, so that their skills can be used to maximum effect in improving pupils' learning. Pupils benefit from the opportunity to participate in language exchanges with France and Spain, as well as links with local colleges.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- The teaching is of good quality.
- There have been very good improvements since the previous inspection.
- The boys' attainment and the provision for extra-curricular activities have improved.
- The curricular provision for 14 to 16 year olds is much better.
- Pupils' attitudes to the subject are much better.

Areas for improvement

- Information and communication technology needs to support progress in composition more.
- Accommodation needs to be improved, in particular the provision for pupils' individual practice.

- The approach to listening to music needs to be more consistent.
- The curriculum needs to include a greater emphasis on music from around the British Isles.

195. Teachers' assessment of 14-year-olds in 2001 showed that standards were well below the national average. These assessments were, however, harsh. No pupils were entered for the 2001 GCSE examination. Pupils enter the school with little previous musical experience, in particular, lacking the creative element. However, the additional lessons provided for pupils in Year 7 is now having a significant impact on their progress and, by the time they reach 14-years-old, most are working at the expected level.
196. With the emphasis on practical skills, pupils' performance is developing well. Boys recognise the notes on the keyboard and confidently play simple melodies, reading from formal notation or from memory. This was noticeable in a Year 7 group. Here, pupils practising the sea shanty 'Drunken Sailor' were able to play the melody that was rhythmically correct and with a steady beat. Pupils have studied a range of different styles of music and explain the main elements of the music. However, their appraising skills are not as well established. A contributory reason for this is the inconsistent approach to listening. Pupils are beginning to compose music in a variety of styles. These compositions have a clear structure and are supported with chord progressions. However, these lack creative development, in particular improvisation skills. The overall attainment has improved since the previous inspection, the present Year 9 having had the benefit of specialist lessons since joining the school.
197. The attainment of 16-years-old pupils is at the level expected. Pupils are making good progress and are beginning to develop an understanding of historical developments. They discuss early periods of music, for example, the Baroque style, and name composers who contributed to the other periods. Composition skills are developing well, pupils having produced at least two compositions towards the GCSE examination. These compositions have good structure, for example, the pop song compositions have a clear introduction, verse and a chorus; some have been arranged for small ensembles. Pupils have composed in a classical style. These compositions have a clear harmonic structure incorporating the main elements of the period; higher-attaining pupils have added embellishments to create authenticity to the style. The quality of these compositions is better than normally seen.
198. Listening skills are not as well developed at this stage. Although pupils recognise styles of music, they experience difficulties in expressing themselves and using the appropriate musical vocabulary to describe the main components of the music. A contributory reason for this is the lack of emphasis on the development of listening skills, the present Year 11 not having had the benefit of specialist teaching in their early years in the school. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and achieve appropriate targets. Gifted and talented pupils, in the main those who play a musical instrument, achieve well.
199. Attitudes to learning, pupils' behaviour and the boys' personal development are all good. Pupils respond well to their teachers and are anxious to improve their work, leading to good learning. Learning is accelerated by the teachers' skilful management of pupils through high expectations of behaviour, and dealing sensitively and quickly with any unacceptable behaviour. Pupils respond well to this approach showing respect to their teachers contributing positively to progress and learning.
200. The overall quality of teaching is good. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed and a quarter was very good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use their personal skills well to demonstrate styles of music and to accompany singing sessions. This was most noticeable during a Year 10 composition topic. Here the teacher effectively used keyboard skills to play pupils' compositions. The relaxed atmosphere in classes, promoting an ethos where pupils are confident to seek help when required, also accelerates learning. Teachers know their pupils well and have high expectations of them. Lessons are planned effectively to build on pupils' knowledge, encouraging them to practise their skills and refine their creative work. Teaching is less effective when the explanation of the task at the beginning of the lesson is not clear to pupils and consequently leads to slower learning. The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection.

201. The leadership of the subject is very good. The head of department has a clear commitment to maintaining and raising standards. During a relatively short period he has raised the profile of music in the school to a point where pupils now regard it as worthwhile subject, approaching it with enthusiasm. At the time of the last inspection there were no examination groups in the upper school. This has now been addressed and there are now two small GCSE groups. However, the projected numbers of pupils choosing the subject next year have doubled, a positive measure of the increased popularity of the subject. The provision for extracurricular activities has improved and is well supported by pupils, many commenting that they are proud to be part of the ensembles.
202. The accommodation is unsatisfactory for a rapidly growing department. Although there is one well-equipped room there are occasions when pupils are taught in non-specialist rooms where a lack of access to specialised equipment for practical activities slows pupils' development. The two practice rooms are inadequate. The department has recently acquired information technology equipment but this is not yet installed. The use of information technology to support pupils' composition skills is not incorporated in the present schemes of work. The revised scheme of work is giving pupils a broad and balanced musical experience; however, there is a lack of emphasis on music from the British Isles, for example folk music. The overall improvement since the previous inspection has been very good.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good.
- Standards are above average in table tennis in Year 8 and in soccer in Year 10.
- The teachers are enthusiastic and relationships with pupils are very good.
- There is a good range of extracurricular activities.

Areas for improvement

- Standards at GCSE and A level are not high enough.
- There are no reports to parents for boys in Years 10 and 11.
- Curriculum planning is needed to ensure full coverage of the National Curriculum throughout the school.
- Pupils studying a second modern foreign language in Year 9 have too little time for this subject.
- Assessment of pupils' progress is not good enough.

203. Teacher assessments of pupils by the end of Year 9 were below the national average in 2001 but this contradicts current observations. The standards achieved by pupils in the GCSE examinations in 2001 were below the national average. All pupils achieved a grade G pass, however, and overall, pupils did better in physical education than they did in most of their other subjects. Results have fallen steadily over the past four years. Standards achieved in the A level Sports Studies are below the national average.
204. Standards throughout the school have improved since the last inspection. By the end of Year 9, standards are average, although there is some variation between activities taught. Standards are above average in table tennis and pupils in Year 8 demonstrated a knowledge and understanding of the game which is above average. They play the game with good control of bat and ball and use a wide range of different shots. They understand when to use topspin as a strategy for attack. They use the smash effectively. In Year 9, pupils' skills of passing and ball control in soccer are well below average and many are unable to play a game effectively. They have little awareness of space in which to pass and receive a pass, and end up chasing the ball as a group. In basketball, pupils in Year 8 know the basic rules of the game and demonstrate a different range of passes. In games, they are unable to transfer these skills where they break down in competitive situations, often by uncontrolled dribbling.
205. By the end of Year 11, standards are average overall, but above average in soccer. In Year 10, pupils play a full game to a high level. Their knowledge and understanding of the game, including tactics of attack and defence, are above average. They create space when passing and their ball control is very

good. In Year 11, knowledge and understanding of the game are good but not as well developed as in Year 10.

206. Standards in the GCSE course are average. Pupils demonstrate a pride in their written work and presentation is of a good standard. In a theory lesson, pupils in Year 10 possess above-average knowledge of the heart as cardiac muscle. They know the structure of the heart and related blood flow through it to transport oxygen around the body. They also know that the heart can respond immediately when extra demands are placed upon it, such as when playing sport. Pupils' standards in table tennis and soccer are average. Pupils with special educational needs are integrated into lessons and often take an active part. They make good progress. Teachers identify gifted and talented pupils, but some are not often challenged sufficiently and they make satisfactory progress. There is no specific planning for these groups of pupils.
207. The quality of teaching throughout the main school is good, much is very good and some is excellent. This is an improvement since the last inspection, although pupils are still not given opportunities to evaluate each other's performances. Very good teaching took place in a table tennis lesson where pupils in Year 8 were challenged to use backspin and topspin. The teacher made good use of demonstration to support pupils. In a soccer lesson with Year 11 pupils on the GCSE course, the teacher identified weaknesses in pupils' skills and devised a range of strategies for improvement. These were done in small groups and pupils were challenged well. Teachers are enthusiastic and this is a major factor, which results in the positive attitudes of pupils. Relationships with pupils are a strength and teachers manage their classes effectively. In the best lessons, learning objectives are clear and teachers possess good subject knowledge of the activities taught. Their understanding and knowledge of the National Curriculum are less secure and there has been insufficient planning for the recently introduced Curriculum 2000. Curriculum planning was identified in the last inspection as a weakness and has not improved. Marking is regular but comments do not indicate how pupils may improve and grades are not evident to inform pupils of their standard.
208. Overall, the attitudes of pupils are very good, although there are some pupils in Years 9 and 11 who do not take an active part in lessons. There is still insufficient involvement of non-participant pupils in lessons and on some occasions they are unsupervised. This has not improved since the last inspection and is a cause for concern in terms of safety. The majority of pupils arrive enthusiastically for lessons and enjoy being with their teachers. They work collaboratively in groups and with their teachers and behaviour is often very good. All pupils on the GCSE course demonstrate a mature attitude to their work.
209. A range of extracurricular activities is available and many boys have achieved success at county and regional level. School teams are successful, particularly in soccer and this is a credit to the department where facilities are so poor.
210. The improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory. Accommodation is still unsatisfactory and inadequate, although the school has recently submitted a Lottery bid to enhance sporting facilities in both the school and the community. There continues to be insufficient time for gymnastics, rugby and cricket. The pupils in Year 9 who study a second modern foreign language are still denied access to the required time in the curriculum. This was a cause for concern in the last report, as was assessment, which is still not good enough. The programme for pupils in Years 10 and 11 lacks balance. Present timetable arrangements result in some pupils who study GCSE having all their core lessons on the same day. There are no reports to parents for pupils in Year 10 and 11 and this is in breach of statutory regulations.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in religious education is **poor**.

Areas for improvement

- Staffing and accommodation are not good enough.
- Leadership and management are poor.
- Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory.
- Provision for the sixth form is inadequate.

211. Results in the GCSE (short course) examination in 2001 were below average. GCSE results in recent years have ranged from well below average to above average and show no discernible trend.
212. In Years 7, 8 and 9, progress is slow and attainment by the end of Year 9 is well below the standard expected. Pupils have some knowledge of Christianity and other religions studied but it is superficial and insecure. Their understanding of religious ideas and use of correct vocabulary are very undeveloped. Pupils lack the skill to relate religion to themselves or to their experience of life.
213. In Years 10 and 11, pupils in the highest attaining group write about prejudice and discrimination. Their progress is satisfactory and these pupils have enough knowledge and understanding to achieve an average range of grades at GCSE. In other groups, pupils' progress is slow and attainment by the end of Year 11 is well below average.
214. Behaviour by pupils is satisfactory but attitudes in lessons are variable and generally unsatisfactory. In Year 7, pupils are positive in attitude and keen to learn. They are mature and responsible and their behaviour is very good. By Year 9, pupils are only partly attentive to the teacher and are too easily distracted to be successful in written work. In Year 10, when pupils have outside speakers, they show interest and pay attention. In other lessons, pupils are negative in attitude and complain about the number of different teachers they have had. The school's staffing difficulties have clearly had a negative impact on attitudes.
215. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory. Pupils receive lessons from teachers who have insufficient knowledge of religion and an inadequate grasp of the purpose of religious education. Pupils receive incorrect information and fail to develop the vocabulary they need. Pupils make little progress in basic skills because the activity in many lessons is to copy from a worksheet or textbook. Undemanding activities predominate. Absence of planning and low expectations, lack of purpose and shortage of resources are weaknesses evident in many lessons. Teachers show no use of ongoing assessment and pupils have no sense of progress in their learning. Despite the need for improvement in many areas of teaching and learning, the management of pupils in Year 7 is good and time is used well.
216. The curriculum in the main school is broad, balanced and relevant and matches the requirements of the agreed syllabus. All pupils have one lesson a week and this allows them to follow the GCSE (short course) in Years 10 and 11. [In the sixth form four students follow the A level course but the school does not provide religious education for the others as required by law.] The poor quality of provision in religious education diminishes the subject's contribution to personal development.
217. Leadership and management of the department are poor. Staffing is at the root of the problem. The previous head of department left in December 2001. Since January 2002 there has been no permanent head of department despite the school's repeated attempts at recruitment. The acting head of department teaches most lessons but also has responsibility for a large number of lessons covered by supply teachers. This difficult situation is exacerbated by those lessons being taught in ten different rooms. A further difficulty, and evidence of the shortage of learning resources, is that pupils may not take books from school for homework. In such circumstances, the struggle is to survive and there is no sense of educational direction. In the present circumstances the two highest priorities are securing teachers with the necessary knowledge and ensuring lessons have clear learning objectives that are shared with pupils.
218. Since the last inspection there has been a substantial decline in the quality of provision in all aspects but especially in leadership and management. The previous report spoke of the department's distinctive contribution both to the aims of the school and to the personal development of pupils. Religious education is in urgent need of a head of department capable of re-establishing the subject

and taking it forward into the future. Success now depends on the priority given to religious education by the school's governing body and senior management team.

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. Many sixth form courses are taught jointly with the staff of the adjacent Pensby High School for Girls, and boys represent approximately half of the cohort. The organisation, co-ordination, and liaison between staff teaching the courses are sound.

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
Business studies	1	100	76	0	12	1.0	1.7
Mathematics	3	67	62	33	15	2.3	1.5

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	3	100	96	0	46	4.0	6.6
Business studies	5	80	92	0	32	2.4	5.5
English literature	8	100	95	0	37	3.8	5.9
Design and technology (full course)	4	100	91	50	30	5.5	5.4
General studies	18	78	85	11	30	3.9	4.9
Geography	8	63	92	13	38	2.5	5.7
History	12	67	88	0	35	2.8	5.5
Mathematics	11	55	87	18	43	3.6	5.8
Media studies	6	100	93	17	31	4.0	5.5
Religious studies	1	100	92	0	38	4.0	5.8
Sociology	1	0	86	0	35	-	5.3
Sports/physical education studies	5	80	92	20	25	3.2	5.1

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

219. The focus of the inspection was on mathematics and biology but physics and GNVQ intermediate science were also sampled. There are no boys taking chemistry this year. In physics, all three candidates taking A level obtained at least a grade E in 2001. In the two lessons seen, students achieved well and attained average standards. Year 12 students have a secure understanding of Newton's Laws of Motion and applied them well to everyday situations such as car collisions. Two students were reluctant to answer questions voluntarily or to put forward ideas and the teacher did not target questions sufficiently to check their understanding. The two Year 13 students skilfully manipulated apparatus and recorded measurements accurately while undertaking an investigation on beta particle absorption. They confidently explained what they were doing and what they were trying to find out. The teacher continually questioned and challenged them and gave appropriate guidance as required. They have recently acquired a sound understanding of harmonic motion. The teacher makes effective use of past examination questions in reinforcing their understanding and the students find the model answers provided particularly helpful.
220. The GNVQ intermediate science results in 2001 were above average, with all students gaining a pass grade. The lesson observed was very well prepared and planned, serving the needs of students at different stages of the investigation. The tasks were well chosen and were successfully developing measuring, recording, interpretational and evaluation skills. The teacher gave appropriate guidance. Students were fully engaged and interested throughout and enjoying the lesson. Some had used information and communication technology facilities to process and display their results.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- The most able students attain grade A in A-level mathematics.
- The progress of almost all of the current students in both Year 12 and Year 13 is good. The best are on course for grade A in their current studies and standards overall are improving.
- Overall, teaching is good and one third is very good.
- Assessment is very good. Students are given realistic and challenging targets. Homework and past papers are used very effectively to monitor and improve progress.
- Behaviour is always very good. In lessons seen, attitudes to learning are almost always good or better.
- Leadership and management are very good.

Areas for development

- Results have been consistently below the national average in recent years.
- The attitude of a minority of students is only satisfactory. This occasionally results in irregular attendance. Even the most able students do not display open enthusiasm for mathematics.
- Whilst teaching overall is good, there are significant variations in the quality of teaching within the three aspects of mathematics taught.
- The department has correctly identified with senior management the need to restructure the way the subject is listed within the option system.
- There is a need to increase the access to information and communication technology to enhance learning in all aspects of the subject.

221. Results in both AS- and A-level examinations in 2001 were below the national average. However, some students attained grade A in both levels of the examination. Results have been below the national average in recent years, but in relation to students' prior attainment at GCSE their progress has been consistently good. Dropout rates, however, are higher than the national average. Approximately half of the students re-sitting GCSE mathematics obtain a grade C or above regularly.

222. The standards of work of the current students suggest that they will gain better grades than students did in the past. The only student of statistics in Year 13 is very able. In a very good lesson seen, he showed a deep understanding of the purpose of the chi-squared distribution and used it extremely confidently and with accuracy to determine whether observed frequencies were significantly different from expected frequencies. In mechanics, the two students enjoyed their studies. They showed willingness in coming to the whiteboard to illustrate solutions to problems involving potential and kinetic energy. Whilst needing prompting, they demonstrated levels of knowledge at least in line with the national average. Students in pure mathematics were less secure. The four students showed little confidence when trying to establish the equations of straight lines using vector geometry. The ability level of this group overall was clearly below average. Overall, the standard in Year 13 of the students on the course is slightly below the national average. Standards of numeracy are good.
223. Students in Year 12 also work confidently in statistics. In a very good lesson, they used their knowledge of the binomial theorem to determine whether or not five dice they were throwing were biased. They worked sensibly and rapidly in pairs and used statistical techniques accurately to establish their results. In pure mathematics they are less secure when expanding algebraic expressions using the binomial theorem. Ultimately, they use Pascal's triangle accurately to correctly identify the coefficients of terms in the expansions. Some students in mechanics are hindered by a lack of basic technique when attempting to integrate vectors. One student in particular is disadvantaged because he has little grounding in pure mathematics. Overall, the standard of the students in Year 12 is slightly below the national average. Standards of numeracy are good.
224. Teaching is good overall with one third being very good. There are differences in the effectiveness in the way in which the different aspects are taught. Statistics is taught very well, with a clear emphasis on understanding. In the lesson with Year 12, the teacher encouraged the students to think about the reasonableness of their results as well as applying the rigid statistical techniques. Their experiment was meaningful to them. In mechanics, whilst students in Year 13 are encouraged to work at the whiteboard, they need more time to think out their solutions and are not encouraged to state their solutions or their preliminary thinking. They simply attempt to write solutions on the board. In pure mathematics, the work is often done with an emphasis on processes rather than understanding. In a lesson on vector geometry, students drew numerous accurate diagrams to represent equations of straight lines in vector form, having been told the positions of two points on the line. Ideally, however, they should have ultimately been able to write down equations confidently without this. Students were not allowed sufficient time to explore and experiment finding different points on just one of these lines and checking their accuracy. Learning, whilst able to produce solutions, was a little insecure. Whilst, understandably, some teachers feel the need to move forward steadily, by spelling out processes and techniques carefully to students (many of these having modest results in GCSE), there is also a need to stretch the levels of understanding further.
225. Teachers have good subject knowledge and relationships with students are very good. Teachers are willing to make themselves available to help individual students out of lessons and all set and mark accurately, meaningful homework, but students are rarely directed to read around the subject. Teachers know their students well and keep them well informed of their progress towards their targets. Some of the written feedback to students on how to improve is of high quality, but this is not consistent.
226. Students learn well. Considering their entry levels from GCSE, they make good progress. They know their levels of attainment well and most work extremely hard. The majority respond well to a challenge, enjoy lessons and are diligent with homework. In lessons, however, there is little real enthusiasm for the subject itself. Students who are studying GCSE mathematics to improve their grade usually make good progress.
227. The department is very well led and managed. The head of department is an outstanding teacher of statistics and leads by example. He sets clear targets for students and their teachers know what is expected of them. He has worked hard in the areas of professional development of staff and monitors teaching and learning well. He realises that the department needs to change the way mathematics is offered in the option system so that all students cover the same modules and experience a greater variety of teachers. Resources are good, and are usually used effectively. However, there is a need to

improve the access to information and communication technology, to enhance learning in all aspects of the subject. Accommodation is adequate. Overall, the department has made satisfactory progress since the previous inspection.

Sciences

Biology

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

Strengths

- GCSE results in 2001 were just below average and improved on those of 2000.
- Students are attaining average standards, achieving well in relation to their prior attainment levels.
- The teaching is good and the subject is well managed.
- Students' attitudes are positive and they enjoy very good relationships with their teacher.

Areas for improvement

- A significant number of students - both boys and girls - are not punctual for lessons.
- The information technology resources are not always readily available for independent study.

228. The GCE A-level examination results in 2001 were just below national averages. They significantly improved on those of 2000. There were nine candidates in each year. Almost all achieved grades that were at least as good as or better in relation to their performance in the GCSE examinations in 1999.

229. In the work seen during the inspection, standards were average and students achieve as expected or better when their prior attainment at GCSE is considered. In the first AS module, Year 12 students have a sound knowledge of biological molecules although some experience difficulties in linking the structure of the molecules to their function. Revision of the module is organised effectively to raise standards. The teacher has used previous examination questions extensively. Planning and interpretational skills are at expected levels but evaluation skills are less well developed. Students' note taking skills are developing well and they have the required numeracy skills to handle the types of calculations required of them so far. The students recalled basic ideas on transportation and photosynthesis well. During the practical investigation they skilfully prepared slides and manipulated microscopes. From work done in a previous lesson they displayed their results in appropriate graphical form and interpreted them well. Standards of presentation were above average. There is only one boy in Year 13 on the A2 level course. He is making good progress and attaining average standards and achieving well with a secure knowledge of the factors affecting dormancy of seeds. He confidently described the investigation he was carrying out and accurately explained the steps.

230. Teaching is good overall; almost a half was very good. It has improved since the last inspection. Teachers know their subject very well and make it comprehensible in a lively enthusiastic manner. They also know each student extremely well and have established excellent relationships. This together with teachers' effective use of praise, encouragement and humour promotes confidence and eagerness to succeed. Lessons are well planned and resources are used effectively. Demonstrations are well prepared and tested beforehand and practical work is managed in an orderly manner with all students kept busy throughout. Much class discussion is promoted but there is occasionally insufficient targeting of questions to ensure that the more reticent students have understood the work. In one lesson the teacher was most thorough when explaining new mathematical concepts required to enable students to process their results.

231. Interest and concentration levels are high. All students say they enjoy the subject, citing the good teaching and positive relationships as the main reasons. They are kept well informed as to how they are progressing. They particularly appreciate the revision lessons at the end of modules. The frequent use of previous examination questions that are carefully marked is making a significant contribution to their good progress. They co-operate very well in groups, helping each other considerably. They are careful and skilful when using apparatus and observe the necessary safety precautions. However, they do not always arrive for lessons on time.

232. Leadership is satisfactory and management is good. Longer term planning is not clearly set out. The two teachers are well qualified and experienced. They regularly meet with the biology teachers from the adjacent girls' school. Two teachers, one from each school, are involved in teaching each group and as far as possible they teach those parts of each module where they have a particular expertise and liking. Assessment procedures fulfil requirements and students' work is assessed thoroughly and regularly. Use is made of the information in monitoring progress and setting targets. The technicians are well organised and provide very good and much appreciated support. The accommodation is satisfactory and has improved since the last inspection. Students are not always able to make use of the information technology resources for independent study. Otherwise, resourcing is adequate. The students have recently spent two days on a course on microbiology at the local university. The department takes advantage of the nearby estuary for field studies.

BUSINESS

The focus was on business studies that is offered as an AS and A2 level subject as well as a vocational options at Intermediate and Advanced level.

Business studies

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

Strengths

- Teaching on all courses provided by business studies has a positive impact on learning.
- Attainment by intermediate and advanced vocational students is well above national averages.
- The team approach to sharing of responsibilities such as the departmental self-review of teaching strategies within the department is supporting an improvement to standards.

Areas for improvement

- Analyse and use data more effectively to provide a more secure basis for identifying potential grades early in the courses and set work targets with students which will enable them reach that potential.
- Continue to develop schemes of work to include a more rigorous approach to the teaching of each business topic, including teaching methodologies, homework, resources and opportunities for information and communication technology.
- Explore and develop opportunities for the use of business software to enhance learning.

233. Standards are above average in vocational courses, and average in academic courses. In both the intermediate and advanced GNVQ business, the examination results have been consistently above average, and above expectations for the ability of students on entry to the course. The majority of students on the advanced vocational course had previously followed the intermediate GNVQ course and so planned to stay in the sixth form for three years. In lessons and written work, intermediate GNVQ students have a good knowledge of finance, make good use of research into local business, and are starting to analyse statistics in order to draw conclusions, although some weaker students find the data as presented too challenging.

234. Advanced vocational (VCE) students are developing an understanding of motivation factors and make effective links between theory and their own experiences of the world of work to support learning. In the advanced subsidiary and advanced level business studies course that is taught jointly with the neighbouring girls' school, boys' results are below national averages; however, results are in line with their achievements in other subjects. The standards reached by Year 13 advanced level students are improving. Students have good knowledge of the workings of a balance sheet and are starting to use case studies to practise skills of evaluation and analysis. A very capable Year 12 student who is unable to take business studies with others due to a timetable clash benefits from one-to-one teaching, and is developing an excellent grounding in the subject.

235. Overall, the quality of teaching is very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and this is used effectively to challenge and extend students' learning. For example, in lessons on finance in Year 13 the teacher used skilful questioning to deepen students' understanding on the uses of

balance sheets and working capital. In the intermediate GNVQ course, teachers have high expectations and the brisk pace ensures that students maintain concentration throughout. They make progress in understanding the differences between overdrafts and bank loans when applying these to a newly established business, and as a consequence confidence grows and even the weakest students make a positive contribution and a gain in learning.

236. In the majority of advanced vocational lessons, students collaborate well when working with peers to develop ideas on how workers are motivated. Lessons are well organised with a range of activities, and this helps to ensure that students are presented with increasingly challenging tasks; this has a significant impact on their learning. The use of a business and industry as a primary source of information is well developed through opportunities for vocational students to take part in work experience, and through visits and speakers to the school. Students are also encouraged to use the Internet to carry out research into national companies, and many make good use of word processing to present their coursework, but overall there is a lack of opportunity for students to use business software to extend knowledge.
237. Assessment is closely linked to the course criteria, and students benefit from the good standard of marking which shows how work can be improved. The use of progress reports is effective in vocational courses where students are made aware of strengths and weaknesses, and there are plans to extend this across all courses, but the use of focused targets for improvement based on the analysis of student data as well as student work is under-developed.
238. In all classes, the majority of students are highly motivated and are keen to do well. Students expressed positive views of business studies. Relationships are very good and students listen intently to the views of others and are actively involved when taking part in collaborative activities to develop their knowledge and understanding.
239. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. There is an enthusiastic and experienced head of department who also has a heavy workload as head of sixth form. She has delegated some responsibilities to the second teacher and this is supporting his professional development and building his confidence. Together they form a strong team committed to continuous improvement as is shown in the joint work on improving teaching in the departmental self-review. However, although there are established links with teachers in the girls' school as part of this self-review, those links are not systematically planned to support continuous improvement of the jointly taught academic business course. There is too little analysis and use of data for target setting, although the department plans to compare future examination results with data on entry to develop a more secure base for predicted grades. Meanwhile, target grades are to be established when the results of the first examinations in Year 12 are received. Lesson planning is very good, but there is a lack of rigour in the long-term planning in schemes of work which list topics to be taught with some student outcomes, but do not yet identify teaching methodologies, homework, resources and opportunities to use information and communication technology other than for Internet research or presentation of work to extend learning.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The focus was on the A-level course in information and communication technology, as described below.

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

Strengths

- The teaching is of good quality.
- The teachers have good subject expertise.
- The students show much enthusiasm for the subject.
- The AS-level results are improving.

Areas for improvement

- There are too few opportunities to visit organisations to promote an understanding of the use of information and communication technology in the workplace.

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The procedures for individual target setting are unsatisfactory. |
|--|

240. The overall provision for the subject is good. The present AS course is attracting larger numbers than previously, demonstrating the growing popularity of the subject. The retention rate is good; all the pupils who started the 2000 AS course completed it. Only one student progressed to study the A-level course. The results of the AS-level computer studies course have improved over the three previous years with all students achieving a pass grade in the 2001 examination. In the A-level computer studies course four of the six students achieved pass grades, while the proportion achieving the higher (A/B) grades was below average. Results in 2001 were below the national average.
241. The work in the AS-level course is of an overall average standard. Year 12 students have made a good start and are progressing well with their individual projects. Students who are taught in conjunction with the adjoining girls' school are not so well advanced. All the students have good technical skills and apply them well in their projects, communicating well through word-processed or desktop published text for project introductions and appropriately devised questionnaires. Students' analytical skills are developing soundly through their projects. For example, students are applying what they know about spreadsheets, entering the data using linked macros and data entry screen with understanding. They show an understanding of health and safety issues and the social implications of the use of information and communication technology.
242. Although some students are able to discuss the use of information and communication technology in its wider context few students have had the opportunity to experience first hand the complexities of its use in large organisations. Students are not clear about evaluating the testing procedure for their projects and the need to write a set of instructions that are 'user friendly' and easily understood by a non-specialist user. The one A-level student has a good understanding and knowledge of the work, using a database and spreadsheets with confidence. Students are well advised about the courses and the requirements. They have a good level of interest in the subject and are confident to discuss their work.
243. Overall the teaching is good and students learn well. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use their expertise effectively to guide their students to the next stage of learning, encouraging them to apply their skills and become independent users. The planning of lessons is thorough and provides a balance of theory and practical skills. Assessment procedures are clearly established, helping them to move forward with their learning. However, there is a lack of target setting for students, in particular in Year 12. Although the Year 13 student has only one lesson per week, the planning is clear with specific targets to achieve. There are, however, procedures for the student to seek help during the lunch breaks and after school should he be experiencing difficulties. When students are working individually, teachers circulate well, discussing work with them and so leading to better learning.
244. The subject is well led and managed. The head of department has clear ideas about improvement. Teachers work hard and give freely of their time. Resources have improved since the previous inspection with effective facilities for demonstrations.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus of the inspection was on art and design and on media studies, both as described below. Not all students who opt to study media studies have completed the GCSE course; all have had some experience of studying the media for a course work element of English GCSE. This does not disadvantage students who have limited previous experience but does give the other students a head start.

Art and design

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

Strengths

- The development of individual creative artwork.

Areas for improvement

- Students need to form and express opinions and judgements on art.
- Students need opportunities to use computers creatively.
- Clarification is needed of areas of responsibility in the joint course management.

245. Standards of work are average. These standards are achieved because the teaching is focused well on promoting individual creativity in practical work. Students' attitudes are satisfactory and this also ensures that the quality of their learning in art is satisfactory. As a result, students' achievement overall in relation to their standards when they began in the sixth form is satisfactory. In the most recent examination results, the numbers entered are too small to relate to national statistics but, with no A or B grades achieved, appear to be well below the average compared with the previous year, when two students gained B grades.
246. Small numbers of boys take part in a joint provision for AS- and A-level art with the adjacent girls' school. The practice of leaving folders of work at the last centre in which students were taught can lead to long delays at the start of lessons. Students are able to build on sound drawing and painting skills because of the demonstration of craft skills in both two- and three-dimensional activities that they receive from their tutors. They develop their studies creatively to a satisfactory standard because of the good individual support and guidance they receive in both years. Even at this level, however, sometimes students still express a lack of confidence in their drawing skills. Others draw and paint finely executed analytical studies of the human body to a very high standard. They are able to research the work of a chosen artist, such as James Rosenquist, and use their findings to influence their own original work. They develop sound spatial awareness and skill in well-crafted sculpture that they embellish with well-painted imagery based on their study of Joan Miro. Following a visit to Grizedale Sculpture Park they make large-scale imaginative wicker abstract forms in challenging tasks.
247. Students speak very positively about the course. They appreciate the good opportunities to visit art galleries, at home and abroad, and value the adult way in which they are treated. While practical matters are well addressed, students do not receive enough formal training in forming and expressing opinion and judgement, with the result that students' ability to discuss or write about art is less than expected for this level of course.
248. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Teachers have good knowledge of the subject. Their planning of work and teaching methods is satisfactory. Opportunities for students to work with scanners and computers to creatively manipulate images are inadequate and few word process their work. Some rely on computers at home to access the Internet to find and print information about contemporary sculpture. Learning is satisfactory overall.
249. Since the previous report, new courses have been successfully introduced but there are some details unresolved, such as the keeping of a course diary and the development of essential communication skills. Opportunities for students to continue their work beyond the formal single periods timetabled are limited by a lack of designated workspace. Performance data held by the school is not yet used by the department to monitor students' progress and awareness of art and artists continues to be limited by the poor range of books and contemporary learning material in the studios and library.

Media studies

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

Strengths

- The teachers have high quality subject knowledge of the key concepts of media.
- Teachers provide supportive guidance for pupils.
- Teachers set high standards and have high expectations.
- Teachers successfully convey to students knowledge of the wider historical, social, political and economic contexts.
- Teachers have much enthusiasm for the subject.

Areas for improvement

- There is a lack of resources for more than 'low tech' practical work.
- There is a lack of good provision in the library for independent research and private study.
- Students' punctuality to lessons is unsatisfactory.

250. Standards in AS- and A-level examinations are above the national average. All students who took the examination in 2001 passed. In comparison with similar schools, the students' examination points score is higher. As with GCSE examination results, few students achieve the highest grades of A and A*.
251. Students in both years use media terminology confidently in discussion and discuss their projects with sound understanding of the criteria to be met. There was some lack of focus in one Year 12 group; they had not thought through their practical project as carefully as another group. They had chosen their product but the research to support it was insufficiently clear to provide the limited focus needed. In discussion they understood the constraints of the task chosen and used technical terms effectively. Year 12 students were working on a practical project that required them to research their audience; they demonstrated how they had selected their audience and how they would design their media text to meet their audience's needs. Year 13 students had begun their final project, a short video, and showed how they had made their editing choices. They explained how they had used the limited facilities to maximum effect.
252. Teaching is good and students are provided with clear examination information and targets. Teachers' knowledge is very good and this enables students to develop a clear understanding of the key concepts. The students are provided with clear guidance on research skills and encouraged to use a variety of methods to improve their knowledge base of media audiences and institutions. The practical projects are generally low technology based, as the school does not have sophisticated resources or specialist accommodation. Within the constraints, students are encouraged to develop their production skills to ensure clear understanding of the limitations under which media texts are commercially produced. The course work is carefully planned to give students time to research and produce practical projects to meet examination deadlines. Emphasis is placed on the importance of maintaining deadlines. Work is carefully monitored and guidance given by the teacher to students who may be experiencing difficulty.
253. Learning is good overall. There are some resource limitations impinging on students' private and independent study. The library is inadequate and there is a reliance on students having access to their own computer facilities. One Year 12 student produces presentation packages for his father's business using 'PowerPoint'. Another is combining his information and communication technology experience with his media studies. Students' attitudes to the subject are positive and there is much enthusiasm in lessons. However, students are frequently late to lessons.
254. Relationships within the group are good and there is mutual respect between the teacher and the students. Students work cooperatively and successfully. Students are capable of working independently but there are limitations during the school day as the library is used as a classroom and other facilities are not available. The information and communication technology suite is frequently used well but the computer facility in the library is not easily accessed. Few facilities exist for private study. The lack of sophisticated equipment places constraints on the type of practical

project students might produce but the potential adverse impact on examination requirements is minimised by the careful planning and organisation of the course by the teachers.

255. The subject is well led and managed. The schemes of work are well thought out. The work is effectively monitored and students' work is carefully marked, providing guidance to aid future learning. Students are well supported by class teachers in lessons with carefully constructed study guides.

HUMANITIES

The focus of the inspection was on geography and history, as described below. Some religious education work was observed and scrutinised. One Year 13 religious education lesson was observed and teaching was good. No students turned up for a second religious education lesson. In the GCE examination in religious education at A and AS level, results in 2001 were very low with most students failing to achieve a grade.

Geography

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

Strengths

- There is a well written scheme of work which provides a good basis for teaching.?
- There are good quality textbook resources for students.

Areas for improvement

- The standards achieved by students are not high enough.
- The rigour and challenge of teaching and expectations need to be greater to give students a greater depth of understanding?
- The procedures for assessment need to improve to effectively support students' learning.

256. Students' overall level of attainment by the end of Year 13 is well below that expected nationally. Two students entered the AS examination in 2001 and neither of them gained a pass grade. Results in the A-level examination in 2001 were well below the national average for the subject. The results have remained broadly static since 1997. Results achieved by students in this subject are poorer than those in their other subjects.
257. Students have a basic knowledge of the subject but they do not have the breadth of knowledge or depth of understanding required. Their work shows a lack of detailed knowledge of examples of the features they have studied. Work completed in Year 13, for example, on the work of rivers shows a superficial understanding of the reasons for flooding, but not the links between them which cause catastrophic events, or detailed knowledge of those events.
258. Students have a weak background general knowledge of the subject. They can extract information effectively from resource material. In one lesson, for example, students in Year 12 worked effectively in groups to collect information from a wide range of resource material to write a report on the changes associated with severe climate change in South America. Notes are usually well written and comprehensive. Fieldwork reports generally show satisfactory understanding of geographical enquiry and the methods of collecting evidence and analysing data. Students have difficulty in writing detailed and well-structured essays and rarely use geographical terms. The highest attaining students make satisfactory progress but are not challenged sufficiently to develop their understanding to enough depth.
259. The quality of teaching was satisfactory overall although one lesson was unsatisfactory. Teachers are well prepared and organised and lessons start briskly and proceed smoothly. They have a good knowledge of the subject, so information and explanations are given clearly, are generally well illustrated, and arouse students' curiosity. Little opportunity is provided for students to be involved in the lesson through discussion, and questioning often lacks the incisiveness to challenge students sufficiently to deepen their understanding. One lesson suffered from an excessive use of a video extract. Expectations are modest. Lessons are well planned as part of a sequence. There are

appropriate opportunities for students to work in groups and use information and communication technology as a tool for research.

260. Teachers have a good relationship with students and establish a sound working atmosphere in lessons. Resources are of good quality but are not exploited sufficiently for students to develop insights in sufficient depth and detail. Although notes and files are checked regularly, marking is not sufficiently detailed to enable students to know what they must do to improve.
261. Students co-operate effectively with each other in groups, organise themselves quickly and support each other in their work. They listen carefully, are attentive, and are willing to make a contribution to the lesson. Late arrival to lessons and the absence of a minority of students cause organisational difficulties for teachers. Students generally have a positive attitude to the subject, and they are well motivated and work hard.
262. The scheme of work is well structured and effectively underpins teaching. It provides adequate opportunities for fieldwork and the use of information and communication technology for research, using databases, and presenting work. The system of assessment and recording is ineffective and does not provide regular information for students about the progress they are making. Resources are of good quality and students have access to up-to-date textbooks.

History

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

Strengths

- Teachers know their subject well.
- Teachers use assessment well to help pupils make progress.

Areas for improvement

- There are too few opportunities for students to discuss, form and express their own views and opinions and challenge the views of others.
- Questioning techniques rarely provide opportunities for students to respond at length.
- The attitudes of students to their work are unsatisfactory.

263. The GCE A-level examination results in 2001 were the highest for the past four years, although still well below average. Two-thirds of the boys gained a pass grade. In only one of the past four years has a boy gained an A or B grade. In relation to their GCSE results, however, students make satisfactory progress by the end of Year 13.
264. The standard of work seen during the inspection from boys in Years 12 and 13 was broadly in line with that expected nationally and reflects an improvement on recent years with a stronger cohort of boys. This included a small amount of work potentially of grade A standard as well as some likely to be awarded the lowest grades. Boys in Year 13 understand that historians have differing, and sometimes conflicting, views of the past, and the highest attainers understand why this is so. In Year 13, good quality essays were analytical in their approach and detailed evidence provided a sound basis for the opinions expressed. Some lower-attaining boys have difficulty explaining the underlying meaning of some of the texts they have to read. Their oral responses to teacher's questioning indicated an average level of knowledge and understanding. Their answers were often brief, and without the prompting of the teacher, boys did not generally develop in-depth thinking.
265. Boys in Year 12 achieve standards that are broadly average. They show at least sound knowledge and understanding of the events they are studying. They understand and explain, for example, the problems that Germany faced in the 1930s. The higher attainers demonstrate an understanding of the concepts underlying the actions taken in Germany at the time. The essays were often narrative rather than analytical. In work on the unification of Germany, for instance, most described and explained adequately several reasons why unification happened, but very few attempted to assess which cause was the most significant. Some boys failed to identify clearly enough the key words in

the question and so wrote a narrative that included much that was not relevant. Some boys in Year 12 struggled with the fairly basic mathematical calculations needed to complete a chart showing the results of elections in Germany in the 1920s. The highest attainers used the completed chart successfully to make valid deductions about the problems of the electoral system in Germany at the time.

266. Teaching is satisfactory overall, occasionally good, and contributes to boys' satisfactory progress from their GCSE course. Teachers have good subject knowledge, which they communicate effectively. The work set is appropriately challenging, and matched well to the requirements of the examinations. Work is marked to examination criteria, and the usually helpful comments on marked work provide students with clear guidance and ways to improve their answers in the future. Students are set practice examination questions, both essays and source evaluation, throughout the course.
267. Lessons are largely dominated by the teachers, and do not provide pupils with sufficient opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning. When using the textbooks, teachers often ask students to read aloud, but then rather than ask the students to explain what they have read, the teacher explains it for them. This allows many students to remain passive rather than active learners. Teachers' questioning often leads to single word or single sentence answers, and does not allow students good opportunities to give lengthy or detailed responses. No group or paired work was seen during the inspection. The most effective teaching and learning occurred when students were set a task they had to complete themselves, with the teacher acting as a supporter of the learning rather than as an instructor. Although many of the students did not find the task an easy one, it did lead to effective learning about what happened in Germany in the 1920s.
268. Some boys learn well, but many do not achieve as much as they should. Too many are passive, and are happy to allow others in the group to answer and ask questions. The attitudes in general are unsatisfactory, and demonstrate a lack of commitment to hard work. In one lesson for example, almost all the boys were fifteen minutes late arriving following morning break. In another lesson it was clear that some had not done preparation work adequately.
269. The boys have a good range of new and appropriate textbooks available for their study, an improvement since the last inspection. Boys' work as independent learners is restricted, however, by the very poor provision in the library. The number and range of books available to them are much too small for them to read widely and acquire the depth of understanding needed to gain top grades. Insufficient use is made of information and communication technology as a resource for learning.
270. The subject is satisfactorily led and managed. There are good quality schemes of work for the AS and A2 courses. There, is however, no long term planning for the development and improvement of the sixth form provision.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus of the inspection was English, as described below. It was not possible to see any sixth form modern foreign languages work.

English

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good.
- Teachers have very good academic knowledge and understanding.
- Students are positive in their attitudes.

Areas for improvement

- In the GCE A level examination in 2001, although all students achieved a pass grade, none achieved the two highest grades.

271. Examination results for English literature in GCE A level in 2001 were well below the national average. Although all students achieved a pass grade, none achieved the two highest grades. All students did, however, perform as expected in the light of their past achievements. The standard of work seen during the inspection was in line with that seen in most sixth forms. It spans a range of levels of attainment but the quality of some of the best written work in Year 13 already matches that of the highest grades. Assignments show detailed knowledge and understanding of texts as well as a mature grasp of the sequence of events. Writing is, in the main, well planned, skilfully crafted and accurately managed, expressing perceptive judgements. Essays on *Death of a Salesman*, for example, had these qualities and revealed detailed textual study and sound critical appreciation. Students make useful and relevant notes. In the early stage of their study of *Othello*, students in Year 12 made detailed comment on the play, which revealed familiarity with some of the central themes of the work such as jealousy and revenge. Students answer articulately and fluently, often extending responses coherently. They read aloud well. In discussion they support points of view through close reference to the text.
272. The overall quality of teaching is good. Teachers have high academic standards that have a direct influence on students' own learning. Teachers' enthusiasm for set texts, their thorough knowledge of them and expertise in the broader context of works help to create a positive ethos. Relationships within the classroom are positive and mutually respectful. The marking of assignments is very thorough with much constructive comment. Clear guidance is given for ways to improve. Examination requirements are constantly rehearsed.
273. The students' learning is good. They acquire the necessary skills well and work at a good pace. They take their work very seriously and try hard, demonstrating good attitudes to their studies.
274. Sixth form courses are well organised. One crucial factor, having an adverse effect upon students' learning and attainment, is the poor resources for research in the library. Subject sections are inadequate to support sixth form study. The head of department brings great enthusiasm and skill to his good management and leadership.