

INSPECTION REPORT

THE KING ALFRED SCHOOL

Highbridge

LEA area: Somerset

Unique reference number: 123879

Headteacher: Dr K Diffey

Reporting inspector: Mr K Davitte
15029

Dates of inspection: 25th February – 1st March, 2002

Inspection number: 123879

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 to 18 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Burnham Road
Highbridge
Somerset

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Dr P Clarke

Date of previous inspection: 23 September 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
15029	Mr K Davitte	Registered inspector	Special educational needs	<p>What sort of school is it?</p> <p>The school's results and pupils' and students' achievements</p> <p>How well are pupils and students taught?</p> <p>How well is the school led and managed?</p> <p>What should the school do to improve further?</p>
12775	Ms J Goodchild	Lay inspector		<p>Pupils' and students' attitudes, values and personal development</p> <p>How well does the school care for its pupils and students?</p> <p>How well does the school work in partnership with parents?</p>
23393	Mr B Dower	Team inspector	English	
13619	Mr B Meech	Team inspector	Mathematics	
5241	Ms C Millband	Team inspector	Science	
8503	Mr A Allfree	Team inspector	Art and design Design and technology	
13734	Mr H Davies	Team inspector	Geography	
17732	Mr D Martin	Team inspector	History	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils and students?
10679	Mr M Aston	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
15396	Mr R Bulman	Team inspector	Equal opportunities English as an additional language Modern foreign languages	
4757	Mr D Morris	Team inspector	Music	
23030	Ms C Runyard	Team inspector	Physical education	
10807	Mr P Quest	Team inspector	Religious education	Citizenship

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The King Alfred School is a larger than average 11-18 comprehensive school in Burnham-on-Sea in the local educational authority of Somerset. There are 1403 pupils on roll with 703 boys and 700 girls. There are 94 students in the sixth form (40 boys and 54 girls) which is below average. The great majority of pupils in the school are white. Only three pupils speak English as an additional language which is low and of these one is at an early stage of learning English. There are 163 (12 per cent) pupils with special educational needs which is below the national average and 39 (3 per cent) with a statement of special educational need which is average. Of the 39 who have statements 26 have emotional and behavioural difficulties. There are 163 pupils known to be eligible for free school meals which is broadly average. The social and economic circumstances of pupils are average overall with the catchment area varying from disadvantaged areas to areas of high-class housing. Attainment on entry for the majority is currently average and has improved in recent years.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

It is an improving school as shown by results in national tests and examinations which are now average overall by the end of Year 9 and Year 11. The school has very recently gained a 'School Achievement Award' from the Secretary of State for Education and Skills in recognition of improvements already made. Provision is good in Years 7-11 but, although improving, standards in the sixth form are below average. Much good teaching combined with good leadership and management have contributed to improvements. The school provides good value for money in Years 7-11 and satisfactory value for money for the school as a whole when the sixth form is also taken into account.

What the school does well

- Standards in Years 7 to 9 which are showing a marked improvement across most subjects.
- Examination results in history at GCSE which were well above average in 2001.
- Standards in drama which are above average and the contribution which the subject makes to pupils' confidence and personal development.
- The contribution which the library makes to pupils' education and which is used well and flexibly.
- The contribution of the governing body working closely with senior management in eliminating a substantial deficit in the budget and in helping to raise standards.

What could be improved

- GCSE results for boys which are below average in most subjects.
- Standards in religious education which are well below average.
- Numbers of students in the sixth form to make it cost effective and an improvement in post-16 examination results.
- The meeting of statutory requirements in the teaching of religious education to pupils in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form and in holding a daily act of collective worship.
- The unsatisfactory accommodation for lunchtime dining arrangements.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

At the time of the last inspection in 1996, although there were signs that the school was beginning to recover from its demoralised state following poor financial control, substantial numbers of parents were not sending their children to the school by choice. Some six years later that situation has been transformed with the school now in a healthy financial state and some 400 more pupils in the school

than at the time of the last inspection. There are currently more applications than places available for the next entry to Year 7 in 2002. Standards have improved in Years 7 to 11 but not in the sixth form. Most of the issues raised at the last inspection have been addressed but the school still does not provide a daily act of collective worship. Overall improvement since the last inspection has been good.

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	C	C	D
A-levels/AS-levels	E	E	D	

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

In 2001, results in national tests at the end of Year 9 were above average in English and average in mathematics and science which represented good progress by pupils who took the tests in 2001 from their time of entry into the school in Year 7. They were much better results than at the time of the last inspection in 1996 when standards in both English and mathematics were well below average.

In GCSE examinations in 2001, results were average overall. Girls' results have been average but boys have been below average. The overall proportion achieving five or more grades at A*-C (43 per cent) in 2001 was not quite as good as in 2000 (47 per cent), but results are much better than at the time of the last inspection when only 28 per cent achieved five or more GCSE grades A*-C. The school sets itself challenging targets which it is not quite meeting, but which are attainable if current improvements continue. The comparison with 'similar schools' above is based on schools with a similar percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. A better measure is the progress made by pupils from their time of entry into the school and those who took GCSEs in 2001 made satisfactory progress from Year 7 to Year 11.

In the sixth form, results at AS-level and A-level were below average in 2001 but better overall than in previous years. As elsewhere the school should soon profit from the greater numbers of higher ability pupils working their way through the school.

Standards seen at the inspection were average at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 in most subjects but there were some exceptions. Standards are currently above average in mathematics and drama at the end of Year 9 and well above average in drama at the end of Year 11. In design and technology, history and GCSE physical education, standards are above average by the end of Year 11. In art standards are below average at the end of Year 9 and in religious education standards are well below average both at the end of Year 9 and Year 11. In the sixth form standards seen at the inspection were better than indicated by recent examination results in 2001. Most students are currently achieving satisfactorily in relation to their previous results.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good: most pupils are willing to learn and involve themselves readily in activities but a minority are not as well motivated.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory: the behaviour of the great majority is good but the poor behaviour of a small minority holds back the learning of others in some

	classes. There is also occasional bullying and vandalism.
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Personal development and relationships	Good: the school has a very positive influence on most pupils' personal development. Relationships between pupils and staff are good overall but a minority of pupils are insufficiently aware of the effect of their actions on others.
Attendance	Attendance is satisfactory overall but there are too many absences in Years 10 and 11 and in the case of some students in the sixth form.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching is currently good in most subjects including in English, mathematics and science. In drama teaching is very good and it is very good in history in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. Teaching is satisfactory in art overall and good in the sixth form. Teaching is unsatisfactory in religious education in Years 7 to 11. The quality of pupils' learning is good overall but varies in some subjects depending on the teacher, for example in English, science, design and technology and art. Nearly all teachers have very good knowledge of their subject. The quality of teachers' planning, expectations and teaching methods is mainly good. Pupils' learning was adversely affected in some classes last year, for example in English and modern foreign languages, by changes in staffing. Recently appointed teachers are making up lost ground with standards rising sharply in modern foreign languages. Most pupils concentrate well and want to learn. Most teachers manage pupils well but there are some examples of insufficient control. The skills of literacy and numeracy are well taught. Marking is mostly good but even more emphasis should be placed on making it clear what pupils should do to improve further. There is very good use of information and communication technology (ICT) in music and some good examples of use in several other subjects but insufficient use in design and technology, history and modern foreign languages in Years 7 to 11, in art and in physical education in the sixth form. The needs of pupils of differing abilities are well served overall, although some teachers make better use than others of individual education plans in teaching pupils with special educational needs.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good, but there is further scope for developing vocational options. The school fails to meet statutory requirements in the provision of religious education in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. Extra-curricular activities are good and include a number of weekend activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory: there are some very good examples of learning support assistants and teachers working together but links between the special educational needs co-ordinator and departments need to be closer to ensure pupils' needs are always met. This is under review.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good: the very few pupils are well integrated, and form tutors and pastoral heads monitor their progress and welfare effectively. There is appropriate external support and advice where needed.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual,	Satisfactory: good for moral and social elements and satisfactory for spiritual and cultural. During the inspection assemblies were of a high

moral, social and cultural development	quality in many respects but did not include an act of collective worship.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good: the educational and personal support and guidance for pupils are good. Procedures for monitoring behaviour are satisfactory but there is some lack of consistency in application of policy. The assessment of pupils' attainment and progress is good.

Partnerships with parents are good but there are small numbers of parents whose support cannot be relied upon to ensure that pupils attend regularly and meet coursework deadlines. Newsletters are good but at one a term rather infrequent.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good: senior management has given the school a clear direction in raising standards. Most heads of departments provide good leadership, and it is very good in drama. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory in religious education. Last year some weaknesses in the teaching of English were not picked up and solved quickly enough.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good: governors have done a remarkably good job in putting the school back on a sound financial footing and in working successfully with senior management in shaping the direction of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good: very good for Years 7 to 11 but there needs to be sharper ongoing evaluation for the sixth form.
The strategic use of resources	Good: above average sums of money are spent on learning resources and educational support staff which help in raising standards, but currently the sixth form is not cost effective. Principles of best value are well applied particularly in seeking tenders and purchasing.

Accommodation is satisfactory overall and very good for physical education and drama but lunchtime eating arrangements are unsatisfactory. The growing pressure on accommodation should be helped considerably by the extra building programme already approved. Staffing is satisfactory but the school like others nationally is finding it increasingly difficult to make suitable appointments in some subjects, particularly at short notice, and therefore standards can suffer.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school • Teaching is good and the school expects pupils to work hard • Their children are making good progress • The interesting range of activities • Good leadership and management • They feel comfortable about approaching the school with a problem • The school is helping their children become mature 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The poor behaviour of a minority • The quality and quantity of homework • Information on how their children are getting on • Adequate consultation when a major change is proposed and in particular changes in the structure of the school day

Inspectors agree with the mostly positive views of parents on what pleases them most about the school, but there are a few parents who feel strongly that their differences with the school have not been resolved

in relation to alleged instances of bullying. Inspectors agree that there was inadequate consultation on proposed changes to the school day but that the school is now doing something to rectify that. The school has worked hard to tackle inappropriate behaviour as it recognises that most pupils want to learn. It has taken very firm action against offenders including a justified increase in exclusions, but there is some further work to do to establish greater consistency in the way staff handle behavioural issues, and in the help they receive. Inspectors judge that reports on pupils' progress to parents are good but could be improved with more consistent reporting on what pupils need to do to improve further. Homework is satisfactory overall but more rigorous monitoring by departmental heads could do much to ensure greater consistency.

ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM

THE KING ALFRED SCHOOL

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form of 94 students (40 male students and 54 females) is below average in size. There is a good range of subjects available at both AS- and A-level but limited vocational provision. There is a flexible open-entry policy and therefore the sixth form recruits a wide range of students by ability. At the time of the last inspection in 1996 substantial numbers of parents were not sending their children to the school by choice following a financial crisis and resultant bad publicity. That affected the ability range recruited to the school and the number of higher attainers. That situation no longer applies but recent groups of students attracted into the sixth form still reflect an intake to the school several years ago where higher attainers were under-represented. A more representative mix of pupils is now working its way through the school with higher proportions of more able pupils as confidence in the school has been restored. As the school is larger than average and being the only secondary school in the town, there is considerable potential for the sixth form to grow. This is indicated by the increased numbers currently in Year 11 who are intending to progress to Year 12. There should also be increased demand as a result of the influx of people into the locality.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

Most students are currently achieving satisfactorily in relation to their previous examination results but there were too many instances of students not achieving as well as they should in recent AS- and A-level examinations. The sixth form is currently too small to justify the range of subjects offered and is therefore not cost effective. This is likely to be overcome in the near future as increased numbers from the lower school work their way through into the sixth form including a higher proportion of more able students.

Strengths

- Current teaching which is good overall and very good in theatre studies and history.
- Above average results in theatre studies and history in AS-level examinations in 2001, including at the top A grades. These results are connected directly to very good teaching.
- Relationships between students and with members of staff which are very good.
- The quality of guidance and support for the next stage of students' education.

What could be improved

- Results at AS-level and A-level in most subjects.
- The cost effectiveness of the sixth form.
- Standards and students' attitudes to work on the physical education course leading to the

examination at AS-level.

- Increase vocational provision as numbers opting for the sixth form increase.

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Satisfactory: A-level results were well below average in 2001 with only five candidates. The department has taken steps to address the fact that these results should have been better. Currently students following the AS- and A-level courses are reaching average standards and achieving satisfactorily in relation to previous results.
Chemistry	Satisfactory: AS-level results at grades A-E were average in 2001. There have only been 13 candidates at A-level in the last four years but 11 passed at A-E grades. Currently standards are average with students achieving well and making good progress in Year 13 and achieving satisfactorily in Year 12. Teaching is good with some excellent features.
Physical education	Unsatisfactory: students currently following the newly introduced AS-level course are underachieving and the majority are not reaching the required standard. Most students are unwilling to work hard. Over time teaching and learning have been unsatisfactory as students are not reaching standards of which they are capable of achieving. At the inspection teaching was satisfactory overall with teachers beginning to address some of the weaknesses in provision.
Geography	Satisfactory: AS- and A-level results were well below average in 2001 with too many underachieving. As a result of measures taken to improve matters, students currently following AS- and A-level courses are doing better and attaining average standards, influenced by good teaching.
English	Good: all nine candidates were successful at A-level in 2001 at A-E grades and achieved satisfactorily in relation to previous results. In the AS-level examinations in 2001, students also achieved satisfactorily with 15 of the 17 candidates successful at A-E grades. Teaching is mainly good.

In addition to the above subjects, which were inspected in depth, lessons were sampled in biology, environmental science, physics, leisure and tourism, travel and tourism, design and technology, economics and business, art, music, drama, history, religious education, French, German and general studies. Of these subjects the best examination results have been in drama and history which were above average in AS-level examinations in 2001. Over time, results in design and technology have been above average. In 2001 although there were only five candidates in art at A-level, three were awarded the top A grade which was a very good achievement. General studies results were average at A-level in 2001, as were results in music. In some of the subjects which were sampled there were too many students who underachieved in the examinations of 2001 in relation to their GCSE results, and in particular in biology, physics, religious education, French and German. As in earlier years in the school, standards in French and German in the sixth form are improving sharply with newly appointed teachers. In the sciences sampled at the inspection, standards have improved somewhat compared with the 2001 results but some students are struggling because of their deficiencies in basic knowledge and their reluctance to work hard enough. Teaching in the subjects sampled is currently good overall.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Satisfactory: induction arrangements for the sixth form are very good and are helped by the guidance given in a very good sixth form prospectus. Most students are placed on courses where they have a chance of passing but there are students who are allowed to start a subject in the sixth form, without a good enough grade in that subject at GCSE, and not surprisingly they fail at A-level. That decision is sometimes left too much to the head of a subject who decides to let the 'student have a go' in the subject without enough intervention from senior management. Although most students are currently achieving satisfactorily in relation to their previous results, and are well supported by their tutors, there were too many examples of underachievement in the 2001 examinations, which should have been picked up and acted upon during a student's course. Advice for higher education is very good and school records show that most students who wish to secure places on degree courses, even when A-level grades are in the lower ranges, go on to achieve success. There are also examples of students attaining high grades and securing places at prestigious universities including Oxford and Cambridge.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Satisfactory: there is committed and experienced leadership and management of the sixth form and students are given much time and support which most students value. Relationships between the management of the sixth form and departments are convivial but there needs to be a sharper focus on monitoring by senior management and greater intervention when it becomes evident that students are underachieving. There is improving use of assessment data but the current underachievement by students on the AS-level course in physical education shows that issues are still not being picked up and acted upon early enough.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The helpful advice on what to study in the sixth form • They are taught well and challenged to do their best • They are helped and encouraged to study • Teachers are accessible if difficulties arise • They enjoy being in the sixth form 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some are unhappy with information on progress; how the school listens and responds to their views; the careers advice given; how they are treated as responsible adults and the choice of courses not being suited to their talents

Inspectors agree with students' views that teaching is good and that they are mostly challenged to do their best. It was also clear from interviews carried out with students at the inspection that the great majority enjoy their studies, their experiences in the sixth form and the continuity with teachers from their studies earlier in the school. Inspectors judged that assessment and feedback to students on their progress is mostly good within individual subjects but that information should be drawn together and analysed more frequently by the head of sixth form. That is beginning to happen using a reputable and established national system for measuring progress. Inspectors judge that the quality of personal support which students receive is very good. Careers advice is satisfactory and guidance on higher education is very good. Whilst there is a wide range of academic courses in the sixth form, vocational

provision is limited and some students could benefit from such provision or from a combination of academic and vocational courses. There are plenty of informal opportunities for students to make their views felt but no formal channels such as an established sixth form council. More formal channels could satisfy some students' concerns and give them a greater say in what goes on.

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. Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 have improved considerably since the time of the last inspection and since 1998 overall results in the combined subjects of English, mathematics and science have been consistently average. In the last two years results have also been average compared with similar schools. Based on figures since 1997 the trend in the school's average points score in tests at the end of Year 9 was above the national trend.
2. Overall figures hide some fluctuations in individual subjects over time and it is only in recent years that English and science have established greater consistency and respectability, with English making great strides.
3. Results in English in the 2001 and 2000 national tests at the end of Year 9 were above average compared with all schools and similar schools and were a significant improvement on the below average results of 1997-1999, and the well below average results at the time of the last inspection. As is the case nationally girls' results have been higher than boys' but the gap at the school has narrowed. In the last two years boys' and girls' results in relation to the national average for boys and girls respectively were similar. The results of the last two years represent good progress from pupils' standards on entry to the school, both for boys and girls.
4. Results in mathematics in national tests at the end of Year 9 have been consistently average in each of the years 1997-2001 compared with all schools. Over time they have been more consistent than those in English and science. The difference between girls' and boys' results has not been significant. These results represent good progress in relation to pupils' standards on entry to the school and good progress since the last inspection when results were well below average. In the last two years results were below average compared with similar schools, but that is based on the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals in the school. A better measure is the good progress made from the time of pupils' entry to the school in Year 7.
5. Results in science in national tests at the end of Year 9 have fluctuated over the last five years but in the last two years results have been average. Boys' and girls' results have been similar, as is the case nationally. Results represent good progress in relation to pupils' standards on entry to the school. In 2000, science results were well below average compared with similar schools but were average in 2001. As with other subjects a better measure is the progress which pupils make from their time of entry to the school.
6. Currently standards in Year 9 are average overall including in English and science and meet national expectations in most other subjects. Standards are above average in mathematics and drama and just above in history and ICT. Standards in art are below average with standards varying depending on the teacher allocated to a class and they are well below average in religious education. In most subjects pupils are achieving satisfactorily with the exception of art and religious education.
7. The school's GCSE results in 2001 and in the two preceding years were average based on the average points score per pupil. In 2001, boys' results were below the national average for boys, and girls were close to the national average for girls. In 2000,

both boys and girls did better with boys close to the national average for boys and girls above the national average for girls. The average points score in 2001 was 36.9 and below the school's target of 39.

8. Overall, GCSE results have improved significantly since the last inspection in 1996 when only 28 per cent of pupils were successful in attaining five or more GCSE grades. The proportion attaining five or more grades A*-C in 2001 at 43 per cent was close to the national average but did not reach the school's target of 50 per cent. In the previous year 2000, results were rather better and equal to the national average of 47 per cent. In both 2000 and 2001, girls achieved more highly than boys. In 2001, 38 per cent of boys and 47 per cent of girls attained five or more GCSE grades A*-C and in 2000, 33 per cent of boys and 60 per cent of girls. The discrepancy in 2000 was wider, as a result of both the weaker performance of boys and the much better achievement of girls. Results have fluctuated from one year to another and that unevenness has led to the trend in the school's average points score being below the national trend since 1997.
9. Compared with similar schools, results were below average in 2001 and 2000 but, compared with pupils' prior attainment in national tests at the end of Year 9, attainment in 2001 was average and in 2000 above average. This is a more significant measure.
10. GCSE results in 2001 were average in mathematics, physical education and single science. Results were above average in design and technology, drama, history and music. They were below average in business studies, combined science, English literature and German, just below average in English language and significantly below average in French, geography and statistics. In art they were below average at grades A*-C but above average in the percentage attaining A* grades and A grades which boosted the points score to average.
11. In 2001, girls achieved better than boys in most subjects. Compared with girls nationally results were average in English language, English literature, art, combined science and statistics and above average in design and technology, drama and history. Compared with girls nationally they were only slightly below average in mathematics, below average in single science but significantly below average in French and geography.
12. Boys in 2001 were significantly below average in combined science (double award), English language, English literature, French, geography and statistics. They were well below average in business studies. They were average in combined science (single award), design and technology, mathematics and physical education. They were above average in history.
13. Results were better in the previous year in 2000 when they were average in English language, science and history and slightly above average in design and technology and physical education. Results were above average in drama and well above in German. In 2000, girls' results were near to average or above in nearly all subjects whereas boys' results were below average in most subjects. Results were below average in French and slightly below average in English literature and geography. The only subjects significantly below average were art and statistics.
14. Currently standards in Year 11 are average overall including in English, mathematics and science with most pupils achieving satisfactorily with the exception of religious education. Standards in design and technology, history and in GCSE physical education are above average and well above in drama. Pupils with special educational

needs and those with English as an additional language make satisfactory progress and similar to the progress made by other pupils.

15. Overall, standards of literacy are satisfactory in Years 7 to 11. Most pupils are confident and fluent when speaking but there were occasions when their limited range of specialist vocabulary became apparent. Most have the reading skills to understand the range of texts they meet in all subject areas. They listen well and the majority can concentrate for extended periods of time. The majority of pupils are able to adapt their writing to the varied demands of the curriculum but there are those who struggle with technical accuracy in some subjects.
16. Standards of numeracy and mental arithmetic are good in Years 7, 8 and 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. The better standards in earlier years compared with national expectations at that stage reflect the benefit of the impact of the National Numeracy Strategy earlier in the school. Pupils are frequently required to make calculations without using their calculators and as a result most can work without a calculator with reasonable confidence.

Sixth form

17. Overall results were below average in 2001 but an improvement on the well below average results in the three preceding years. Currently most students are achieving satisfactorily in relation to previous results but achievement and progress has been unsatisfactory in physical education. In the AS- and A-level examinations in 2001 there were too many instances of students underachieving.
18. Students who took courses in the sixth form in recent years were drawn from cohorts which were deprived of the full ability range on entry to the school at the time when the school was experiencing difficulties. Although this accounts to some extent for the low grades in the sixth form, that is not the complete picture and there were some weak results. On the other hand there have also been some good results particularly in relation to students' earlier attainment.
19. Most students in theatre studies have been successful at A-level over time and have achieved very well. Students also achieved very well in AS-level examinations in 2001 with all six candidates passing and five of the six candidates at A-B grades. History results in 2001 were particularly good at AS-level with all eleven candidates successful and four at A-B grades which represented very good achievement. Art was above average at A-level in 2001 with three of the five candidates being awarded the top A grade. Over time results in design and technology have been above average. In English in 2001 all nine candidates were successful at A-level and 15 out of 17 at AS-level. Results were average in general studies at A-level with seven of the eight candidates successful and one attaining an A grade. Results were also average in music at A-level and average in chemistry at AS-level.
20. Of the weaker results in 2001 there was underachievement in mathematics at A-level with the majority of students not doing well enough in relation to their previous results at GCSE. Although AS-level geography attracted 28 candidates ten were ungraded which was poor. Five students out of 12 were ungraded in physics, three out of ten in religious studies, four out of 14 in biology, three out of eight in economics and three out of nine in graphics. There was also underachievement by too many students in French and German at AS- and A-level.

21. The majority of students following vocational courses in the sixth form were successful in 2001. In the intermediate GNVQ courses in leisure and tourism and business there were six candidates in the former and four in the latter. Of the six candidates in leisure and tourism three passed, one other gained a merit, but two failed. In business, of the four candidates, three passed and another was awarded a merit. In the advanced vocational certificate of education (AVCE) course in travel and tourism, of the four candidates all gained D grades. Most students on vocational courses achieved satisfactorily in relation to their previous results.
22. Retention rates are satisfactory in the sixth form but there are some students who cannot cope with the demands of sixth form study and leave early in the academic year. Students have satisfactory skills in ICT and some opt to build further on those skills in lessons arranged for sixth formers. Most are adept in communication and numeracy skills which are monitored effectively across subjects rather than through specific lessons.

Pupils' and students' attitudes, values and personal development

23. The attitudes of pupils' towards school are good overall. Most pupils attend school on a regular basis, and are prepared to work hard and gain a sense of satisfaction when they achieve success in their studies. Pupils are exceptionally well motivated in physical education lessons. Many participate enthusiastically in the range of additional enrichment opportunities the school provides. School productions in particular are well supported. When interviewed, pupils in Year 8 described how their experiences in expressive arts had given them more confidence in their daily lives. Pupils from ethnic minorities, those with physical disabilities or special educational needs are fully integrated into the school community. When introduced to a variety of topics in personal, social and health education pupils also show interest including in their attitudes to aspects of citizenship.
24. Relationships between pupils and with staff are good. There are many opportunities for collaborative or group work to further develop pupils' social skills. For example, Year 11 girls studying GCSE physical education, although generally lacking confidence in whole games situations, felt that the boys understood this and sensitively supported them. In ICT pupils help each other readily in practical group work. Pupils often willingly share their knowledge and expertise and support each other in their learning in many subjects.
25. The standard of behaviour in the school is satisfactory. Most pupils move around the school in an orderly manner and are sensitive towards the needs of others including those with physical disabilities. Pupils know and understand the code of conduct and standard of behaviour expected of them. Behaviour in the majority of lessons is at least satisfactory, and on occasions excellent, but in a small minority of lessons it is unsatisfactory. Behaviour is particularly good in physical education. Pupils in Years 7 to 11 interviewed at the inspection gave examples of lessons which were disrupted by poor behaviour. Most pupils respond positively to the expectations of staff but are frustrated by the inability of a minority of teachers to keep control. Having said that, there are a number of pupils, including some of those with emotional and behavioural disabilities, who present challenging behaviour to even the most experienced teacher. Some pupils and parents expressed concern about incidents of bullying. Although not widespread it is an ongoing issue for the school to address.
26. Since the previous inspection the instances and number of pupils excluded for a fixed term from the school has significantly increased. In the last academic year there were

160 fixed-term exclusions involving 85 pupils compared with 48 at the last inspection. The school has a zero tolerance policy if aggression is shown towards members of staff. This is reflected in the rise in the number of exclusions and is justified. Permanent exclusions have not increased.

27. The development of pupils' initiative and personal responsibility is satisfactory. The development of pupils' independent learning skills, and their ability to take responsibility for their own learning, are not consistently developed throughout the school. There is good practice in physical education lessons, for example, where pupils are taught to take responsibility for getting out equipment and doing their own warm-up sessions. They respond well to this expectation. Some pupils have a tendency to be passive rather than active learners and are unable to sustain their concentration for a reasonable length of time. Teachers often have to work hard to stimulate pupils' interest in their studies, motivate them to learn and encourage them to complete their GCSE coursework. At present, meetings of the school council are not being held. Pupils in Year 9 act as school receptionists and some pupils represent the school on the Burnham-on-Sea Youth Council. Opportunities for pupils to develop this aspect of their personal development are restricted.
28. Attendance is broadly in line with the national average. Unauthorised absence is also in line with the national average. However, the attendance of pupils in Years 10 and 11 is a cause for concern. Taking into account study leave before their mock examinations, since September 2001 the attendance of 42 per cent of Year 11 pupils has been below 90 per cent and 17 per cent have attendance levels below 80 per cent. This low level of attendance inevitably adversely affects pupils' chances in GCSE examinations. The majority of pupils are punctual when arriving at school and this is an improvement since the previous inspection.

Sixth form

29. Most students in the sixth form have good attitudes towards their studies and their response to the pre-inspection survey shows that the great majority enjoy being in the sixth form. There are exceptions where students are not working hard enough and in particular in physical education.
30. In general, students are developing attitudes and skills which should equip them well for employment and higher education but occasionally students are over reliant on their teachers. Students nearly always work well together and show respect for each other's viewpoints, for example in general studies when discussing a range of topical issues. Relationships between students and teaching staff are very good. Although occasionally students lack confidence in tackling tasks this is the exception rather than the rule. Most, whilst having realistic appraisal of their strengths and weaknesses, have been nurtured throughout the school to aim as high as possible when faced with new challenges.
31. Sixth form students' involvement with the rest of the school is limited and there is currently no student council. It is not a school which seeks to cultivate active involvement of students in a wide range of duties. The best examples of involvement include students listening to younger pupils read and recently a member of the sixth form chaired a debate of Year 9 pupils about changes to the school day. Students are very involved in the annual 'Rag Week' largely through their own initiatives and raise significant monies for charities selected by the students. The most recent event raised over £3000.

32. Attendance in the sixth form is good overall but there are students whose attendance is a cause for concern. The school is aware of this issue.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

33. Teaching is good in most subjects including in English, mathematics and science. In drama, teaching is very good at all stages and is very good in history in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. Teaching is satisfactory in art and unsatisfactory in religious education.
34. The quality of pupils' learning is good but varies in some subjects depending on the teacher, for example in English, science, design and technology and art. In science, for example, the best lessons are characterised by a skilful management of practical activities in an atmosphere where pupils are encouraged to learn and respond with interest, but there are lessons where the range of teaching methods used is too narrow. In English most lessons challenge and interest pupils, but at times lessons make insufficient demands on pupils and methods used are uninspiring. In art the quality of pupils' work varies and is linked directly to the quality of teaching. Pupils' learning was adversely affected in some subjects last year, for example in English and modern foreign languages, by changes in staffing. Recently appointed teachers are making up lost ground with standards rising sharply in modern foreign languages.
35. Most teachers have very good knowledge of their subject which in the main allows them to pitch lessons at the right level, to develop lessons in the right way as opportunities present themselves, and to deal with questions comfortably. In drama, teachers are not only knowledgeable but bring an enthusiasm and commitment to the subject which motivate pupils and spark interest. In music, teachers' knowledge and understanding assist in the preparation of well thought out worksheets. In teaching dance the ability of teachers to demonstrate what pupils should be striving to achieve is an important factor in moving pupils on in their learning. In the specialist teaching of ICT expert knowledge equips teachers well for challenging some high attaining pupils.
36. The quality of teachers' planning, expectations and teaching methods is mainly good. In mathematics, the quality of planning helps to ensure that all pupils' needs are met, including those with special educational needs, and in the best lessons objectives are profitably shared with pupils. Planning is also a positive feature of most other subjects including history, music, physical education and currently in geography. It is also an important factor in the success of personal, social and health education lessons, as seen at the inspection, which mostly capture and retain pupils' interest.
37. The needs of pupils of differing abilities are well served overall, although some teachers make better use than others of individual education plans in teaching pupils with special educational needs. In religious education pupils are not helped enough to cope with reading material. Teachers of mathematics in Years 10 and 11 have a clear focus on raising standards which is helped by the high expectations which they have of pupils. In drama, work is demanding but not threatening and taught in such a way that all pupils make significant progress. Expectations in physical education are high and set the right standards. In modern foreign languages the high expectations which teachers have of pupils are also helping to drive up standards, although there are some weaknesses in addressing the needs of talented pupils. Despite the many successes of history there is scope there too to extend the thinking of higher attaining pupils. In art, expectations vary too much depending on the teacher and in science there are also inconsistencies. Teaching on the recently introduced Youth Award programme in Year 10 skilfully leads, challenges and involves the class and is giving pupils greater confidence and

motivation. In these lessons there are very good working relationships with the learning support provided. One of the strengths of the specialist teaching of ICT is the way that teachers provide tasks and challenges for all abilities.

38. Most pupils concentrate well and want to learn but a minority lack motivation and are unable to apply themselves for the whole lesson. In drama a particular strength is the ability of pupils to evaluate their own and each other's work. In geography pupils are now expected to think about their work and to be actively involved in their own learning. In modern foreign languages pupils learn particularly well when teachers introduce new language through games and independent activities. In science, however, pupils do not always show enough ability to explore their ideas and in religious education there is a general lack of interest and enthusiasm by pupils in response to the quality of teaching which are barriers to learning.
39. Most teachers manage pupils well. In mathematics, where teachers spot the potential for poor behaviour, they use good classroom management skills to avert any problems. In modern foreign languages teachers manage pupils well by keeping them busy with short and varied activities and in history classroom management is very good. In physical education there are high expectations of behaviour and very good management works hand-in-hand with much mutual respect between teachers and pupils. There are some examples of insufficient control in English and weak management of lessons is a general feature of religious education. Group discussion is not well controlled in religious education.
40. There are some good examples of the use of ICT in English, mathematics, science and geography and very good use in music but there is scope for greater use in art, history, modern foreign languages and design and technology and for more consistent use in English.
41. The quality and use of ongoing assessment are good and marking is mostly regular but there are some inconsistencies. Whilst there are examples of teachers spelling out clearly to pupils what they need to do to improve further, for example in modern foreign languages and physical education, that vital ingredient of effective marking needs to be reinforced further. Marking of pupils' work in religious education is unsatisfactory. In design and technology assessment is better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9 and varies from thorough to rather superficial. Even in history, which has many successes, there is work which has not been marked thoroughly. There are also some inconsistencies in geography and in physical education. Feedback in lessons is good and accurate but in art weaker teaching is associated with undue praise for superficial work which results in pupils setting low standards for themselves. The setting and assessment of homework is satisfactory.
42. The skills of literacy and numeracy are well taught with most teachers responding well to school and national initiatives. The development of literacy skills is unsatisfactory in religious education. In preparing for a greater emphasis on citizenship, this aspect is well taught when it occurs as a part of subject teaching but, as yet, the process is rather fragmented. When encountered, pupils respond well and show interest in aspects of citizenship.

Sixth form

43. As elsewhere in the school the quality of teaching is good, but this is particularly so in the sixth form where teaching observed at the inspection was good in most lessons.
44. A particular strength of most teachers is their knowledge and understanding which are so important in teaching to AS- and A-level standards. This allows mathematicians to teach with confidence and there are examples in biology of teachers' wide subject knowledge being used effectively to take ideas forward. In chemistry teachers' very good knowledge of their subject is illustrated in perceptive questioning and interesting explanations. In economics and business studies the teacher with recent experience of a senior position in banking was understandably very comfortable in teaching the complexities of balance sheets and this showed in the quality of explanations given. Good knowledge is used in the teaching of music to enable students to progress in their learning, for example following analysis of a piano quintet. The quality of the guidance given to students in geography on how to improve stems from teachers' expertise in the subject. History teachers have a distinct confidence in their subject allied with a perceptive analysis of students' needs.
45. The quality of lesson planning is good. Teachers of mathematics profitably share clear objectives with students and in English careful planning mostly leads to well-structured lessons with increasingly challenging tasks. Well-planned lessons are mostly complemented by good teacher expectations as in the best lessons in chemistry. Students in English are challenged to extend their understanding and are encouraged to think analytically. Teachers of drama have the ability to set the necessary targets in line with course requirements and couple this with sufficient encouragement to students to move them on in their learning. In physical education, however, lower attainers struggle with technical vocabulary and higher attainers are not fully extended.
46. The management of students is very good. The close rapport between teachers and students in chemistry helps the understanding of difficult work and such relationships are also a feature of most other lessons including in English and geography.
47. Teaching methods are good. In design and technology students are well supported in working on individual projects and there is a clear methodology at work in the teaching of art. In physical education, although there are at present too few teaching strategies to develop students' learning and tasks do not take sufficient account of students' previous knowledge, evidence from the inspection showed that such issues are beginning to be addressed.
48. Arrangements are adequate for the teaching of key skills in the sixth form in ICT and students interviewed who choose to follow the course were able to give examples of how their skills and application have improved as a result. In other subjects teachers use students' ICT skills well in design and technology, religious education and vocational subjects. There are some examples in geography of researching information and occasionally in modern foreign languages of using the Internet. Such skills could be fostered more in physical education. Numeracy and literacy skills are also adequately taught but as an integral part of subjects rather than through extra provision. This is mostly successful but in physics misconceptions can arise when students have a weakness in numeracy.
49. Ongoing assessment and marking are good and there is good use of homework to extend students but there are inconsistencies. In religious education although marking has some good written comments the grades given are rather generous. Students

mostly respond well to the demands placed on them but there are examples where students do not take on enough responsibility and are too dependent on the teacher for their learning. This was seen with some students in mathematics and chemistry and in a small proportion of lessons in geography where students were over directed. There are students in physical education who are currently not working hard enough and, although not pronounced, there are also instances in chemistry but alongside examples of very keen students. In geography students enjoy and benefit from field trips but in modern foreign languages students in the past have taken little opportunity to travel abroad with the school.

50. The determination of the school to improve and build on its existing sixth form provision should be helped considerably by its current teaching force who are mostly well qualified and competent in the subjects they teach.

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

51. The quality and range of opportunities for learning are good but the school does not meet the statutory requirements in the provision of religious education in Years 10 and 11 where the time allocation is low. The special emphasis given to timetabled classes in ICT, rather than relying solely on subjects across the curriculum to bear the full onus for developing pupils' skills, is having a beneficial effect. However, the contribution made by subjects to ICT is rather patchy. A strength in the curriculum is the additional emphasis which the school gives to drama which not only develops pupils' skills and appreciation in that subject but also contributes significantly to their self-confidence.
52. The school is looking carefully at the pattern of the curriculum which it will offer in the future taking into account national initiatives and the needs of its pupils and students. In Years 7 to 11 it works hard and effectively in its aim to serve the needs of all pupils. There are some appropriate alternatives to the traditional curriculum where pupils find that diet too challenging or not suited to their talents. Therefore some pupils are disapplied from French in Years 10 and 11 and follow an ASDAN Youth Award scheme. In Year 11 this includes a morning of vocational options at the local college of further education. Although fairly recent initiatives, they are reaping benefits with much careful thought and application going into the programme. The curriculum has also been broadened in Years 10 and 11 with a GNVQ course in ICT. There is further scope for developing vocational courses and the school is very aware of the additional opportunities which will be offered by vocational GCSEs in the near future.
53. The school adopts an inclusive approach in that pupils with special educational needs are largely taught in the same classes as others. This is helped by the number of learning support assistants employed although some teachers are more aware of pupils' individual education plans than others. Equality of access to the curriculum is good for all pupils but is affected when pupils are allocated a teacher who is less proficient than others. In addition, in Years 8 and 9 boys do not have the same opportunity as girls in dance. Although very good use is made of ICT in music not all pupils have equal access to facilities. Equality of access is helped by the very good attention given to and provision made for pupils with disabilities, including wheelchair users.
54. Extra-curricular activities are good and very good in physical education and associated activities. There are many opportunities to become involved in drama, music, sport, the Duke of Edinburgh scheme and subject-related and general visits, including field trips. Opportunities also include some visits abroad. Extra-curricular activities also

include good support for learning outside the school day. Teachers of ICT are well aware that not all pupils have access to the Internet at home and lunchtime access to computing facilities helps in promoting equality of opportunity.

55. A good personal social and health education (PSHE) programme has developed and is looked at very critically from time to time to improve content and the quality of teaching. There are strengths in using heads of year in planning the PSHE programme as that ensures the commitment of some key players, but there are weaknesses and central co-ordination should be stronger to ensure that new initiatives are introduced speedily and uniformly. This would help for example in the implementation of citizenship. Arrangements for work experience are good and all students in Year 10 have this opportunity. Arrangements for careers education are satisfactory.
56. The school takes advantage of links with the community but suffers from not having large employers locally. Despite this, design and technology has fostered some good links. The school correctly sees the increased focus on citizenship in the curriculum as an opportunity to strengthen its links with the community. Links with primary schools have been strengthened considerably as an integral part of the school's recovery and development programme. There is a healthy initial teacher training programme operating in the school from which all teachers benefit and which is a source of recruitment for some appointments.
57. The overall provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and culture development is satisfactory. It is good for the moral and social elements. The school aims clearly embrace this aspect. As a community school it has a keen awareness of its role in providing a framework of values within which pupils can develop.
58. The provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. The school has not audited or planned for this aspect carefully enough and as a result opportunities are missed. The school organises one main assembly per week for each year. There is no overall programme for these assemblies and individual heads of year arrange their own programme, although occasional themes that occur nationally, such as the recent Holocaust Day, are jointly organised. Whilst assemblies do make a positive contribution to pupils' moral and social development, the spiritual element is weaker. During the inspection the assemblies seen were of a high quality but did not include an act of worship. The use of the registration period varies considerably with some tutors making positive use of the time. However, the lack of a clear, co-ordinated programme means that there is no consistency. Too much depends on individual tutors, many of whom do not use it effectively either for spiritual reinforcement or other matters.
59. Some subjects have clearly identified the places in their curriculum where spiritual development can be addressed. Good examples can be found in geography and science where a consideration of the power of nature provides opportunities for reflection. Likewise in history, good use is made of resources to encourage pupils to reflect upon the meaning of life. In English much that happens is incidental. Weakness in the provision for religious education means that obvious opportunities are missed there too.
60. The provision for moral education is good. A clearly understood code of conduct is positively reinforced by most teachers who act as good role models. A good example of this is found in the mathematics department where a positive learning ethos permeates the whole department. That feature is also strong in physical education. Assemblies are well used to reinforce moral values. Although not centrally co-ordinated, the personal and social education course addresses relevant ethical issues and seeks to

provide pupils with the skills to cope with moral dilemmas. English plays an important part in this provision. The issues raised in works such as Dickinson's 'I heard a fly buzz when I died' are used to help pupils explore morality. These are complemented by opportunities in several subjects such as history and geography. Population problems, the effects of deforestation and the lessons we can learn from history, are some examples of work that is covered. Religious education examines religious teaching on contemporary moral issues such as euthanasia.

61. The provision for social development is good. The community nature of the school is frequently addressed in assemblies. At the moment the school council is not functioning, but plans are in hand to make this an important element in the new citizenship provision. Many subjects encourage pupils to work in pairs or groups. The importance of teamwork is frequently addressed in physical education. A range of topics in English explore social issues. A good example is found in the exploration of social prejudice in Roald Dahl's 'The Rat Catcher'. Drama provides particularly good opportunities for pupils to develop their social skills. Issues of social responsibility are covered in science when issues such as the developments in genetic engineering are explored. A good extra-curricular programme contributes positively to pupils' social development.
62. The provision for cultural development is satisfactory. In some respects it is good but there are too few opportunities for pupils to consider the multicultural nature of British society. Although religious education covers aspects of this in Years 7 to 11 the shortage of time allocation to this subject in Years 10 and 11 means that opportunities to study a wide variety of faiths are restricted. Opportunities for pupils to consider their own cultural traditions are found in several subjects and art and music make good contributions. Other subjects such as history, physical education and religious education also contribute positively. Pupils can benefit from exchange programmes with European countries and the school is involved in the Comenius Project with links to schools in Germany and Finland. Links with a school in Uganda help to provide an additional focus and was successfully reinforced by the visit of five pupils and a teacher from that school in the last school year.
63. The school is aware of the need to provide more opportunities for pupils to take greater responsibility for the general life of the school. Currently, democratic processes which involve formal consultation with pupils are not strong enough and therefore do not marry well with plans to strengthen citizenship. A good audit has been carried out with most subjects carefully examining their syllabus to identify where aspects are already covered and where it could be reinforced. Some departments such as drama, history, science and mathematics have completed this exercise extremely well.

Sixth form

64. A good range of subjects is offered in the sixth form at AS- and A-level but a more limited range of vocational provision. The number of students in the sixth form does not currently justify the range of subjects on offer and class groups are mostly too small. The school sees this as a temporary situation as it tries to build up its sixth form from an increasing number of pupils lower in the school who wish to study in the sixth form.
65. The school is reluctant to expand its vocational provision until numbers justify such moves, but that should be an objective in order to provide for a wider range of students and to offer alternatives to a mainly academic curriculum. In the meantime the school has made some progress. Vocational courses are offered at the moment in ICT, travel and tourism and leisure and tourism. There is a small NVQ group which spends two

days a week in school and the rest on work placement and training. Links being fostered with colleges are satisfactory.

66. Work-related education is confined to vocational courses but careers advice is satisfactory and very good for those wishing to proceed to higher education.
67. There is adequate provision for those who need to develop their key skills in ICT but there is no formal provision for students to develop their skills in numeracy and literacy. This is left to individual subject teachers and works satisfactorily but there are students in physics who struggle when their mathematical skills are not up to scratch.
68. Moral and social development are good and cultural development is satisfactory with the latter also depending on the subjects studied. In addition to the PSHE programme which covers a good range of issues teachers act as good role models in reinforcing the values of the school and this influences pupils and their development. Spiritual provision is much weaker as a result of the school not making the necessary statutory provision for religious education and for a daily act of collective worship.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS AND STUDENTS?

69. This is a caring school where pupils are valued and the pastoral care they receive is good.
70. The educational and personal support and guidance for pupils are good. Year teams stay with their group throughout their time in school which provides an opportunity for a constructive working partnership to be established between pupil, tutor and head of year. The transition from primary school to secondary school is very effective and starts with visits to primary schools by staff. As a result pupils settle quickly and feel well supported in their early days in school. Those in need of support with their literacy skills attend the early morning 'Catch Up Club' which helps considerably.
71. The monitoring of pupils' academic performance and personal development is good. Heads of year have overall responsibility for monitoring their year group and carry out those duties well, in mainly focusing on pupils' pastoral needs. Departmental staff are responsible for using assessment data and predicted target grades to monitor pupils who may be underachieving academically. Pupils in Year 11 identified as underachieving are mentored by teaching staff who have volunteered their time to help them prepare for external examinations. This is good practice in the crucial run up to examinations. A few pupils are mentored by volunteers from the community such as governors and local business people. The small number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds are well integrated and well cared for. There are only three pupils with English as an additional language and only one is at an early stage of learning English. All are carefully monitored. One Year 9 girl of Russian origin who speaks German fluently is included in sixth form lessons with a view to entering the A-level German examination in the near future.
72. The school has begun to adjust to the revised requirement for recording, monitoring and assessing pupils' special educational needs. Staff generally have a good understanding of such pupils' needs but those pupils with special educational needs could benefit from a closer ongoing dialogue between the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) and other teachers. This could pinpoint more accurately common approaches amongst staff to aid pupils' learning and in some cases behaviour.

73. The school successfully bid for an 'out of hours' education grant. This is profitably used to provide an after-school club in the library to support the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills, and access to computers for research and homework is also available. The librarian is highly skilled and very supportive in helping all pupils to use library facilities effectively and computers as research tools to support their studies. Much care is taken by the librarian in the selection and display of books to ensure that the interests of all are served.
74. Careers guidance is satisfactory. The school is well supported by the careers service but links with the Education Business Partnership could be exploited further. The special evening for parents and Year 9 pupils to help with GCSE and other choices is well organised and options are clearly reinforced and illustrated. Work experience is well organised and supports pupils' preparation for their post-16 choices. Recently a 'university evening' was held to raise pupils' aspirations and to encourage them to aim for higher education. Such events are important particularly where potential university entrants are the first generation in their family to be so. The annual careers convention is well supported, including by further education providers and the armed services.
75. Alternative curriculum arrangements are in place for disaffected pupils in Years 10 and 11. These include a Youth Award course, extended work placements and courses at local further education colleges. These arrangements enable pupils to gain qualifications they would not otherwise have achieved. The Youth Award scheme makes a significant contribution to the development of social skills and confidence of these young people. Although this provision has only been in place since September early evaluation shows that this has retained at least 30 students in education who might otherwise have been excluded or not attended regularly.
76. Procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are good. This represents a significant improvement since the previous inspection. Attendance data is analysed systematically and used to target individuals and encourage them to improve their attendance through a range of support strategies. The school has a constant battle to ensure that all of its pupils attend school regularly. The needs of its pupils are diverse and attitudes prevalent within some sectors of the community do not promote a high level of attendance. The education social worker supports the school well and is valued by heads of year. Several pupils, who previously hardly attended school, have now been reintegrated into the school. A range of strategies, such as first day phone calls and weekly meetings between the heads of year and education welfare officer, are helping to increase overall levels of attendance. Pupils are rewarded for 100 per cent attendance.
77. The school's procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are satisfactory. Heads of year who have challenging tasks have the primary responsibility for monitoring and recording incidents of poor behaviour. If problems are occurring on a regular basis pastoral support plans are produced by most heads of year that set clear, achievable targets for pupils. Though parents are often notified about these targets they are not sufficiently involved with the school in setting these targets and monitoring improvement.
78. Standards of what constitutes acceptable behaviour have been established but the school's procedures for managing pupils are followed more consistently by some staff and departments than others. On occasions, pupils are left standing outside classrooms and at other times staff send pupils to the behaviour support room to continue working under supervision. Some of the pupils interviewed expressed a lack of confidence in the ability of staff to handle bullying incidents. The majority of pupils,

however, felt that most incidents are effectively dealt with when brought to the attention of staff. The fact that the behaviour support room is staffed by members of the senior management team, including the headteacher, helps to ensure that such managers are in touch with problems facing some staff in particular. Firm action is taken by the school when behaviour is unacceptable, and an analysis of incidents recorded shows that the increase in exclusions has been justified. The governing body is appropriately involved at all stages of the exclusion process.

79. The school works well in partnership with the education psychologist and behaviour support team to develop strategies to manage pupils with challenging behaviour. Initiatives, such as anger management groups, have been used to help pupils come to terms with their behaviour. However, a fully integrated approach involving close and ongoing working relationships between the special educational needs co-ordinator and departments and subject teachers has yet to develop. There are nevertheless some very good examples of learning support assistants and teachers working together for the clear benefit of pupils. The imminent appointment of a new teacher with a brief for social inclusion should help all pupils including those with special educational needs.
80. The arrangements for child protection are good. The nominated person is fully trained. The staff handbook contains procedures to follow if incidents occur. Appropriate procedures are in place for children in the care of the local authority.
81. Arrangements for health and safety are generally satisfactory. The school has successfully addressed two of the issues raised at the last inspection. Attempts have been made to control pupils leaving the site at lunchtime. However, the school gates are not supervised at lunchtimes and it is impossible to monitor who has left the site. A member of staff has overall responsibility for health and safety. Some minor issues have been brought to the attention of heads of department. Currently no member of the governing body has oversight of health and safety.
82. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are good. The results of external examinations are systematically analysed. They are discussed at departmental reviews with senior management to identify strengths and weaknesses and devise strategies to improve pupils' achievements. The achievement of boys and girls is monitored and the school is devising strategies to address any differences in performance. The progress of minority groups is currently not identified separately.
83. National test results from primary schools, and data from the school's own assessment procedures, are used to build up a profile of pupils' attainment when they enter the school. This forms a baseline for tracking their progress over their time in school. A weakness in this system is that the school does not have the test results of some pupils from their primary schools and this gap should be plugged. Predicted grades for both end of Year 9 national tests and GCSE examinations enable teaching staff to set related targets for pupils. Most pupils are aware of their predicted grades and the level they are currently working at which helps in securing their involvement.
84. Use of assessment information is good in the majority of departments but better use is made in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9, although the latter is improving rapidly. Data is used to identify pupils in Year 11 who are underachieving and, if appropriate, a mentor is allocated to help them prepare for external examinations. There is particularly good practice in the ongoing use of assessment data in science. Pupils are regularly assessed through tests to monitor their progress against predicted grades.

Sixth form

85. Overall the way that the school cares for students in the sixth form is satisfactory and there are some very good features.

Assessment

86. There are mainly effective arrangements for assessing students' attainment and progress within departments. The school is also making greater use of baseline data and target setting in the sixth form. The use of a nationally recognised system is bringing about an improvement in the monitoring of students' progress. This is necessary as there has been too much of a void between the use of assessment data at departmental and whole-school level. This has resulted in some underachievement not being picked up early enough when there is insufficient action at departmental level. Examination results in 2001 show that there were cases of that occurring in the last school year and there has been insufficient monitoring of the newly introduced physical education course at AS-level in this current year, where there is also underachievement.
87. Assessment, verification and moderation procedures follow awarding body requirements including on vocational courses.
88. There has been detailed scrutiny of examination results to ensure that there is not a repetition of some of the underachievement which occurred in 2001. The evidence from the inspection indicated that the in-depth analysis has been profitable and that most teachers have adopted new approaches and more rigorous monitoring to prevent a repetition of that underachievement.
89. There are good systems for reporting students' progress to students and parents although there are some students who would like even more information on how they are getting on.

Advice, support and guidance

90. Induction arrangements for the sixth form are very good and are helped by the guidance given in a very good sixth form prospectus. Most students feel that they were given helpful advice on what to study in the sixth form. Although the great majority are placed on courses where they have a chance of passing, there are students who are allowed to start a subject in the sixth form without a good enough grade in that subject at GCSE, and not surprisingly they fail at A-level. That decision is sometimes left too much to the head of a subject who decides to let the 'student have a go' in the subject without enough intervention from senior management.
91. Although most students are currently achieving satisfactorily in relation to their previous results, there were too many examples of underachievement in 2001 examinations which should have been picked up and acted upon during a student's course.
92. Students feel that they are well supported by their teachers who are accessible if difficulties arise and this was clearly evident during the inspection. There is good attention to students' personal needs and they feel there are a number of staff they can approach for help. They value the fact that the head of the sixth form knows them well as individuals and treats them accordingly. The steps taken to ensure students' health and safety are good.

93. Advice for higher education is very good and school records show that most students, who wish to, secure places on degree courses even when A-level grades are in the lower ranges, and go on to achieve success.
94. Some of the innovative ideas used in registration time by the head of the sixth form could be replicated elsewhere in the school where insufficient use is made of that valuable time.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

95. The parents' views of the quality and effectiveness of what the school provides and achieves are good. However, only 28 parents attended the meeting prior to the inspection and only nine per cent of parents completed the parent questionnaire.
96. The parents who responded to the questionnaire and attended the meeting said their children like school, the teaching is good and that their children are expected to work hard. They felt their children are making good progress and that the school provides an interesting range of activities. They mostly felt comfortable about approaching the school with a problem but a few parents disagree with that strongly. Most parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire agree that leadership and management of the school are good. Concerns were expressed about the behaviour of a minority in the school, the quality and quantity of homework and the information they received about their child's progress. There are concerns over the lack of adequate consultation on proposed changes to the school day which has had an adverse influence on parents' views on how closely the school works with them.
97. Inspectors agree with the mostly positive views of parents on what pleases them most about the school, but there are a few parents who feel strongly that their differences with the school have not been resolved in relation to alleged incidents of bullying. Inspectors agree that there was inadequate consultation on proposed changes to the school day but that the school is now doing something to rectify that error of judgement. The school has worked hard to tackle inappropriate behaviour as it recognises that most pupils want to learn. It has taken very firm action against offenders including a justified increase in exclusions. There is some further work to do to establish greater consistency in the way staff handle behavioural issues and in the help they receive. Inspectors judge that reports on pupils' progress to parents are good but could be improved with more comparisons with national standards and examination requirements where relevant. Homework is satisfactory overall but more rigorous monitoring by departmental heads could do much to ensure greater consistency.
98. Despite the problem of lack of sufficient consultation on changes to the school day, links with parents are good. Pastoral staff ensure that ongoing contact is established with parents of pupils who are not only causing concern but also pupils who are achieving well or have successfully met their targets. Parents are frequently contacted by telephone and letter, and some are invited in to talk to heads of year when difficulties occur. The quality of information provided for parents about the progress of their children is good. An interim report enables parents to be clear about what their children's predicted grades are likely to be in external examinations and how they are achieving in relation to them. The quality of annual reports has improved since the previous inspection and generally gives parents a clear indication of what pupils have studied and how they are achieving in relation to the rest of their peer group. There are some inconsistencies in identifying areas for improvement so that pupils can set targets to raise their standard of work. The school holds a range of information

evenings for parents in addition to the annual consultation meeting. All of these events are well supported. Newsletters are good but too infrequent and confined to one a term.

99. The contribution of parents to children's learning is satisfactory. Most willingly collaborate with the school to resolve difficulties when they occur. However, parents are not involved in the formal drawing up of pastoral support plans and setting and monitoring targets for improvement. A minority of parents do not respond adequately to the school's request for support in managing behavioural problems. This hinders the school's efforts to bring about a successful resolution to the difficulties. Whilst the school pays due regard to involving parents of pupils with special educational needs and in reporting on their progress, a few parents wrote to the inspection team expressing concern over their children not being able to cope when extra support is not available in class. Periodic surveys of parents' views could identify such concerns more accurately and promote closer links. The parent teacher association supports the school in many ways and is active not only in fundraising but supporting at school events. Many parents support the school in a myriad of ways such as helping with transport. The majority of parents ensure that both homework and coursework are completed to meet deadlines. There are parents, however, who do not ensure that homework and coursework are completed or that their children attend school regularly. These factors reduce pupils' overall progress and attainment and ultimate success in external examinations.

Sixth form

100. The majority of students feel that they were given helpful advice on what to study in the sixth form. They feel they are well taught and challenged to do their best. They appreciate the fact that they are helped and encouraged to study and that teachers are accessible if difficulties arise. Nearly all enjoy being in the sixth form. There are students who are unhappy with the information which they receive on their progress, how well the school listens and responds to their views, the careers advice given, how they are treated as responsible adults and the choice of courses not being suited to their talents.
101. Inspectors agree with students' views that teaching is good and that students are mostly challenged to do their best. At the inspection there was much evidence of this including in those subjects where results were not high enough in the examinations of 2001. It was also clear from interviews with students at the inspection that the great majority enjoy their studies, their experiences in the sixth form and the continuity with teachers they already know from their studies earlier in the school. This was a big factor in students choosing to study in the sixth form rather than opting for another institution. Inspectors judge that assessment and feedback to students on their progress are mostly good within individual subjects, but that information should be drawn together more frequently by the head of sixth form to provide a more regular and accurate overview. Inspectors also judge that the quality of personal support which students receive is very good with most students interviewed at the inspection being very impressed with the way their individual needs are met. Careers advice is satisfactory and guidance on higher education is very good. Inspectors understand why some students feel that the choice of courses is not suited to their talents. Whilst there is a wide range of academic courses in the sixth form, vocational provision is limited and some students could benefit from such provision or from a combination of academic and vocational courses. There are plenty of informal opportunities for students to make their views felt but no formal channels such as an established sixth form council. More formal channels could satisfy some students' concerns.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

102. Good leadership and management at senior level has given the school a clear direction in raising standards. It is an improving school and has very recently gained the 'School Achievement Award' from the Secretary of State for Education and Skills for what has already been accomplished. Most heads of department also provide good leadership; it is very good in drama, and for ICT in relation to the specialist teaching programme. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory in religious education. Last year there were some serious deficiencies in teaching, including in English, which were not picked up and solved quickly enough by the English department or by senior management and which affected equality of opportunity for those pupils affected. Otherwise governors, senior management and teachers are vigilant in pursuing equality of opportunity. The library is well managed.
103. A teacher has been identified to co-ordinate the formal introduction of citizenship into the curriculum. An initial audit of current provision has been good but there has been a mixed reaction from departments with responses varying from very good to barely satisfactory. In order to move on from the good start made by the co-ordinator, senior management should put more weight behind this venture. There is also the issue of staff training to be addressed as well as earmarking resources specifically for the development of citizenship.
104. The governing body carries out its duties very well and is helped by close working relationships with the headteacher and senior management team. It is well informed by senior management and has a very good appreciation of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Governors have done a remarkably good job in putting the school back on a sound financial footing. They are astutely and very well led by the chair of governors who is highly regarded in the school.
105. Much of the increased momentum in the school derives from the headteacher's determination that the school should not stand still. In proposing changes to the structure of the school day there was insufficient consultation with parents and primary school partners, but that should not detract from the particular contribution of the headteacher in bringing about change successfully in many quarters. His conviction that what has been achieved so far is only the beginning of what is ultimately possible is exactly what the school needs to ensure further progression.
106. Teachers and support staff project a good professional image which is very important in a school seeking to raise pupils' aspirations. Administrative and support staff make a significant contribution to the running of the school and there is much experience, commitment and enthusiasm to tap into further.
107. Daily briefing sessions in a large and growing school are important in communicating essential information to all, but some support staff who have much direct contact with pupils are not included. Certain information is not always relayed quickly enough to learning support assistants, particularly information regarding pupils they support.
108. The school evaluates its performance very well in Years 7 to 11. Targets are mostly monitored well throughout the year. In addition to a rolling programme of departmental reviews throughout the year, the 'focus week' is becoming established as a key evaluative tool. The school's evaluation of the success of the development plan is very good and culminates in clear documentation which is refreshingly open and to the point.

109. Despite having to subsidise the sixth form, the management of the budget allows well above average sums to be spent on learning resources and educational support staff. This is having a positive effect in raising standards, although in religious education there is a shortage of modern and colourful textbooks and an over-reliance on worksheets. The library is very successful despite a rather tight budget. The pupil teacher ratio is above average as is the amount of available time which teachers spend teaching. Principles of best value are well applied in purchasing and in comparing costs and there is good financial control.
110. Accommodation is satisfactory overall and very good for physical education and drama but there are weaknesses. The accommodation for eating meals at lunchtimes is unsatisfactory as classrooms are used for this purpose. In English there are occasions when lessons are disturbed because of proximity to the kitchens. In design and technology, two rooms used for teaching food technology are in need of refurbishment and the textiles room is too small. Despite very good facilities in physical education overall there is no staff central office and classroom arrangements for teaching GCSE should be improved. Growing numbers are putting much pressure on accommodation and the planned extra building programme is needed. Staffing is satisfactory but the school, like some others nationally, is facing increasing difficulties in making suitable appointments in some subjects, particularly at short notice. Twenty-three teachers have been appointed to the school in the last two years which has posed some difficulties, but has also presented new opportunities and has been generally well managed. The decision to appoint a teacher with an overall brief for social inclusion is a very good move. Opportunities for staff development are good.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

111. Leadership and management in the sixth form are satisfactory. There is a committed and experienced leadership. There is a determination that standards should be raised and in particular in those subjects where there were some disappointing examination results in 2001. There has been much analysis of results and more sophisticated methods are now being used to measure students' progress. There are still examples however where unsatisfactory progress has not been picked up sufficiently early and in particular in the new AS-level course in physical education currently being offered in the sixth form.
112. Relationships between the head of the sixth form, the deputy head of sixth form and departments are convivial but leadership needs to be more proactive in monitoring progress across all subjects. More positive action is required by senior management in conjunction with heads of department where individual students or groups are not progressing as well as they should be. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory and good for most students but some lower attainers, despite much support, are struggling with the demands of academic courses.
113. The school is committed to the concept of 11-18 education and part of the new building programme includes plans for a new sixth form centre. This should help in attracting students to stay on into the sixth form but should be accompanied by each and every student being placed on courses where they have a good chance of success. This has been largely the case but not completely so.
114. The governors are equally committed to developing the sixth form further which is justified in a large school and in a community experiencing an expansion of population.

As effective as they are they too could be more demanding of senior managers in briefing them on how well students are progressing and what is being done where students are perceived to be underachieving. Governors do not fulfil their statutory duties in providing for the teaching of religious education in the sixth form and in providing a daily act of collective worship.

115. Currently the sixth form is not cost effective and is being subsidised by the rest of the school but not massively so. Nevertheless there are currently not enough students in the sixth form to justify the range of subjects offered. The school is confident that having put this in place the anticipated increase in student numbers will justify this policy. That is likely to be the case.
116. Leadership and management are aware of the need to develop a better vocational provision in the sixth form but progress is slow. Understandably, given the financial crisis of several years ago, the governors and senior managers are wary of embarking on a venture which incurs significant costs, but this is an area which should be expanded as numbers grow.

Resources

117. Arrangements for staffing and the provision of learning resources are good. In nearly all subjects staff have the necessary expertise to ensure that students are prepared adequately for external examinations. However there are occasions, as with the rest of the school, where there are difficulties in filling some teaching posts especially at short notice.
118. Again in line with the rest of the school, there is a healthy allocation of the school's budget to learning resources which helps with students' learning and the range of teaching methods used.
119. The general pressure on accommodation in the school is also being felt in the sixth form and too many lessons in chemistry, for example, are taught in classrooms rather than laboratories. The planned building programme which is imminent should alleviate many problems and the school has decided that a part of that should be a new sixth form centre. This shows the school's determination to expand sixth form provision but the success of that policy also depends on the examination results achieved.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

In order to improve standards the governors and senior management should:

- Improve GCSE results for boys which are below average in most subjects by:
 - continuing to monitor boys' progress rigorously from their time of entry into the school;
 - carrying through into GCSE some of the improvements in boys' performance already being seen in Years 7 to 9;
 - the teaching body as a whole continuing to look at strategies to raise the achievement of boys, including the teaching methods which are likely to spur boys on;
 - learning from those subjects which have already improved the achievement of boys;
 - informing and involving boys and their parents more in what the school is aiming to achieve.

(paragraphs 7,8,11,12,13,82,120,121,130,140,149,154,156,168,179,185)
- Raise standards in religious education which are currently well below average by:
 - improving the quality of teaching;
 - improving the quality of leadership and management of the subject;
 - reviewing the time allocation to the subject.

(paragraphs 6,14,33,38,39,41,209-220)
- Meet statutory requirements in religious education in covering fully the locally agreed syllabus in Years 10 and 11 and in holding a daily act of collective worship.

(paragraphs 51,62,68,114)
- Improve accommodation for lunchtime dining arrangements by:
 - considering carefully how these arrangements can be improved alongside the new planned building programme;
 - making representations to the local education authority to plan jointly how existing problems can be overcome.

(paragraphs 110,119)

In addition to the above main areas for improvement the governors and senior management should consider including in its action plan a strategy to improve the unsatisfactory behaviour of a small minority of pupils who interrupt the learning of others in some classes
(paragraphs 25,26,38,97,124,128,157,165,172,177,213)

Sixth form

- Improve results at AS- and A-level in most subjects by:
 - introducing more rigorous selection, guidance and monitoring to ensure that students are always on courses for which they are best suited and are achieving appropriately;
 - involving students in the individual targets set for them;
 - continuing to make improved use of assessment data;
 - earlier and more positive intervention by senior management when students show signs of underachieving;
 - improving the attendance of a minority of students to ensure greater continuity in their studies.

(paragraphs 17,20,111,113,221,222,228,229,231,234,258,259,267,268,276)
- Improve the cost effectiveness of the sixth form by:
 - increasing student numbers and size of teaching groups;

- considering the viability of some individual courses currently offered;
- a more detailed costing of any new courses proposed.

(paragraph 115)

- Improve standards and students' attitude to work on the physical education course leading to the examination at AS-level by:
 - counselling students and agreeing what is necessary to bring about an improvement;
 - ensuring that lesson content is pitched at the right level to secure understanding;
 - senior management monitoring progress and taking prompt action where necessary.*(paragraphs 29,47,245,247)*
- Increase vocational provision as numbers opting for the sixth form expand by:
 - considering the range of options currently available in addition to or instead of what is currently offered;
 - establishing links with employers and higher education establishments to ensure the necessary progression.*(paragraphs 65,116)*

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	160
	Sixth form	45
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		59

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 – 11							
Number	7	29	64	52	8	0	0
Percentage	4	18	40	33	5	0	0
Sixth form							
Number	2	9	27	6	1	0	0
Percentage	4	20	60	13	2	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1309	94
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	163	1

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	39	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	163	0

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	76
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	63

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.3
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.5
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	143	117	260

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	87	95	107
	Girls	93	89	83
	Total	180	184	190
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	69 (66)	72 (63)	74 (61)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	34 (34)	40 (42)	32 (29)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	95	108	106
	Girls	102	90	91
	Total	197	198	197
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	76 (68)	77 (66)	76 (55)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	38 (26)	40 (41)	47 (23)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	96	106	202

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	36	86	94
	Girls	50	100	103
	Total	86	186	197
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	43 (47)	92 (95)	98 (97)
	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	36.9
	National	39.0

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

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

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	7	15	22
	Average point score per candidate	10	13.5	12.4
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	18	17.5

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	7	15	22	-	3	3
	Average point score per candidate	10	13.5	12.4	-	4	4
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.9	17.4	-	-	-

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	1393
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	160	4
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)	78
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	25
Total aggregate hours worked per week	725

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	80
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	26.3
Key Stage 4	21.9

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2002
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	£
Total income	3,285,785
Total expenditure	3,234,410
Expenditure per pupil	2,456
Balance brought forward from previous year	88,719
Balance carried forward to next year	140,094

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	26
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	23

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1
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

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1403
Number of questionnaires returned	130

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	27	60	9	2	2
My child is making good progress in school.	30	60	6	2	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	18	46	19	11	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	13	58	17	9	2
The teaching is good.	15	66	8	0	12
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	17	56	15	11	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	41	43	5	3	8
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	35	54	7	2	3
The school works closely with parents.	15	47	22	6	10
The school is well led and managed.	19	57	4	5	15
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	19	64	8	5	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	31	54	5	3	7

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9.
- Teachers new to the department are well supported and their work is having a positive impact on standards.
- The quality of forward planning and lesson preparation helps pupils to learn well.

Areas for improvement

- The attainment of boys at GCSE which is well below the national average at A*-C grades and well below the standards being obtained by the girls in the school.
- Some teaching which fails to challenge and interest pupils.

120. The proportion of pupils attaining A*-C grades at GCSE in the 2001 English language examinations was just below the national average and average at grades A*-G. Girls' results were in line with girls nationally but the boys under-performed significantly when compared to boys nationally. Overall, standards in 2001 were similar to those in 2000 and were a significant improvement on the results of 1999. They were also an improvement from the time of the last inspection when results were below the national average. Overall, these results represent good achievement when account is taken of pupils' attainment in the national tests at the end of Year 9. The subject's performance was average when compared with similar schools.
121. In the 2001 GCSE English literature examinations the proportion of girls attaining a grade in the A*-C range was in line with national averages but the boys' results mirrored their performance in English language and were well below those of boys nationally. Overall, these results were below the national average, as was the case at the time of the last inspection. Results at A*-G were average. In 2001, pupils did significantly better in their other subjects than in English literature.
122. Results in the 2001 national tests at the end of Year 9 were above average compared with all schools and similar schools. This was also the case in 2000 and the results attained in those two years represent a significant improvement on what was attained from 1997-1999 when results were below average. Results were also a significant improvement from the time of the last inspection when the proportion of pupils reaching Level 5 or above (the level expected nationally for 14-year-olds) was well below national expectations. In 2001 the proportion of pupils attaining Level 5 or above was average and at Level 6 was above average. This represents good achievement in relation to their levels of attainment on entry to the school. The 2001 English results were overall better than those attained in science and mathematics.
123. Standards of work seen at the inspection were average at the end of Year 11 and pupils are making satisfactory gains in their learning in relation to their test results at the end of Year 9.
124. Standards seen at the end of Year 9 are average in terms of the proportion of pupils attaining at Level 5 or above. The learning gains for these pupils are good when judged against their levels of attainment on entry to the school. The majority of pupils display

very positive attitudes to the subject but a minority of boys in all years can disrupt the pace of lessons.

125. Pupils across the age range can express themselves with reasonable fluency in their written work. The planning and drafting of work is done well and most are able to develop their ideas at length with satisfactory accuracy, including many with special educational needs. Apart from the most competent, there are younger pupils who need to develop their paragraphing techniques and their ability to use varied sentence structures. Overall, there is an appropriate range of written work undertaken which is of a satisfactory standard. Standards of reading are good. Pupils read a range of increasingly demanding texts with understanding and can comment perceptively on what they have read. In a Year 8 lesson pupils understood how the tone and rhythm of the poem 'The Commentator' by Gareth Owen gave emphasis to what the writer was conveying and they could replicate the style when they came to write their own commentaries.
126. In speaking, standards are good. Pupils are confident and fluent and can adapt their speech for a range of purposes and audiences. They use tone and pace well and illustrate what they have to say with examples from the text being studied or with personal anecdote. Many are skilled at using acceptable humour to good effect and are quick to respond to the comments of others with their own questions or observations. This often gives rise to lively discussion when they learn from each other. Listening skills are varied. In the best lessons pupils concentrate and reflect on the points made by others and their learning is enhanced by their attentiveness when explanations are given and questions asked. There are occasions, however, when a minority of pupils fail to sustain concentration and become easily distracted.
127. The quality of the teaching seen was good. Teachers have a secure knowledge and understanding of their subject and the quality and detail of the planning are strengths. In the best lessons seen learning objectives were defined and communicated clearly at the start and the work was matched well to the pupils' levels of competency. It was challenging and there was pace and rigour because of the judicious use of varied teaching strategies. This was seen in a Year 9 Shakespeare lesson where pupils came to appreciate the nature of Lady Macbeth and her relationship with her husband as the tragedy of the play unfolded. The teacher's expectations were demanding but his skill in blending encouragement with searching questions drew out the best from pupils. Teachers speak clearly and concisely when giving explanations and then make effective use of sequences of questions to test and extend understanding. Pupils receive good feedback during lessons on how well they are learning and appropriate use is made of praise and encouragement. Another strength of the teaching is the quality of the working relationships with the vast majority of pupils. Teachers have their trust and confidence and as a result a positive working atmosphere prevails in nearly all lessons. Teachers new to the department are well supported and their work is having a positive impact on standards.
128. Although never less than satisfactory, not all the teaching seen was challenging and enjoyable for the pupils. At times the work was taught in ways which made insufficient intellectual demands on them and those lessons were pedestrian and flat. There were also occasions when classroom management strategies were not effective enough in eliminating some poor behaviour by a minority of boys. The use of computer technology in the teaching of the subject and as a learning tool, although good in many instances, is not undertaken in a consistent and systematic way. The use of time can become an issue when the learning objectives are not covered in their entirety and when there is not an opportunity at the end to consolidate what has been learned. The department is

aware of these issues and is looking for ways to use the expertise of its best teachers to improve the quality of teaching and learning overall.

129. Accommodation remains a problem because there are occasions when some lessons are disturbed because of the proximity of those classrooms to the kitchen. Resource levels, however, are good and contribute significantly to the quality of learning.
130. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The subject has been led by three teachers in just over a year and the new head of department has been in post only since September. The department experienced teaching staff difficulties during the last academic year and included lost work and inadequate marking which affected standards. This was not picked up and acted upon quickly enough. The situation has improved with the appointment of new staff to the department. There is now a sense of direction in the work of the subject and progress has been made in identifying the priorities for improvement. The newly appointed head of department is seeking to develop a consistent approach to teaching and learning to raise standards, particularly those of the boys at GCSE. Despite problems in the last school year, improvements since the time of the last inspection have been good particularly in test and examination results.

Literacy across the curriculum

131. Overall, the standards of literacy are satisfactory for pupils of compulsory school age and for students in the sixth form. Most are confident and fluent when speaking but there are occasions when their limited range of specialist vocabulary becomes apparent. This was seen in science where in one lesson pupils' explanations of the term 'phenomena' were simplistic because they lacked the necessary technical language. Pupils have the reading ability to understand the range of texts they meet in all subject areas. They listen well and most can concentrate for extended periods of time. The majority of pupils are able to adapt their writing to the varied demands of the curriculum but there are those who struggle with technical accuracy in some subjects.
132. The school has done much to raise literacy standards since the appointment of the co-ordinator. A school literacy policy is in place and departmental schemes of work contain literacy objectives. The school has identified four objectives for raising the standards of literacy in the current academic year and these are displayed in various places. There has been in-service training for all staff on the teaching of reading for information, the development of pupils' writing styles and strategies to improve pupils' spelling and punctuation. In addition to the school's literacy summer school for pupils coming into Year 7, there is the annual literacy week and the after-school literacy club run by the learning support assistants. As a result of this improved provision there are instances of good practice being used at departmental level. Such work is very well supported by the school's library.
133. In history very good extended writing is undertaken in Years 7, 8 and 9. There is good provision in geography where the use of challenging questions gives pupils the opportunity to discuss concepts and ideas. The department also encourages pupils to read independently. Care is taken in modern foreign languages to grade textbooks and to provide increasingly authentic reading passages. There is still work to be done, however, to ensure a consistent approach to the teaching of literacy skills across all curriculum areas if standards are to be raised further. The school is well placed to secure these improvements because of the leadership of the co-ordinator, the specialist qualification and interest of the head of geography and the commitment of

many other teachers to the implementation of the National Literacy Strategy. There is still much to be accomplished in religious education however.

DRAMA

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

Strengths

- GCSE results which are above average.
- The quality of the teaching which is consistently very good.
- Pupils learn well because of their positive attitudes to the subject.
- Accommodation and resources are excellent.
- The quality and range of extra-curricular activities are excellent.

Areas for improvement

- There are no significant areas for improvement. The challenge facing the department is to maintain the high standards of provision and achievement and to continue to explore ways to enrich the curriculum further.

134. Standards in the 2001 GCSE examinations were above the national average, as has been the case in recent years. The proportion of boys and girls obtaining a grade in the A*-C range last year was greater than boys and girls nationally and the number attaining at the highest A* and A grades significantly exceeded the national figure. These results were the best in the county of Somerset in terms of the rate of improvement in the pupils' attainment. In both 2001 and 2000, pupils did significantly better in drama than in their other subjects.
135. Pupils have few drama skills on entry to Year 7 but the quality of their learning is very good as they progress through the school. By the end of Year 9 they are able to develop a convincing role and learn and perform a small section of script. They understand what they are trying to convey and can communicate those aims to an audience. Pupils in Year 11 are enthusiastic and involved in what they are doing and respond positively to the subject as an explorative and expressive art form. They have a good understanding of drama processes, both in preparation and performance, and as a result make very good progress. The strengths lie in the practical work.
136. The quality of the specialist teaching is very good and accounts for the above average standards in external examinations. Members of staff are not only knowledgeable and skilled in teaching but also bring an enthusiasm for the subject which sparks interest and motivates the pupils. The work is demanding but taught in such a way that all pupils make significant learning gains. A particular strength in the work seen was the ability of pupils to evaluate their own and each other's work. This was helped by learning objectives of the lesson being so clearly communicated to pupils. The excellent accommodation and the range and quality of resources make a significant impact on the quality of learning.
137. The curriculum provision has been well thought through and the range of opportunities available to pupils outside of the taught time is impressive. They take part in performance work and a major annual production, they undertake a range of theatre visits and attend workshops, and they are also closely involved in working with local schools. All pupils have a very positive attitude to the subject and in conversation many expressed their appreciation of the educational experience they receive in drama. The subject makes a significant contribution to their personal and social development and develops confidence and the ability to communicate fluently.

138. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. The head of department provides clear educational direction and is well supported by two experienced, committed and able colleagues.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Effective confident teaching which is consistently good.
- Improving standards by the end of Year 9.
- Good relationships between pupils and teachers.
- Good leadership and management with a clear focus on raising achievement.
- Good use of assessment data to monitor progress and set targets.

Areas for improvement

- Raising achievement and standards at the end of Year 11 particularly at the higher grades.
- Continue to develop strategies for improving pupils' confidence.
- Developing ICT resources for teaching in the classroom.

139. GCSE results were average in 2001 and close to average in 2000 at grades A*-C and just above average in both years in the overall pass rate at grades A*-G. There was, however, below average achievement at the highest grades. Girls' results were slightly below average compared with girls nationally in 2001 and boys' results were average compared with boys nationally. This represents satisfactory progress from Year 9 and good progress since the last inspection.
140. GCSE results were well below average in statistics in 2001 and 2000. Girls' results were close to average compared with girls nationally in 2001 but boys' results were well below average compared with boys nationally. In both 2001 and 2000 pupils did significantly better in their other subjects than in statistics.
141. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 have been consistently average in each of the years 1997-2001 compared with all schools. In 2001, results were average at Level 5 or above (the level expected for 14-year-olds) and also at Level 6 or above. The difference between girls' and boys' results has not been significant. These results represent good progress in relation to pupils' standards on entry to the school and good progress since the last inspection when results were well below average. Overall results were similar to those in science but not as good as those in English. In the past two years results have been below average compared with similar schools.
142. The evidence from work seen in lessons and from pupils' books in Years 7, 8 and 9 suggests better progress than indicated by the most recent national tests and currently standards are above average. Work in Year 7 shows good continuity in numeracy from the junior schools and sustained progress through the year. Pupils' mental arithmetic skills are systematically developed and many lessons start or end effectively with a short number puzzle or game. Pupils of all abilities are regularly required to work with and without a calculator and most understand and can find the prime factors of a number. In a Year 8 class of above average ability, pupils worked confidently on the school computer network using spreadsheet software to explore families of straight line graphs, developing good research skills in the process. Work solving simultaneous

equations in a Year 9 class showed pupils to have good skills in algebra with several pupils able to solve simple equations in their head. Overall this work confirms the good progress and achievement made by most pupils.

143. The work seen in Year 10 shows good progress from Year 9 to maintain average standards. There is a good continued emphasis on number work with pupils of middle and upper ability working on percentages, fractions and decimals with confidence. Much of the homework in books of pupils of all abilities is very well presented. Some good challenging revision work for pupils of above average ability was seen looking at translation, enlargement, rotation and reflection. In Year 11, completed work in books shows that pupils are not progressing quite as well as those in Year 10 although there is a continuing good emphasis on numeracy. There is also considerable variation in algebraic skills, particularly for middle and lower ability pupils. While most can handle the concept of simplifying an algebraic expression, work with equations proves very demanding for the least able. More able pupils, however, have good algebraic skills, they can work with the concept of a function and the graph of a function. In a Year 11 class of higher ability pupils some very good work was seen looking at translation and the graphs of $af(x)$ and $f(ax)$ for a range of functions.
144. There is a well-established team of teachers in mathematics providing confident effective teaching. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection and is now good. In the lessons seen all the teaching was good or better. Teachers have detailed records of the assessments of their pupils, including those with special educational needs, and lessons are well planned to match all pupils' needs. In a Year 7 low ability class, where pupils were looking at sequences and finding the n th term, a variety of activities sustained pupils' interest and probed their understanding. The good relationships in this class and the effective additional in-class support enabled the teacher to both support and challenge the group to promote some effective learning. In a few lessons there was the potential for some poor behaviour but good classroom management skills and appropriate additional in-class support ensured that even in these classes good learning took place. In a lower ability Year 10 practical class working on angles and bearings the availability of two teachers ensured a rapid response to any problem. The resulting sustained pace and sense of achievement in the practical work was clearly enjoyed by the pupils. Teachers use a range of activities to maintain pupils' interest and concentration. Relationships in the classroom are good. In most classes pupils are keen to participate in answering questions or explaining their ideas and are willing to come to the front of the class to work on the board. In the best lessons the aims of the lesson are shared with pupils at the beginning and a variety of tasks or activities sustains their enthusiasm to ensure that effective learning takes place. In a Year 11 class of average ability, pupils using computers for the solution of equations by trial and improvement worked confidently and conscientiously on their assignments clearly enjoying both the work and the individual responsibility they had been given. There is good use of assessment data to monitor progress and teachers know their pupils well.
145. The leadership and management of the department are good. There is a good team spirit in the department and ideas and resources are shared. The schemes of work for Years 7 to 9 have been revised to take account of the National Numeracy Strategy and there is a clear focus on raising achievement in Years 10 and 11 through maintaining high expectations and improving pupils' confidence in their own abilities. Resources for mathematics are generally good and classrooms are enlivened by posters, charts and good displays of pupils' work. Whilst schemes of work make reference to the use of ICT in teaching mathematics the department has yet to acquire the resources in the classroom to allow it to develop its intentions fully.

Numeracy across the curriculum

146. Standards of numeracy and mental arithmetic are good in Years 7, 8 and 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11 reflecting the impact of the National Numeracy Strategy earlier in the school. The mathematics department has revised its schemes of work for Years 7 to 9 to incorporate the National Numeracy Strategy and there is a good emphasis on promoting number skills whenever possible. A whole-school policy for numeracy has been written but has yet to be established across departments. Despite that there is evidence of pupils applying their mathematical skills across a number of subject areas.
147. Pupils develop their number skills as an integral part of learning science and by Year 9 they can handle formulae for variables, such as speed or pressure, but are inclined to omit the units. They can tabulate data and transfer the information to charts or graphs. By Year 11 pupils are confident with scientific calculations. They know how to calculate power using the correct units of measurement and can accurately calculate the velocity of waves in given examples. There is also good general promotion of mathematical skills in design and technology where projects require pupils to measure with increasing accuracy, produce cutting lists and estimate quantities. In food technology pupils weigh accurately, and regularly cost production. They also do sensory evaluation of food and can present this information in graphical form. Schemes of work in modern foreign languages include references to numeracy whenever it is appropriate. There is frequent use of number in dates, times and birthdays in Year 7, collation of data and display in graphs in Year 8 and analysis of data to plan journeys and book accommodation in Year 9. GCSE work includes interpretation of statistical data on environmental issues, teenage magazine surveys and the Euro exchange rate. In geography pupils can access databases and illustrate data with charts and graphs. Measuring, timing and recording are part of many lessons in physical education when pupils are looking at areas such as fitness training or umpiring but numeracy is not, however, specifically planned for in schemes of work or in lesson plans. Opportunities are therefore missed, particularly in GCSE work, to make use of graphs and tabulation.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Improving results by the end of Year 9.
- Expert analysis of test and examination results to judge the department's performance.
- Very good relationships between teachers and pupils creating a happy atmosphere for learning.
- Teachers' strong team spirit and interest in moving the department forward.
- Subject expertise is used well to advance pupils' learning.

Areas for improvement

- The number of pupils attaining higher levels and grades in national tests and examinations.
- The rate of progress for pupils in Year 10 and 11 and wider opportunities for middle and lower attaining pupils to make their best progress.
- Pupils' skills in problem solving, scientific enquiry and analysis in all years.
- Making marking more constructive and focused.

148. Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 have fluctuated over the last five years between average and below average compared with all schools but in the last two years results have been average. In 2001, results were above average at the level expected for 14-year-olds nationally (Level 5 or above) and average at Level 6 or above. Boys' and girls' results have been similar, as is the case nationally. Results represent good progress in relation to pupils' standards on entry to the school. In 2000, science results were well below average compared with similar schools but were average in 2001. Overall, results were similar to those in mathematics but not as good as those in English.
149. GCSE results in 2001 were below average in the double science award and lower than the previous year. Girls' results were average compared with girls nationally but boys' results were well below average compared with boys nationally. In 2001, girls did not do as well in double science as in their other subjects and, in 2000, both boys and girls did less well in science than elsewhere. In single science in 2001, the percentage of pupils attaining A*-C grades was below average; standards were average in 2000. Very few pupils gained the top grades in double science and none in single science. Progress in science has been slower than expected when compared with levels achieved at the end of Year 9.
150. Current standards are average in Year 9. In relation to standards on entry to the school, achievement and progress are mainly satisfactory. Progress is less than expected in lower sets. An analysis of exercise books showed that expectations for middle and low attainers are too low and that higher attainers are not given sufficiently challenging activities for them to make their best progress. How well pupils increase their knowledge and understanding is linked directly to the quality of teaching and can be good. Year 7 pupils learned that solids, liquids and gases behave differently by exploring ideas themselves. Their teacher had perceptively chosen activities that gave them 'food for thought' and stimulated them to think. Alternatively, although pupils in a Year 8 class enjoyed watching a capable demonstration of a simple electro-magnet, and could copy the procedure, they failed to clearly understand what changes happened before and after the introduction of electricity. This was because the teacher's plan focused more upon the activity than upon how learning could be achieved. Progress for a significant minority is slower than it should be because they show little pride in their class work. Pupils' numeracy skills develop as they learn science and measuring skills improve, although they do not practise calculations enough. There is good development of technical language when teachers ensure that pupils use key words. However, pupils rarely plan class experiments, make predictions or analyse results deeply enough to make detailed conclusions. On the other hand, opportunities to use computers have improved since the last inspection, for instance Year 9 use them to record changes in the amount of oxygen produced by green plants during changes in light intensity.
151. Current overall standards in Year 11 are average. Achievement is satisfactory. Attainment is noticeably affected by the quality of teaching. Where lesson planning is imaginative, standards are raised and progress accelerates. For example, after methodically recalling properties of water waves, the imagination of Year 11 pupils was more sharply captured as 'Goldfinger' (the teacher) directed a laser beam at 'James Bond' (a pupil). From this demonstration pupils recognised that light does travel in straight lines and made very good progress in learning more about the properties of light waves. Year 10 pupils made good progress as they quickly responded to their teacher's infectious enthusiasm. They were, consequently, eager to learn more about a force that is exerted on a current-carrying wire in a magnetic field. Conversely, where topics are not dealt with in enough detail, for example in linking the production of

glucose in green plants to other various plant systems, pupils' level of understanding in top sets is lower than might be expected. Analysis of coursework shows that the very highest attainers record investigations to a very good standard with detailed conclusions following sophisticated observations. There is a need, however, to raise pupils' standards in evaluating evidence and procedures in experimental work.

152. The overall quality of teaching is good but there is a significant proportion of teaching which is satisfactory. The positive influence of teachers' expertise is clearly in evidence. Pupils are also praised and cheerfully encouraged to learn. Although seldom exciting, reviews of previous work always take place. The best teaching was imaginatively planned to 'hand over' the responsibility of learning to pupils. For example, by opening and closing an air freshener, pupils in Year 7 discovered for themselves more about the particle theory of matter and by doing so that learning was reinforced more strongly. In another, similar, lesson, obvious very good relationships with their teacher substantially encouraged Year 11 pupils to answer tricky questions about 'cracking' large molecules in front of their classmates. Shortcomings in teaching apply when there is poor planning of ideas, when narrow teaching methods are used or when there are low expectations of the quality and presentation of pupils' work in exercise books. In addition, while marking is consistently done, not all comments sufficiently help pupils to understand how they may improve. Teachers work hard in supporting pupils but now lessons need to be more challenging.
153. Under new leadership since the last inspection, the department continues to be well managed. Teachers strongly support each other. Test and examination results are meticulously analysed to judge performance. The tracking of individual pupils' performance through different aspects of science could be a useful extension of this analysis as could be a more thorough scrutiny of class books.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Improved GCSE examination results particularly for girls.
- Opportunities for pupils to use and experiment with three-dimensional media helps to raise standards.

Areas for improvement

- Improve the attainment and achievement of boys in the GCSE examination.
- Ensure that all teaching is at least satisfactory particularly in Years 7 to 9.
- Ensure that all pupils have the opportunity to make art using computers.
- Ensure that the art rooms are visually more stimulating by adding more quality displays of work and artefacts and by removing untidy areas.

154. Although there has been a year-on-year improvement the proportion attaining A*-C grades in 2001 was below average. Results are better than at the time of the last inspection when they were well below average. Girls do much better than boys and were close to the national average for girls in 2001 at A*-C grades. Boys were well below average. A very good feature of results was girls' above average performance at A* and A grades which helped to raise the points score to average. The progress made by girls is satisfactory but that of boys is unsatisfactory.
155. Currently, standards attained by the end of Year 9 are below average and similar to teachers' assessments for 2001. There is a marked difference between the attainment

seen in the work of some pupils in these years depending on the quality of teaching. Where teachers' expectations are high, attainment is average and pupils make satisfactory progress. Where expectations are not high enough pupils' progress is unsatisfactory. Where younger pupils are reaching average standards, as for example in a Year 8 lesson, they explore successfully how textured surfaces can be used in making art. Combinations of rubbed surfaces are used to compose imaginative landscapes which include imaginative animals. By using this original work as a source of imagery, pupils create paintings with interesting overlays of colour and texture. Where standards are below average the work in sketchbooks is rushed and that made from observation, in particular, is characterised by insensitive use of line. Drawings which record familiar objects are frequently schematic and superficial.

156. In lessons and in the work seen, the attainment of pupils in Years 10 and 11 is similar to recent GCSE results. Girls' work is a little above average but boys' is below average. There had been a tendency for less able boys to do art at GCSE but even when this is taken into account boys still achieve less well than they should do. Girls are much more willing to develop their work. For example, in the metamorphosis project one female pupil had good preparation work and had experimented with printing the same image over the top of a range of different surfaces, producing interesting effects of colour and shape relationships. In contrast to this a male pupil, though producing competent three-dimensional work, showed little evidence of research or the development of ideas. Where pupils combine media, and in particular work in three dimensions, standards are raised but sketchbook work and preparatory studies are, overall, less well done.
157. Teaching and learning in Years 7 to 11 is satisfactory overall but a significant amount of work done by younger pupils shows that the teaching is unsatisfactory. Where teaching is unsatisfactory praise is given for superficial work which results in pupils being satisfied with low standards. There are instances where standards are raised because teachers use well-chosen works of art to support learning. For example in tasks set in Year 7, the work of John Piper is used to show how media can be used to create interesting textures and surface qualities. Similarly when giving homework, well chosen examples of works of art are used to help pupils focus on how ideas may be developed. For example in a Year 9 group, where pupils have been doing work based on the print of 'The Scream' by Munch, a painting by Francis Bacon on a similar theme was used to set an appropriate homework and raise standards. Most art lessons are characterised by good levels of pupil interest and enjoyment, but some younger pupils find difficulty in sustaining interest for the full lesson and a small minority do not behave well. Older pupils work well in class but few boys are willing to show sustained commitment to their work outside of lessons, which would help to raise their attainment.
158. The leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. Schemes of work have been appropriately planned and meetings to review progress and identify areas for further development are regularly held. Over recent years there has been an ongoing difficulty in recruiting and retaining a suitably qualified teacher as the third member of the department. This has had an adverse impact on standards of attainment particularly in Years 7 to 9. The three art rooms are of a good size and there are some good displays, but there is a general 'down at heel' feel to the rooms which have too many untidy areas, and few stimulating displays of visually interesting objects to inspire work.
159. Since the last inspection satisfactory improvements have been made, particularly in raising the overall standards at GCSE. The difficulty in recruiting and retaining a suitably qualified teacher as the third member of the department has meant that overall the

standard of teaching has not improved. At the time of the last inspection pupils did not have the opportunity to make art using computers and this is still true.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Overall quality of provision in design and technology is **good**.

Strengths

- The teaching of skills in all areas of the design and technology curriculum which helps to raise standards when pupils make things.
- Above average GCSE results which reflect the good understanding the teachers have of the examination requirements.

Areas for improvement

- The planning of the curriculum for younger pupils so that they have a better understanding of how different areas contribute to a whole design and technology course.
- Ensure that there is a marking policy for the work of younger pupils which informs them about how well they are doing in relation to the National Curriculum assessment levels.
- Ensure that all pupils increase their understanding of the application of computer-aided design and manufacture.

160. In 2001 GCSE results were above average. The attainment of boys was close to the national average and that of girls above average. Both boys and girls do better in design and technology than in their other GCSE subjects. Pupils do better in food and textiles than in resistant materials, but this is a reflection of the ability of the pupils who opt for these courses and that more girls do food and textiles than boys.
161. In the work seen and in lessons at the inspection, standards were average. When pupils enter the school in Year 7 their experience of design and technology is limited, and reaching average standards by Year 9 represents satisfactory progress. By Year 11 attainment is above average, which represents good progress. Many pupils, including those with special educational needs, meet or exceed their potential.
162. When pupils make things in Years 7 to 9 standards are satisfactory. Younger pupils quickly learn to use appropriate tools, and about the qualities of the materials they use. For example, in a Year 7 lesson where pupils used acrylic sheet to make notepads, they learned to cut, file and bend the material using the right tools, and finish the product to an average standard. Similar standards were seen in a Year 8 textiles lesson where pupils made patterns, cut fabric shapes and appliquéd them using a sewing machine. In Year 9, food technology pupils clearly learned and understood how different methods of cake making produce different outcomes. This too is done to an average standard. In Years 7 to 9 the standard of designing and of representing ideas through drawing is below average.
163. By the time pupils reach Year 11 the standards of both designing and making are similar, and overall are above average. For example, the folders of Year 11 pupils working in food technology are above average, with ample evidence that pupils can plan their work and effectively manage the designing and making of products in food. Standards of making are above average with pupils applying skills and knowledge appropriately, seen for example in the cold sweets project. Similar standards are seen in all other areas of the design and technology curriculum with pupils showing a good understanding of quality control and the importance of a high standard of finish. For example, when using resistant materials to make storage systems, pupils are able to investigate possible designs, compare their ideas with existing products, select

appropriate materials and finish to a good standard. Pupils also understand the need to evaluate and test what they make and as a result modify their designs. For example, one student making a storage system understood the need to modify the design in the light of unforeseen construction difficulties. Another pupil working in graphic products tested a design of fast food containers by making models, thus understanding better the strengths and weaknesses of the design. Greater use should be made of ICT in aspects such as computer-aided design and manufacture, and in food and textiles very little is seen. Where more frequent use is seen, as in graphics, it is not impacting sufficiently on both the design and presentation of work. Also, when pupils work in resistant materials there needs to be an opportunity to use computer-aided design and manufacture to aid both single item and batch manufacture, and to improve the presentation of folders.

164. Overall teaching and learning are good but the teaching which younger pupils receive varies considerably in quality. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of their specialism and the teaching of skills is a particular strength of the department. Projects and lessons are always well planned with lessons having clear objectives which are understood by pupils, as for example in a Year 9 food lesson where pupils learned about different methods of making cakes. Here clear objectives were set, pupils understood what they were expected to do and how to do it, with the result that skill levels and the understanding of processes were improved. Similarly in a Year 10 product design lesson, the good demonstration of metal casting by the teacher improved pupils' understanding of processes and their application. Teachers have a thorough understanding of the requirements of external examinations. Because of this courses are well paced ensuring that pupils stay on track and are able to meet the demands of the course. The above average number of pupils who succeed at GCSE testifies to this.
165. Pupils enjoy work in design and technology and attitudes in lessons are good, but there are occasions when the poor behaviour of a minority causes concern. The level of commitment shown by pupils and teachers is evident in the after-school and Saturday morning sessions which are particularly effective in helping pupils meet the examination requirements. The assessment of the work of pupils in Years 10 and 11 is thorough and there is good practice in some areas. For example in textiles, regular assessment points have been identified and pupils are provided with written feedback about how well they are doing. Clear guidance about how they can improve their work is provided and the information is also shared with parents. A less good feature of teaching is the uneven marking and assessment of the work of younger pupils. In textiles and food technology, marking is satisfactory but in resistant materials it is often superficial and does not give enough information about how well pupils are doing. There is no coherent departmental approach to the assessment of the work of younger pupils, and the assessment that does happen is not effectively linked to National Curriculum levels, which means that pupils do not understand how well they are doing in relation to national standards.
166. Overall the management of the department is good, particularly the day-to-day management of resources and rooms and of the courses for older pupils. Teaching is regularly monitored and this is linked to staff training and development. The department has made many links with industry, which have proved beneficial in enhancing resources. There is too much of a divide between food and textiles and the rest of the design and technology curriculum. This means that the curriculum for younger pupils is not as effective as it should be in developing in them a coherent understanding of the common approaches to designing and making which should be evident in all areas. This was also a weakness at the last inspection.

167. Since the last inspection the department has made good progress. Results at GCSE have improved and are now above average. Teaching and learning which were described as satisfactory at the last inspection are now good, and most of the positive aspects which were reported then have been maintained. The accommodation for food and textiles teaching and learning is unsatisfactory. The textiles room is too small to adequately accommodate the Years 7 to 9 groups. The two food rooms require refurbishing. The fitted furniture is in poor condition and there are damaged food preparation surfaces and flaking paint. Overall this is an improving department with hardworking teachers and shared commitment to succeed.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and understanding and lessons are well planned.
- A commitment to raise standards and the capacity to succeed.
- The contribution of the subject to pupils' computer, literacy and numeracy skills.
- The range of practical and field study activities available to pupils.

Areas for development

- Raising standards at GCSE.
- Development of strategies to ensure that the behaviour of a small minority of pupils does not interfere with the progress of the majority.
- Consistency in marking and provision of helpful comments to assist pupils to improve the quality of their work.

168. GCSE results in 2001 were well below the national average for both boys and girls. In 2000 results were in line with the national average. In 2001, pupils did significantly better in their other subjects than in geography and achievement and progress were unsatisfactory. Girls achieved better than the boys.
169. By the end of Year 9 attainment overall is currently in line with the national average. This represents good achievement in relation to pupils' attainment in geography on entry in Year 7. From observations in lessons and scrutiny of books pupils develop a good range of geographical knowledge and skills. Most have a satisfactory grasp of human and physical aspects of the subject and use geographical language well. Good examples were seen in Year 7 lessons on the impact of climate on human activity. By the age of 14 many pupils have developed a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of tectonics and are able to appreciate the difficulties of predicting earthquakes. This was seen in a number of lessons using the Kobe earthquake of 1995 as an example. The more able pupils, in particular, write well in a variety of formats. Some good extended writing was seen on migration, the plight of refugees, the geography of Italy and development problems associated with the rainforest ecosystem. In Year 8, effective development of enquiry-based work was seen in coursework on a local housing development. Work overall is well presented.
170. From observation of lessons and looking at pupils' books, standards in the current Year 11 are below the national average. In Year 10, pupils are achieving at a level above the national average. Achievement in relation to attainment on entry to the course is satisfactory in Year 11 and good in Year 10. The use of computers is well integrated into the schemes of work for all years and computing skills are being developed well

and used effectively to assist learning. In Year 11 a very good revision programme has just started and many pupils show a satisfactory knowledge of coastal processes and subsequent landforms. Most pupils use geographical language accurately. In Year 10 lessons on shanty towns in the less economically developed world, pupils displayed very good understanding of the causes, characteristics and potential for change. As a result of extremely good teaching and appropriately planned tasks, pupils were able to make very good to excellent progress in understanding and in decision making skills.

171. Teaching overall is good. There is no unsatisfactory teaching and some very good and excellent practice was observed. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject and use a wide range of teaching strategies in the good and better lessons. Planning is thorough. Since the last inspection there has been a significant decrease in the amount of teacher input into lessons. Pupils are now, therefore, expected to think about their work and be actively involved in their own learning, instead of just receiving information. Class management overall is good. Work is marked regularly but while the vast majority of teachers provide detailed comments to assist pupils to correct errors and improve the quality of their work, some marking is less helpful and thorough. Teachers use computers very well to present their lessons. The use of the computer as a tool in teaching and learning is well integrated into lesson planning. Effective input is given to improve pupils' literacy and numeracy skills.
172. Learning is good. A small number of pupils in Year 9, mainly but not exclusively boys, find sustained concentration difficult. This affects the progress of other pupils in those classes. Most pupils work well in groups and pairs and their positive attitudes contribute to the good learning. In the good and better lessons learning is often good or very good, resulting from the quality of teaching and the keenness shown by pupils. This was seen particularly in lessons in Years 7 and 10. Overall relationships with teachers are positive and contribute effectively to learning.
173. The subject is managed in a satisfactory manner. There is a commitment to raising standards and a capacity to succeed. A hard working head of department is making good progress in identifying priorities for development. Teachers work well as a team and teaching and learning strategies have been effectively widened. A very well planned revision programme has been introduced for GCSE pupils to provide effective guidance and support for examination candidates. There are good opportunities for practical and field study activities in each year and these have a positive effect on pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills development. Schemes of work have recently been reviewed and assessment procedures are good. Assessment data is used effectively to plan lessons and monitor pupils' progress. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' awareness of citizenship and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Despite the low GCSE results in 2001, there has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection in relation to providing work to meet the needs of all levels of ability and in teaching.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- The well above the national average standards at GCSE.
- The shared commitment of teachers in the history department.
- The very good teaching of literacy within history in Years 7 to 9.

Areas for development

- To ensure the best practice in teaching in Years 7 to 9 is effectively shared across the department.
- To make more effective use of ICT.

174. The pupils' performance at GCSE over the past three years has been at least above the national average. In 2001 it was well above the national average at A*-C grades and at the highest A* or A grades. These high standards and very good achievement are the result of very good teaching by an experienced team of history teachers. Results in history in both 2001 and 2000 were significantly better than the results attained by pupils in their other subjects. Results in 2001 were the best in the county of Somerset in terms of the value added to pupils' attainment. The two areas of strength within this picture at GCSE are firstly the increased numbers of pupils achieving the very highest grades and secondly the marked improvement in the attainment of boys since 2000, although boys are still not achieving as well as girls at the highest grades.
175. Observation of lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work confirms that the standards of work achieved by pupils in the current Years 10 and 11 are above national expectations. This represents good achievement over the two years of the course for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and with English as an additional language. What all pupils can do well is to describe historical events such as the Italian invasion of Abyssinia or the Cuban Missile Crisis. Middle and higher attaining pupils are able to analyse and then explain complex historical trends such as the failures within the work of the League of Nations in the inter-war period. The relative weakness in the work of lower attaining pupils is their failure to recall accurate detail and then to use this to support their answers. History remains a popular option.
176. The standards of work achieved by the pupils in Year 9 are just above national expectations. This represents good achievement for all pupils, including those pupils with special educational needs and for those with English as an additional language. Pupils of all abilities produce good extended writing and demonstrate increasingly good factual knowledge and understanding, such as the Year 8 pupils who vigorously argued about the relative merits of the later Stuart and early Hanoverian monarchs as effective rulers. Pupils have a clear chronological framework of the past by Year 9.
177. The quality of teaching and learning in history is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good at GCSE. Strong features of the most effective teaching are the good relationships between teachers and pupils. Many pupils in almost all classes are willing to answer teachers' questions and to offer their own ideas. Teachers' management of pupils is also very good, although in some lessons observed the poor behaviour of a minority of pupils adversely affected the learning of all. Teachers' planning is a strong feature, both of individual lessons and of a series of lessons. Year 7 pupils were able to demonstrate their good understanding of the reasons for the success of the Roman army in a common assessment task, because the previous series of lessons had built their knowledge up step by step and structured the way in which they recorded their

evidence. They were also given very effective literacy support for their writing. The best teaching is also challenging. In a Year 8 lesson pupils responded extremely well to the challenge of a 'balloon debate'. The teacher had skilfully built up the pupils' knowledge and then structured the lesson in order to allow them to develop their understanding. As with much of the more imaginative teaching, such as the text messages between Year 8 and Charles I, the pupils really enjoyed their learning. At GCSE the teachers' excellent knowledge of the syllabus enables them to prepare pupils very well for their examinations. In a Year 10 lesson the pupils recapped their knowledge of Hitler's foreign policy aims by marking three different pupil answers and at the same time they learned a valuable lesson about the importance of only using relevant information in their own answers. This was just the first step in a series of well-paced tasks. The relative weakness in teaching is where teachers' exposition is too long, slowing down the pace of learning and where teachers are missing opportunities to extend the thinking of higher attainers.

178. The leadership of history is good. There have been a number of good improvements since the last inspection, most notably the improved examination results. The strong team of specialist historians are very committed to their work. The schemes of work in Years 7 to 9 give effective guidance to all those teaching history although they do not currently specify the expectations for pupil attainment at each level of ability. The head of history does not formally monitor the teaching of the subject through lesson observation and work scrutiny and there are inconsistencies in the information pupils receive on how to improve, particularly in Years 7 to 9. In a number of classes pupils' work has not been marked sufficiently regularly. Resources for history are good with a suitably wide selection of textbooks available in Years 7 to 9 and GCSE. This is having a very positive impact on the standards pupils achieve. Insufficient use is currently being made of ICT.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

Overall, the quality of provision in ICT is **good** when taught as a separate subject but irregular when used to support teaching and learning in other subjects.

Strengths

- Attitudes to learning by pupils in ICT lessons.
- Where ICT is taught as a separate subject, the teaching is mostly good and often promotes high standards of work from pupils.
- The distribution of ICT resources throughout the school.
- Excellent technical support.
- The open access library ICT resources.

Areas for development

- The more thorough implementation of a whole-school policy for ICT involving all departments thereby strengthening links across the curriculum.
- Developing ICT competence and confidence with all subject teachers.
- The better delivery of National Curriculum entitlement to ICT in Years 10 and 11 for those pupils not taking the GNVQ course in the subject.

179. Pupils achieve just above average standards by the end of Year 9. Girls attain higher levels than boys. In Years 7 to 9, as a result of a well-taught and progressive course in ICT, pupils make good progress. There are a number of 'high flyers' who take a particular interest in the subject in and out of school who reach well above average standards. They take a pride in presenting work of a very high standard. Most pupils

acquire a range of skills rapidly and apply them to their project work in ICT and in their other subjects when given the opportunity. Portfolios of work however are not as well ordered as they could be. Pupils respect the ICT equipment and the environment in which they work. Attitudes to learning are good for the majority throughout Years 7 to 11 and pupils support each other well particularly in practical work.

180. The introduction of the GNVQ course in Years 10 and 11 is providing a more useful vehicle for learning ICT skills than the previous GCSE course. The indications are that pupils opting for this course should achieve above average results. For other pupils in Years 10 and 11, experiences vary and as a result pupils' access to their ICT entitlement is patchy. They retain the skills acquired in Years 7 to 9 but opportunities to use them fully are not always provided across subjects of the curriculum.
181. A number of departments are making good use of ICT to enhance teaching and learning. Very good use is made in music when facilities are available and it is one of the strengths of that subject. There are examples of good use in English, science, geography, and in mathematics as seen in the solution of equations in Year 11. Greater use should be made of ICT in design and technology in Years 7 to 11. More use could also be made of ICT in art, history and modern foreign languages. The ICT provision in the school is good but the time is now ripe to broaden the impact of the excellent resources on teaching and learning in all areas of the curriculum. The impact on subject teaching staff by the New Opportunities Funding for teacher training and ICT has not yet been fully felt. The library makes a very good contribution to pupils' learning with its open access to ICT resources.
182. Where ICT is taught as a separate subject the quality of teaching is good and sometimes very good. ICT teachers have considerable knowledge and skills which enable them to help the learning of pupils of all abilities, including higher attainers. There are many good examples of how teachers cater for the needs of all pupils, and pupils with special educational needs are enabled to make similar progress to others. Lessons are well prepared and offer progression, pace and challenge. Teachers' expectations are very good as is their use of time, resources and support staff. The excellent technical support available is used well and as an integral part of teaching to improve pupils' learning.
183. A good feature of ICT provision is the response of teachers to the fact that some pupils do not have access to Internet facilities outside school. Opportunities are therefore provided for pupils to use the school's extensive facilities during the lunch break.
184. The leadership and management of the specialist teaching of the subject are very good. The attention to detail by the head of department is evident in the records of attainment compiled. The school, using the National Grid for Learning funding, has provided up-to-date ICT resources available throughout the school and in the library area. The five computer suites are being well used but the increase in pupil numbers will continue to put pressure on these resources. There is a need for the school to finalise and implement a whole-school policy for ICT. Increased use of the Internet, now available at over 130 work stations throughout the school, will need careful monitoring, engaging both parents and pupils in agreed codes of practice.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- The department is well led and very well managed through concerted team efforts.
- Teachers' subject knowledge and management of pupils are very good.
- Teachers' assessment of pupils and advice about improvement are very good.

Areas for improvement

- GCSE results, particularly those of boys, were below average.
- The use of ICT is insufficient.
- There are currently insufficient enrichment and extension opportunities for talented linguists.

185. GCSE results in French at grades A*-C, from a large entry, were well below average in 2001 for both boys and girls, and were also below average in 2000. Results at grades A*-G for boys and girls were above the national average. Both boys and girls attained lower results than in their other school subjects in 2001 and the results overall were depressed by the poor performance by boys.
186. In 2001, GCSE results at grades A*-C in German were below the national average, and much lower than in the previous year when they were well above average. In both years, all pupils entering gained grades in the range A*-G.
187. Most pupils enter the school in Year 7 with little or no knowledge of either French or German. They all have very good opportunities to learn both languages, acquiring a good foundation of skills and knowledge in Years 7 to 9. Inspection evidence suggests that current attainment of both boys and girls by the end of Year 9 is equivalent to national expectations, a substantial improvement on standards indicated in teachers' assessments last year. Despite discrepancies in progress in French and German most pupils have good recall of vocabulary or idioms relating to school and family life, leisure pursuits and travel. Many pupils apply grammatical rules accurately as required by the National Curriculum, reflecting the department's strong contribution to literacy. Early in Year 9 pupils of all abilities, including some with special educational needs, start speaking and writing in past and future tenses to describe experiences and make arrangements. Pupils apply number in various ways, ranging from times and dates to simple monetary calculations and surveys of likes and dislikes. Lower attaining Year 9 pupils who discontinue their language studies receive nationally recognised certificates of achievement.
188. Pupils' attainment in French in Years 10 and 11 has risen sharply due to very good teaching, and currently equates with the national average. The smaller but predominantly higher ability groups studying German have restored the above average standards achieved by pupils in earlier years. Pupils learn to speak and write at greater length and in a variety of styles, producing tourist brochures or short, reflective essays about holidays and healthy living. Lower attainers, including pupils with special educational needs, use well-designed writing frames to express their ambitions or project their future careers. Listening skills are particularly well developed, so pupils can follow those lessons where teachers speak French or German continuously. Less competent linguists appreciate clear explanations in English when needed and get satisfactory scores in listening exercises based on familiar taped material. Many pupils speak only briefly in response to teachers' questions, but one German class in Year 10 conducted an animated discussion about the merits of recently released films.

189. The quality of teaching is never less than satisfactory and overall it is good. Teachers are fluent in French and German and have secure knowledge of examination and National Curriculum requirements, which they share profitably with their classes. Pupils learn well in thoroughly planned, well-focused and energetically delivered lessons reflecting the youthful age profile of the department. Well-established routines used to introduce lessons enable pupils to practise vocabulary and idiomatic speech. Bright classroom displays of finished, illustrated writing show teachers' strong emphasis on creativity, literacy and numeracy. Insufficient pupils' work is as yet produced on computers. Teachers' expectations of pupils of all ages and abilities are high in both French and German, and pupils' positive, vigorous response is evident in most lessons. Pupils learn particularly well on the frequent occasions when teachers introduce new language through games, competitions or independent activities. Those with special educational needs or having English as an additional language are well included, especially when they get extra attention in smaller sets. Teachers manage pupils well, presenting short varied activities that sustain their interest and keep them busy. The mood of classes can change quickly from hilarity to studious application as teachers exploit newly introduced topics through written work. Occasionally, despite the teachers' best efforts, banal GCSE topics such as school uniform lose the interest and involvement of some older boys. In many classes teachers do not provide sufficiently for talented linguists or those who finish work fast. Teachers assess their pupils' work thoroughly keeping them well informed of their attainment and progress, especially in classes preparing for external examinations. They prepare and follow up lessons with a regular programme of homework, usually making effective use of pupils' time.
190. The department is well led and is now very well managed through a concerted team effort involving new and established teaching staff. The recent appreciable rise in standards of attainment and the supportive learning environment in classrooms show the enthusiasm and flair of a regenerated language team. Documentation is good and subject to constant revision as new courses are introduced. There are very good formal and informal opportunities for young teachers to share ideas and responsibilities. The confidence and approval of the senior management is evident in its expansion of language provision and support for exchanges and visits in Europe. The department has rightly established as urgent priorities the improvement of examination results, especially those of boys, and better use of information and communication technology. They have the strong will and the capability to succeed.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- GCSE results in 2001 which were above average.
- Good teaching and learning.
- Very good use of information and communication technology when the ICT suite is available.

Areas for improvement

- Greater access to ICT facilities across year groups.
- Insufficient time allocation for GCSE classes.

191. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2001 showed boys attaining at the national average and girls well above, giving an overall result of a little above the national average. This agrees broadly with inspection findings and represents good

achievement from a position of below average attainment in music on entry to the school. However, teacher assessments are subjective and not subject to standardisation and moderation, and should therefore be interpreted with caution.

192. The proportion of candidates obtaining grades A*-C in GCSE in 2001 was above the national average, and A*-G grades were also above average. This represented good achievement by the 19 students who followed the course.
193. In work seen during the inspection standards at the end of Year 9 are average. Pupils know and understand how to compose simple pieces making effective use of common devices such as repetition, ostinato (a musical phrase which is repeated many times, forming a basis for a piece), contrasts of pitch and contrasts of timbre (types of instrumental or vocal sounds). They can play keyboards, locating the notes from notation. Pupils gain familiarity with ICT programs such as 'Sibelius,' (a magical computer program which can make writing music seem as easy as using a word processor). They are acquainted with an appropriate range of musical styles and the work of representative composers.
194. In work seen during the inspection, standards by the end of Year 11 are average. Performance and composing skills are reasonably well developed given that only three lessons a week are available to study GCSE music, but knowledge of composers, musical styles and the elements of music need further development. For example, only one student in the Year 11 class recognised correctly a piece of music from the Romantic period.
195. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers have very good knowledge and understanding, and musical skills are evident, for instance in the well thought out worksheets which lead pupils step by step through activities in a way that facilitates good learning. They plan the lessons and manage the pupils well. ICT is being very well used, although eye contact with pupils when they are all sitting behind computer screens and the teacher wants to show pupils something on the board can be difficult. While it is well used it is unfortunately the case that, because of the pressure of use on the ICT suite, the provision is uneven. It means, for example, that some classes in Year 9 gain experience of musical ICT, but others do not, giving rise to concern about how those who do not can make comparable progress. The quality of learning at all stages is good. Pupils are well behaved and well-planned lessons engage the pupils' interest. For example, Year 8 made good progress using basic chords in class performances of 'In the Mood' because the tasks were clearly understood and pupils enjoyed the tune. Pupils have positive attitudes to the subject and there is a reasonable take up for GCSE. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, for example in a Year 7 lesson when learning to compose melodies by steps and leaps, but using a simplified letter notation to write down their ideas.
196. The leadership and management of the department are good. There is good documentation and procedures for assessment of pupils' work. Teachers take advantage of training to keep abreast of new developments such as the introduction of new examination courses.
197. Recent GCSE results have been good. Teachers show great commitment in running musical groups such as the band and choir, and musical events such as the steel band concerts are well received and appreciated by the community. The school band was observed working on a piece entitled 'Metal Merchant' and made good progress as a result of crisp direction and good evaluative commentary by the conductor. The instrumental teaching scheme is well organised.

198. Improvement since the last inspection has been good taking teaching, attainment and examination results forward significantly.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- GCSE results have improved and current Year 11 pupils are above average.
- Good planning with a logical progression of tasks and high expectations of behaviour.
- Very good target setting for GCSE, which gives pupils a clear picture of their standard at all times and what they need to do for further improvement.
- Exceptionally well-motivated pupils who adhere readily to the well-established code of conduct.
- The quality and range of extra-curricular activities is very good and pupils achieve well at local, county and national levels. The quality of dance performance is very good.

Areas for improvement

- There are some inconsistencies between teachers in the quality of marking, report writing and sanctions for pupils who do not have the correct kit.
- Aspects of planning to meet the objectives of the GCSE dance theory course.
- A central office which would enable teachers to easily access records, resources and policies as well as aid daily discussions and the sharing of good practice.
- Boys do not have the same opportunity as girls to study dance in Years 8 and 9.

199. GCSE results were average for physical education in 2001 and 2000. Pupils' achievement and progress were good and they attained better results than in their other subjects. Boys achieve particularly well and were well above the national average at A*-A grades.

200. The standard of work of pupils in Year 11 currently studying GCSE physical education is above average in both practical and theoretical aspects. This represents very good achievement relative to when they began the course in Year 10. They have a good depth of knowledge and are able to make logical links between their practical performance and aspects of theory. For example, they effectively plan their own fitness programmes to improve their agility, stamina, strength and endurance in their chosen sport. The pupils achieving the highest standards use technical language confidently when writing and speaking. They write fluently and reflect sensitively on topics such as discrimination in sport and show respect for beliefs and values of other cultures. Lower attaining pupils have a satisfactory grasp of key points but require additional help to structure their written answers. The pupils' high levels of motivation and independence have a strong impact on the quality of their work and learning.

201. GCSE results in dance have been below average, but the overall standard of work of girls in Year 11 studying GCSE dance is average. Their practical performance is above average but their knowledge of theoretical aspects is below average. Overall their achievement is good relative to their ability, especially in practical work. Their dances show technical control, good use of levels, change of speed and good interpretation of mood through the dynamics of their movements. They are able to effectively apply principles of choreography and show influences of other cultures and eras. A minority of girls have a good depth of knowledge. They use technical vocabulary accurately when describing types of movement. Generally the majority have insufficient recall of

facts and find it difficult to link what they have learnt in practice to theory. Their listening skills are weak and require constant repetition to ensure they answer questions accurately.

202. The standards of work of pupils in non-examination classes in Year 11 lessons are average. A significant minority are above average. Their depth of knowledge, refinement of skill from Year 9 and high levels of independence in their learning contribute to good levels of achievement for all pupils. They apply strategies and tactics with increasing thought and accuracy. In football the boys show accuracy when passing and are able to use one and two touch effectively. The players off the ball adapt their positions to make themselves more readily available to receive it. The girls understand the technical detail of a variety of shots in badminton, but are not always consistent in their ability to play each shot accurately. They still play with a square stance and are slower to anticipate the flight of the shuttle.
203. The standards of work of pupils in Year 9 are average. Again a significant minority are above average. All pupils achieve well relative to their ability. The vast majority have a good understanding of rules and tactics in games such as netball, volleyball, football and hockey. Even if their skill level is limited they have a good understanding of what needs to be done to improve. For example in a lower set boys' gymnastics lesson, the level of skill was below average but they made satisfactory progress in their partner work through their understanding of words such as body tension, sequence and trust. They had increasing confidence to try new balances with a greater degree of difficulty. In an upper set girls' hockey lesson the pupils were able to plan and practise tactics and strategies and transfer them into a game situation. All pupils know how to warm up effectively before taking part in physical activities and understand the importance of exercise for a healthy lifestyle. Pupils with special educational needs at all stages achieve well relative to their ability.
204. Teaching is good overall, and pupils learn well as a result. There is a significant proportion of very good teaching and this is found particularly in physical education GCSE lessons. The teachers have high expectations of the pupils' attitudes and behaviour in lessons. They set tasks that require the pupils to be independent and take responsibility for their own learning. A good example of this was seen in the fitness training module. Assessment and target setting is thorough. Homework and classwork are marked regularly and a well-designed progress sheet indicates each individual's areas for improvement and how to achieve their expected grade. The quality of marking by some teachers is very good but the best practice is not shared between teachers. The structure of the dance theory course is not so effective. Pupils are not told of their areas of weakness sufficiently early and marking does not always inform them of what they need to do to improve. Lower attaining pupils do not have sufficient help to focus on key words or how to structure their answers. The teachers' subject knowledge of the practical module is good. Demonstration is used effectively to illustrate correct technique and helps the pupils to improve their work.
205. The teachers always let the pupils know what they will be expected to do by the end of the lesson. Their expectations of high standards of work are nearly always consistent and they continually encourage them to strive for better performance appropriately related to their ability. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated into lessons. For example a sixth form student was able to effectively help some girls with limited co-ordination skills in a Year 8 dance lesson. Not only did they gain greater confidence but also made good improvements in learning the hand jive. Those with potential behavioural difficulties are exceptionally well motivated to improve their skills. The teachers use a variety of methods that are successful in developing practical,

evaluative and planning skills. A good example of this was seen in a Year 9 netball lesson where the pupils had to organise themselves in a complex practice and comment on each other's performance. This immediately resulted in improved ball skills and greater understanding of defensive tactics. Question and answer sessions are used effectively to assess the pupils' knowledge and to provoke thought. The pupils in Years 7 to 9 are not yet aware of the newly introduced National Curriculum levels but have a good knowledge of their own individual learning. The teachers are good role models for their pupils and create a caring, challenging and effective learning environment. As a result the pupils behave well and adhere to the established code of conduct.

206. The mutual respect and shared enthusiasm between the teachers and the pupils make a considerable impact on the quality of work. This is especially evident in the popular extra-curricular programme where pupils enjoy team and individual success at local, county and national levels in sports such as volleyball, cricket, acrobatic gymnastics, football and netball. The pupils are currently preparing for a dance performance. They show commendable commitment and practise every lunchtime in order to refine their dances. Too few boys are involved in this production and this may reflect that they have less opportunity to study dance than the girls. Their only experience is in Year 7 whilst the girls have lessons in Years 7, 8 and 9. Many of the pupils take part in a diverse range of activities outside of school and the department actively promotes links with clubs in the community.
207. Leadership and management of the department are good. There have been good improvements since the previous inspection. The quality of teaching has improved resulting in improved standards and attitudes. Recent new leadership of the department has effectively highlighted areas for further improvement and considerable work has been done to prepare the school for Sports College status, Sports Mark Gold award and a Sports Development role. New assessment procedures are having a positive impact particularly at GCSE. The department currently has separate male and female offices. A central office could enable teachers to easily access records, resources and policies as well as aid daily discussions and the sharing of good practice, for example in ensuring that teachers use the same sanctions for disciplining pupils who forget their kit. Monitoring of teaching is beginning to have an effect on consistency in approach but has not yet extended to ensuring that all reports to parents are of the same quality. The lack of a permanent base for theoretical lessons creates difficulties in establishing a subject-stimulating environment and also for the transportation of resources.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Project work in Year 8 is beginning to involve pupils in some innovative use of the library.

Areas for development.

- Standards of achievement and the overall quality of teaching.
- The provision for pupils who have special educational needs.
- The quality and use of resources.
- Additional time in Years 10 and 11 so that the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus can be fully implemented. Currently it is about half that recommended.

208. There were no entries for GCSE in 2001.

209. By the end of Year 9, standards are well below the level set out in the locally agreed syllabus. In Years 7 and 8, pupils are developing a factual knowledge of the main beliefs and practices of a number of religions but this knowledge lacks depth and is not sufficiently reinforced in Year 9. Consequently much that they have learnt is forgotten. They have a shallow factual knowledge with limited understanding of the deeper significance of religious language and symbolism. They are unable to make the links between a range of religious expressions and beliefs and have limited skills of evaluation. They appreciate the important role that religion plays in helping people find meaning and purpose in life, but do not fully understand the significance of religious faith in making moral decisions. A Year 9 group has been considering the question of abortion but their views reflect a very subjective understanding of the problem and do not demonstrate a deeper understanding of the important religious issues involved.

210. Progress for pupils of average and above average attainment is unsatisfactory. Progress for lower attainers and pupils with special educational needs is poor. For example, Year 8 pupils have recently been completing projects on both Hinduism and Judaism. These contain a great amount of detail that is simply copied from books or downloaded from computers. Pupils have little understanding of the information they have obtained. Pupils with special educational needs could not read what they had copied. Whilst most pupils are sensitive to the beliefs and lifestyle of others their lack of knowledge restricts their ability to explore questions of meaning and purpose.

211. The above picture is repeated in the general religious education classes in Years 10 and 11. Pupils have a very low level of general knowledge of religious language, concepts and beliefs. Their work showed that they are able to examine social and moral issues but their ability to bring to bear any religious analysis is limited by their lack of a firm base of religious knowledge. Much of it is again based upon a subjective point of view. Their knowledge of festivals and ceremonies and such things as rites of passage is limited. Year 11 pupils had difficulty in describing any significant religious customs and beliefs. Progress in general religious education classes is poor.

212. A group of pupils are taking the subject for the GCSE examination in both Years 10 and 11. In a year 10 group the higher attainers do not have a strong base of knowledge and understanding. They lacked the skills of evaluation and synthesis that are required to achieve good grades. Their current level of work is well below that which it should be for pupils of their ability. A Year 10 group examining the traditional arguments for the existence of God could not really understand the language used. The lower attainers and pupils with special educational needs in this group could not access the materials used and had virtually no understanding of the work being done. Progress in current GCSE classes is poor.

213. There is a very wide range of both ability and attitudes in the Year 11 group. The lessons are constantly disrupted by the behaviour of a significant number of pupils in the group. As a result, those pupils with ability are not making the progress that they

should be making. The level of work seen is well below that required for pupils at this stage in the course and they are unlikely to achieve the grades that they should be achieving. In a discussion, pupils were unable to describe the Christian teaching on such matters as contraception and had limited understanding of basic Christian beliefs and practices. Their knowledge of Buddhism is slightly better. By now they should be well on the way to completing coursework but this was not in evidence during the inspection.

214. There is considerable variation in the quality of teaching but the overall picture is unsatisfactory. One good lesson was observed on Buddhism, which was taught by a non-specialist. This was due to the professional experience of the teacher who, despite a lack of resources, clear guidance and support, was using her experience in teaching well. The lesson proceeded at a good pace with a variety of teaching styles being used to challenge and involve the pupils. In over one third of the lessons the absence of a specialist religious education teacher is being covered by a temporary supply teacher. This teacher who has come into school at a difficult time and with limited resources is admirably 'holding the fort' but a lack of experience and limited understanding of recent developments in religious education mean that lessons lack vigour and pace.
215. The teaching of basic literacy is unsatisfactory. There is no emphasis on key words and although writing frames are in evidence they are not effectively used to support learning. In a significant number of lessons observed the management of classroom relationships was unsatisfactory. In these lessons there was considerable resentment and frustration resulting in disruptive behaviour. Time that should have been focused on learning was taken up with resolving discipline issues. Consequently lessons lacked pace and challenge. Teachers did not control group discussions well with pupils failed to listen well, frequently talking over each other and the teacher. Question and answer sessions deteriorated into chaos.
216. Teachers use a number of learning strategies. Audio visual aids are frequently used. Innovative use of library facilities has started with project work in Year 8. A shortage of modern colourful textbooks means that there is an over-reliance on worksheets which, although well produced, do not address the needs of lower attaining pupils.
217. Marking is unsatisfactory. In the Year 11 examination group, pupils' books have not been marked since September. The collection, co-ordination and marking of course work in the examination groups are a cause for concern. Homework was set during the inspection but pupils' books contain very little evidence of this being regularly done. What is done is not marked.
218. There is a general lack of interest and enthusiasm from the pupils. The written work produced suggests that pupils do not take a pride in their work. It is characterised by poor standards of presentation and low standards of literacy. Pupils complain of uninteresting lessons and lack of teacher control.
219. The school does not allocate sufficient time to the subject in Years 10 and 11. This shortage of time is compounded by the current 'carousel' system in which ICT and religious education rotate. This does have an effect upon standards with insufficient time available to cover the requirements of the agreed syllabus.
220. The overall management of the subject is unsatisfactory. A legacy of poor resources, staffing problems, lack of clear organisation and poor decision making has meant that the subject has been experiencing problems for some time. The recently appointed subject leader, who has brought some structure into the syllabus especially in Years 10

and 11, has a good understanding of the way that the subject should develop but lacks the experience, both in the classroom and in the management of the subject, to bring this into being. Despite spending a considerable amount of time preparing worksheets and lesson plans the subject leader is finding it difficult to take the subject forward. Progress since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory.

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

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2001.

GCE AS-level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	1	0	72	0	33	0	2.3
Chemistry	8	87	87	25	43	2.3	2.9
Biology	14	71	85	14	36	2.1	2.6
Physics	12	58	87	16	42	1.6	2.8
Environmental science	4	100	N/a	0	N/a	1.7	N/a
Design and technology: graphics	9	66	N/a	0	N/a	1.1	N/a
Business studies	8	62	88	0	29.4	1.0	N/a
Music	3	100	94	0	44	3.0	3.1
Theatre studies	6	100	N/a	50	N/a	3.3	N/a
Geography	28	64	91	7	40	1.3	2.9
History	11	100	94	36	43	3.9	3.1
Religious studies	10	70	92	10	42	1.4	3.0
English	17	88	96	0	28	1.3	2.9
French	6	66	90	0	45	1.3	3.0
German	3	100	91	33	42	3	3.0
General studies	9	89	82	22	27	2.1	N/a

GCE A-level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	5	40	87	20	43	2.4	5.8
Chemistry	1	100	90	0	43	6	5.9
Biology	3	100	88	0	34	4.6	5.2
Physics	1	100	88	100	40	8	5.6
Environmental science	5	60	N/a	20	N/a	2.8	N/a
Design and technology	5	80	91	40	30	4.8	5.3
Business studies	2	100	92	0	32	4.0	5.5
Travel and tourism	3	100	N/a	0	N/a	4	N/a
Theatre studies	5	80	N/a	20	N/a	4	N/a
Art	5	80	96	60	46	6.8	6.5
Geography	7	57	92	14	38	2.5	5.7
History	2	100	88	0	35	5	5.4
English	9	100	95	33.3	37	4.9	5.9
French	2	50	89	0	38	1	5.5
German	1	100	91	0	40	4	5.8
General studies	8	88	85	25	30	4.7	4.9

Intermediate vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		Average point distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
GNVQ Leisure and Tourism	6	66	N/a	16.6	N/a	N/a	N/a
Business	5	80	N/a	20	N/a	N/a	N/a

N/a Not available

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The focus was on mathematics and chemistry and lessons in other sciences were sampled.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Good teaching based on secure subject knowledge.
- Very good relationships between students and teachers.
- Students enjoy their work in mathematics.
- Good use of assessment data to monitor progress and set targets.
- Effective leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

- Achievement at AS- and A-level.
- Extending the range of teaching strategies for supporting small groups of students.
- Improving students' independence and confidence in their own abilities.
- Continuing to develop ICT resources to support teaching in the classroom.

221. Results at A-level were well below average in 2000 and 2001. Entry numbers have been small with only five candidates in 2001. Students' achievement and progress in relation to their earlier results were unsatisfactory, illustrated most clearly by the fact that two candidates who had A grade passes at GCSE did not even manage to attain an A-E grade in their advanced level examinations. Results at A-level have fluctuated in the last four years with the best results in 1998, when they were average.
222. There was only one candidate who completed AS-level studies in 2001, who was ungraded, but numbers have increased with seven students on the current course.
223. Students following the AS-level course are attaining at least average standards and are making satisfactory progress in relation to the grades which they attained at GCSE. Teaching has taken stock of the need to raise standards. In Year 12 there is a good emphasis on developing algebra with students coping well with complex expressions and equations. In students' files some work in calculus looking at maxima and minima is of an appropriate standard and in class, students cope well with the theory of integration as a process of summation and a means of finding the area under a curve. In a Year 12 mechanics lesson there was good understanding of the basic concepts of a projectile launched horizontally, with students working well on the initial examples. However, later in the lesson they showed little confidence in applying the basic theory to more complex problems.
224. The standards being attained by students currently on the A-level course in Year 13 are at least average. Students' algebraic skills and their ability to analyse are well developed with some good work in their files on polynomials and inequalities and in differentiation and integration. Work on turning points, points of inflexion and stationary values confirms a sound knowledge of underlying concepts. In a Year 13 pure mathematics lesson, however, students needed a great deal of support to cope with implicit differentiation and work on examples was handled with little confidence,

suggesting some serious shortcomings in basic understanding. Much of the work in students' files is well presented with some excellent graphical work.

225. Teaching is good and has improved since the last inspection. All the teaching seen was good or better. Teachers have good subject knowledge and teach with confidence, checking students' understanding throughout the lesson. Relationships between students and teachers are very good and students respond well to a combination of support and challenge. A Year 12 pure mathematics lesson looking at integration as a process of summation was largely developed through a series of questions that tested and extended students' knowledge of previous work. The teaching style generated enthusiasm and students were confident in coming to the front of the class to explain their ideas. Lessons are well prepared with clear objectives that are shared profitably with students. Teachers have good detailed knowledge of their students and their strengths and weaknesses and monitor their progress well. Groups are small and individual support from teachers can be very effective in meeting the different needs of students. In a Year 13 applied mathematics lesson looking at motion in a circle and investigating acceleration the teacher was aware of those students who were also studying physics and drew on their practical experience to relate theory to practice for the whole class. In some classes the small student numbers and a lack of variety in the activities limits students' contributions to the lesson and they can become over dependent on the teacher for support. As a result they often do not display the confidence they should, particularly in tackling new problems, given their abilities.
226. Day-to-day management of the work in the sixth form is good. Courses are well planned and effectively managed and there is a determination to raise standards. There are detailed schemes of work with clear objectives and assessment strategies that are shared with students. Students' progress is regularly assessed and monitored against their expected level of performance. Teachers monitor attendance and punctuality carefully and work is marked regularly and returned promptly. There is, however, a need for a clearer long-term strategy to deal with small groups of students, the low aspirations of some of these students and their limited confidence in applying their knowledge in new situations, to improve achievement at AS- and A-level. Teachers are aware of students' skills in ICT and this is well used to reinforce and extend their understanding but there is currently no computers and linked projection facilities to support teaching in the classroom.

SCIENCES

227. The focus was on chemistry, but biology, environmental science and physics were also sampled.
228. AS-level results in biology were below average at grades A-E and A-B in 2001 and were pulled down by four of the fourteen candidates being ungraded. At the other end of the scale two candidates were successful at grade A. Almost half the number of candidates, however, did not make the expected progress by the end of Year 12.
229. There were only three candidates in 2001 at A-level in biology. All three succeeded at A-E grades but there were no A-B grades. Achievement in relation to earlier GCSE results was unsatisfactory. In the last four years the combined total of candidates has only been 15. All attained an A-E grade over that period but the last time a high grade (B) was achieved was in 1999.
230. Five students studied environmental science at A-level in 2001 and three passed at A-E grades.

231. In physics, AS-level results were below average in 2001 at grades A-E and A-B. Two of the twelve candidates attained an A grade but five candidates were ungraded. At A-level there was only one candidate in physics in 2001 who made satisfactory progress to achieve a B grade.
232. Three lessons were observed in biology and two in physics across the years, and one Year 13 environmental science class. Teaching was mostly good. Students in a Year 13 biology class capably extended their computer skills using the Internet because their teacher clearly understood their need to refine research skills. In another lesson, a teacher's wide subject knowledge was used effectively in taking ideas forward in considering ethical implications of genetic screening. The good attitudes of students in these lessons helped their progress. On the other hand, progress was hampered in a Year 12 class when students had to be admonished because of lack of homework and their tardy preparation slowed down a dissection. Keen students consolidated what they knew about the heart, and those who had difficulty were very well supported by their teacher in sharpening observations of valves. However, obvious gaps in knowledge of the structure of the heart, usually dealt with in Year 11, were noticeable.
233. Whilst determining the specific heat capacity of copper using an electrical method in a physics lesson, certain students were quickly aware of limitations and identified key sources of errors. Other students had difficulty in explaining the problem technically and in depth. Where misconceptions occur in learning physics, they are often because of deficiencies in numeracy.

Chemistry

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

Strengths

- Teachers' enthusiasm and the quality of their relationships with students.
- Good use of assessment information to check progress and set targets.
- Marking of students' work which contains helpful written comments.

Areas for improvement

- Standards at AS- and A-level.
- More rigorous intellectual challenge and application.
- Students' skills of analysis, evaluation and argument and wider opportunities for independent learning.
- Improved self-esteem, confidence and commitment in students' approach to learning.

234. AS-level results in 2001, with eight candidates, were average at grades A-E but were below average at grades A-B despite two candidates attaining A grades. In relation to earlier results, students' achievement and progress were unsatisfactory.
235. At A-level there have only been 13 candidates in the last four years but eleven have been successful at A-E grades. There were only two candidates in 2001 at A-level, both of whom achieved satisfactorily in relation to their GCSE results, in attaining C grades.
236. Standards of work of current Year 13 students are average. Year 13 teacher assessments for chemistry, so far, show that all students should pass the examination, and two are predicted to attain A grades. This represents very good effort and progress all round.

237. In a well-planned lesson, Year 13 students who were competent at titration in their practical work, ably investigated the kinetics of the reaction between iodine and propanone in acid solution. Where they had difficulties, identifying which key concentration should be measured, they were effectively supported by their teacher and therefore progressed well. Two higher attainers having completed the task more quickly, tended to 'coast' and needed more demanding activities. Although lower attainers energetically collected data, they were less capable of analysing and interpreting results. By the end of another lesson, all the students knew far more about the equilibrium law than they did beforehand because of the excellent learning atmosphere their teacher established through striking subject expertise, nimble explanations and constant encouragement in handling complex calculations. They responded equally enthusiastically and worked hard in increasing their understanding about equilibrium in chemical reactions.
238. Current attainment, overall in Year 12 is average across grades A-E and below average at grades A-B. Progress since Year 11 is satisfactory for the majority but hampered by students' low esteem and poor attendance by some students. They build on work done before about inorganic chemistry more successfully than moving on to learning about organic chemistry. However, they made good strides in understanding reactions of alkanes because of their teacher's good explanations, skilled questioning and good use of humour. Students were ready and willing to listen to the explanations but on the whole they need to be more involved in lessons.
239. Analysis of work highlighted variations in the organisation of files and quality of note taking which affect the quality of students' reflection and achievement. There is a need to practise distilling ideas from references to make succinct notes. The very best work makes hypotheses explicit, uses evidence well and chooses relevant information in support of ideas, for example in finding the enthalpy of combustion in a series of alcohols. There is good use of analytical statistical method in this work, to calculate equations, although certain statements lack justification. Evaluations, however, are detailed and refer to fundamental ideas about chemistry. A significant number of students have difficulty clearly justifying the methods they use, analysis is limited and evaluations poor. They find it difficult to apply scientific laws in support of hypotheses. There is scope for more practice in investigative methods early on.
240. There is much strength in teaching which is good overall, with notable examples of excellent features, all reflected in students' learning. The best teaching has high expectations of what students are capable of achieving. Very good knowledge of chemistry is illustrated in perceptive questions and interesting explanations. Students occasionally 'sit back' and listen at the expense of being more fully involved in an exchange of ideas. However, the close rapport students have with their teachers substantially helps them understand difficult work. This was noticeable in a discussion about how equilibrium could be calculated in an experiment about hydrolysing ethyl ethanoate. Good understanding occurred because the teacher made sure that each student came to a conclusion after sorting out tantalising calculations. All made very good progress because the teacher was fully aware of possible misconceptions and took steps to prevent these happening. Marking of students' work contains comments that are very helpful to them in their learning.
241. The subject is well led and managed within a close team, which has a positive effect upon the rate of students' learning. Teachers share ideas and teaching methods and support each other well. The subject is benefiting substantially from analysis of performance undertaken by the science department. Good use is being made of

assessment information to check the progress of individual students and to set them targets. Access to computers has considerably improved since the last inspection. Students are strongly critical, however, of the fact that a large proportion of their lessons take place in classrooms and not in laboratories. The curriculum is not overly enriched by additional activities or visitors to the department, although students have visited the Royal Ordnance Centre to observe infra-red and X-ray crystallography.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

242. Design and technology was sampled in the sixth form with two lessons observed. Over time, results at A-level with small numbers are above average. In 2001, results in design and technology at AS-level were below average. Teaching was good in the two lessons observed and led to students gaining a good understanding of product design, development and manufacture, with students meeting their potential. In a Year 13 lesson the teaching style was well matched to the needs of the very small class with students well supported as they worked on individual projects. Their work shows evidence of good use of ICT.

BUSINESS

243. Business and economics was sampled at AS-level with one lesson observed. In that lesson, students were making good progress in beginning to come to terms with the complexities of balance sheets and attaining satisfactorily. Where they understandably had difficulties with some of the terminology and concepts used, teaching was understanding but at the same time students were made clear of what was expected of them. They were very comfortable with the teacher's approach and style. The teacher with very recent experience of a senior position in banking was understandably confident in handling the topic and this showed to very good effect in the explanations given. In 2001 there were eight candidates for AS-level economics with five successful at A-E grades but three students were ungraded.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

244. The focus of the inspection was on physical education, and the Intermediate GNVQ Leisure and Tourism and AVCE Travel and Tourism courses were also sampled. Results in 2001 in the single award and in the Intermediate GNVQ were average. Teaching is at least satisfactory and at times good. In the Year 12 Intermediate group, students are achieving well in relation to their attainment at GCSE. They are making good progress in developing independent research skills including in the use of ICT. This was seen in a lesson dealing with social, environmental and economic issues in connection with three tourist destinations, helped by students' excellent attitudes. Year 13 AVCE single award students are achieving in a satisfactory manner and attainment is similar to the national average. In 2001 all three candidates were successful at grades A-E but none at A-B.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Practical performance of the students.
- Good relationships creating a supportive environment.
- Commitment of the students to helping in younger pupils' lessons and clubs.

Areas for improvement

- The range of activities in order to stimulate more independent learning.
- The match of lesson content and teaching styles to meet current students' needs and capabilities.
- The variety of activities and opportunities for all to pursue the Community Sports Leader Award.

245. The achievement of students currently following the newly introduced AS-level course is unsatisfactory. Whilst two students are working to course expectations, the majority of students are below average, are not meeting AS-level requirements. A particular strength of the more able students is their ability to link physical performance with theoretical aspects. They are able to research topics and contribute satisfactorily to class discussions. In homework assignments most students do not show a depth of understanding and their notes are limited. Students do not have the study skills or attitudes required for independent learning and lack the knowledge and confidence to contribute to class discussions.
246. A particularly positive feature in the sixth form is the students' commitment to helping in younger pupils' lessons and clubs and which reflects the importance which teachers place on developing good relationships and support. They give valuable help for the less able and add depth when coaching extra-curricular activities. There is an optional programme of activities for all pupils in the sixth form where the range of activities at present is limited but students achieve good standards in badminton and football. Two girls seen learning to play squash require additional coaching support to progress further. A Community Sports Leader Award is offered but as an extra-curricular activity. This results in less students opting for the course than if it was built into the subject timetable.
247. Over time the quality of teaching and learning have been unsatisfactory as students are not reaching the standards of which they are capable of achieving. At the inspection teaching was satisfactory overall in the lessons observed with teaching ranging from unsatisfactory to good. There was evidence that teaching is beginning to address some of the weaknesses in provision and that teachers have the necessary skills to bring about the improvements needed. The most effective teaching involves interesting explanation of facts reflecting the teachers' good subject knowledge. An example of this was seen in a skill acquisition lesson where the teacher used a practical experiment to highlight factors that affect learning. The students could relate to this and grasped the concept more easily. At present there are too few teaching strategies to develop students' theoretical understanding or to stimulate independent study. The lower attaining students struggle with technical vocabulary and the more able are not fully extended. Many of the students are unwilling to do the extra study that is required and this is having a detrimental impact on their learning despite the encouragement and support of teachers. Homework assignments are marked regularly and constructively and notes are checked for completion but targets set are not always appropriate for individual student's level of attainment. ICT skills could be used more effectively within the teaching programme to stimulate a greater variety of response. The permanent base for theoretical lessons creates a more subject-stimulating environment but does not have a storage area for resources which is an inconvenience for teaching.
248. Leadership and management of the department is satisfactory, but there have been weaknesses in the planning of the AS-level programme, with teachers and the school being carried away by their own enthusiasm in wanting to introduce the course as early as possible. Assessment procedures are satisfactory but the data has not been used effectively to recognise weaknesses in teaching strategies. The teething problems

which the department is having with the introduction of the new AS-level course should not detract from the overall strength of the provision of physical education in the school as a whole, and its worthy and ambitious plans to build on this further in applying for Sports College Status. In addition looking to the future development of the AS-level course, the school has correctly identified that there are pupils currently in Year 11 following a GCSE course who have the skills and ability to be particularly successful at AS-level.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

249. Art, music and theatre studies were sampled during the inspection. Two lessons were observed in art, three in music and two in drama.
250. A-level results in art have been above average over time but national comparisons in any one year are difficult with small numbers. There were only five candidates in 2001 but three were successful in attaining the top A grade which represented very good achievement and progress in relation to earlier results. In the lesson seen with Year 13, teaching was good. Students were attaining above average standards and were being effectively encouraged to develop their ideas by making large scale observation drawings. The standard of work of those currently in Year 12 is above average and drawings made in preparation for the food project were large, experimental and provided a good basis for further development. This was seen clearly in the work of one student making paintings based on the people eating food at a party. Currently students in Year 12 are meeting or exceeding their potential. Good teaching is based on good underlying methodology with an appropriate emphasis on the development of ideas through observation drawing.
251. At AS-level in 2001 all three candidates in music were successful at grade C. There were no candidates at A-level in 2001 and a total of only five candidates in the three previous years, four of whom were successful at grades A-E, and one at A-B in 2000. In the three lessons observed, teaching was good overall and in one, very good teaching included the analysis of part of Brahms' piano quintet, providing insights into the development of themes. This gave students a good understanding of the technique which was later applied successfully in their own compositions.
252. In the A-level theatre studies course in 2001 three of the five candidates were successful at grades A-E with one attaining a B grade. Achievement in relation to their prior attainment was very good for three candidates, but one student underachieved in only nearly passing in the subject. Most candidates in theatre studies have been successful at A-level over time and have achieved very well. The 2001 AS-level results in theatre studies were above average with all six candidates successful and five of the six candidates awarded A-B grades. These AS results represented very good achievement for the students concerned.
253. The standards of work seen with sixth form students in theatre studies during the course of the inspection were average. The four female students in the current Year 12 are achieving well, as are the two students in Year 13. Students in Year 12 following the AS-level course are being stretched in order to be successful in the examinations. A mixture of encouragement and setting the right targets and strict deadlines by teachers is having the right effect in raising students' aspirations and self-belief. This was seen when students were undertaking acting and directing roles. Teaching is very good, very professional and a great asset to the school.

HUMANITIES

254. The focus of the inspection was on geography, and history and religious education were sampled.
255. Two lessons were seen in history. Results in history in A-level examinations over the past three years have improved but numbers opting for the subject are low. In 2001 there were only two candidates with one attaining a C grade and the other a D grade. Results at AS-level in history in 2001 were above average. All eleven pupils entered achieved a pass grade with four students achieving the higher A or B grades. These results represented very good achievement for this group of pupils and compare very favourably with student performance in other subjects in the school. The successful introduction of AS-level is the result of the very good teaching and the commitment of pupils.
256. There are now increased numbers of pupils opting for history. Observation of lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work confirm that standards in the current Year 12 are equally as good as those indicated by the AS-level results in 2001. Year 12 pupils demonstrate a good ability to explain historical processes, such as the treatment of the Jews by the Nazi state, and to argue articulately about how they can be interpreted by historians. In Year 13 the four pupils who have continued with their study of history are maintaining the high standards they achieved at AS-level. They are committed to their work and are making good progress with their personal studies. Pupils in both years are able to analyse historical events critically such as their understanding of the use of the media by the Nazis for propaganda purposes.
257. Two lessons were seen in religious education. There were no candidates at A-level in 2001 but ten were entered for the AS-level examination. Of the ten candidates seven were successful at A-E grades, mostly at D-E grades, but three were ungraded. One candidate attained a B grade. The current standard of work in the sixth form is average. Students have a good grasp of the complex philosophical language and concepts being covered. A group studying the teaching of Bonhoeffer was able to write good essays and showed good research skills. Students' folders are well organised, with good standards of literacy and presentation. They use their private study time well. They make good use of ICT both in preparing their own work and in researching the subject. Students are on target to achieve their predicted grades.

Geography

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

Strengths.

- Teaching and learning are currently good with teachers having a very good subject knowledge and lessons having a clear structure.
- Students have positive attitudes and are developing independent learning skills.
- This is a forward looking department with a clear commitment and capacity to raise the recent low standards in the subject.

Areas for development

- Standards achieved by students.
- Monitoring of teaching and learning.
- The regular monitoring of students' progress.
- Guidance on the most appropriate course to meet students' individual aspirations and abilities.

258. Results at A-level in 2001 were well below the national average and they were below average in 2000. Numbers of candidates in 2001 were small. Only one of seven candidates attained a higher B grade and three candidates failed to achieve a grade. Several students underachieved in relation to their predicted grades based upon GCSE performance. One candidate was allowed to start the course with only a D grade at GCSE and was not surprisingly ungraded at AS-level. There has been a downward trend in results since the last inspection.
259. The AS-level examination results in 2001 were also well below the national average and, partially as a result of significant absence and some poor motivation of students, a great many underachieved. Of the 28 candidates, 18 attained a pass grade with two in the A-B category but ten candidates were ungraded.
260. The observation of students in lessons and an analysis of samples of their work confirm that the standards achieved by current AS- and A-level students have improved and are in line with the national average. This represents satisfactory achievement. Attainment is better than in 2000 and 2001 as a result of better student motivation, a keen analysis of the reasons for the well below average results and good teaching.
261. Students show a satisfactory knowledge of topics in both physical and human geography. In the AS-level groups, they are beginning to work with increasing confidence on their own, collecting data and forming satisfactory judgements from the data. This was seen in work exploring river processes on the Holford Brook in the Quantocks. Students are able to carry out enquiry tasks, for example researching social and economic problems associated with an increasingly ageing population in Great Britain. They are developing satisfactory communication and presentation skills. In the A-level course these skills are further developed. Good examples of independent learning skills were observed in lessons on the changing industrial nature of the British Isles and when examining the global importance of the growth of sustainable systems of development.
262. In both the AS- and A-level courses some students do find analysis and evaluation of data and texts difficult.
263. Overall teaching is good. Lessons have a clear structure and are well planned. Resources in the form of texts, teacher generated materials, computers and students' prior knowledge are used effectively. Teachers display very good subject knowledge both by what they say but also the ways in which they plan tasks to enable students to learn. Overall, marking is very thorough and good guidance is given to show students how they can improve their work. Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning in the vast majority of lessons. In a small proportion however teachers are over directive and this allows students to be less actively involved in their learning. Good use is made of case studies to develop research skills. This was seen when students were researching de-industrialisation in urban areas of Great Britain.
264. Students learn well. They are attentive and work well in response to the good quality teaching. They use resources well, particularly texts and the Internet to gather information. They enjoy the subject, particularly the practical independent learning and fieldwork assignments. They have developed good relationships with their peers and with teachers and both independent learning skills and oral and written communication improve across the two years in the sixth form.
265. There is satisfactory management and leadership of the subject. This is a forward looking department with a very clear commitment to raising recent low standards,

combined with a capacity to succeed. The hard working head of department and her team have improved the range of teaching strategies, and development planning has identified weaknesses and put forward appropriate strategies to raise standards. Time should be found to enable regular mentoring of individual students' progress as well as to extend the monitoring of teaching and learning. Improved guidance to students as to the most appropriate courses to follow post-16 and more rigorous procedures to ensure regular attendance by students are priorities for development. There are very good stocks of reference materials and attention is given to providing students with up-to-date information. Regular meetings enable teachers to compare their experiences of the new syllabi and help them to share best practice in teaching. As a result of the downward trend in results over recent years, improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

266. The focus was on English, and modern foreign languages were sampled; four lessons were seen, two in French and two in German.
267. Small numbers of students have entered for French and German at A-level in recent years, with below average results in both subjects. In French in 2001 only one of the two candidates passed and both underachieved in relation to their GCSE results. There was only one candidate in German who passed with a D grade having attained an A grade at GCSE.
268. At AS-level in 2001, only four out of six of the students entered for French attained a pass grade, the highest of these being C. In relation to their GCSE results students underachieved. In German, all three students gained pass grades, one attaining the higher grade B, but one noticeably underachieved in attaining an E grade having started the course with an A grade at GCSE.
269. Currently the few A-level students of French and German learn well in small groups and benefit from the close personal attention they receive in class. The less confident linguists usually learn well from the more able, and from excellent models of their teachers and the French language assistant, but a few are reticent about speaking. Achievement in relation to earlier standards is mostly good and standards are about average. Students base their essays on material drawn from authentic sources, occasionally researching their work on the Internet, but more usually referring to school publications. They take little advantage of opportunities to travel abroad with the school. Teaching in the sixth form is currently good and in line with the improved teaching in the department in the current academic year.

English

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

Strengths

- Most achieve satisfactorily in AS- and A-level examinations in relation to previous results.
- The achievement of students currently in Year 12 is good.
- The quality of the teaching which is predominantly good with particular strengths in subject knowledge and expectations.

Areas for improvement

- Continuing to improve current standards in Year 13.
- A greater proportion of higher grades in examinations.

270. In the 2001 A-level examinations all nine candidates passed at grades A-E. Students' achievement in relation to their previous GCSE results was satisfactory. Although there has been no difference in results of boys and girls in previous years, girls did much better than boys in 2001. The number of entries has declined from a high in 1998 and this has been accompanied by a fall in the number of students achieving at the highest level.
271. In the AS-level examinations in 2001, 15 of the 17 candidates passed at A-E grades. As most passed with D-E grades, results overall were below the national average but students achieved satisfactorily in relation to their earlier performance at GCSE.
272. Students currently in Year 12 are adapting well to the demands of the AS-level course and standards of work are average with students' achievement good. Students are thinking critically about the set texts and are developing an independent, personal response to what they are reading. They display good analytical skills and are able to support their views with relevant textual references. This was seen in a lesson studying 'A Clockwork Orange' where the students tracked the changes in the principal character's attitudes and explained the significance of the timescale involved. They shared ideas and responded to each other's ideas because they found the work challenging and enjoyable. It was also seen in a Year 12 lesson on Othello' where students were challenged to think critically about the forces driving the principal characters in the closing scene of the play. They understood the emotional conflicts underlying the tragedy and showed insight into the portrayal of those conflicts in clips from film productions of the play.
273. Students in a Year 13 A-level lesson demonstrated a good knowledge of Congreve's 'The Way of the World' and understood the significance of key scenes in the play and the unfolding relationship between the main characters. They were not as confident as Year 12, however, in developing their personal responses to the text and relied heavily on the teacher to lead them through the work. Although responsive to questions, they did not engage in discussion with each other and therefore there was not the dynamic of students exploring and exchanging ideas. Standards of work seen are, however, beginning to improve for this year group after staffing difficulties affected their first year on the course. This is because of the quality of the teaching and a growing confidence amongst the students themselves.
274. The quality of the teaching in the sixth form is predominantly good. The strengths lie in the teachers' knowledge and understanding of English literature and the methodology needed to stimulate students to give of their best. The quality of planning is also good, particularly in the careful structuring of lessons into increasingly demanding stages. Teachers have high expectations of their students and use questioning effectively to challenge and extend understanding and to encourage them to think analytically. There was pace and rigour in most of the lessons seen and the work was challenging.
275. Students display a mature attitude to their work and in Year 12 are beginning to respond well to the challenge of greater independence. These students are developing a personal response to literature and a critical approach in discussion which enables them to learn from each other. They annotate their own work and have note taking and research skills. In the lessons seen a small number of students were passive learners and contributed little in discussion. The aim should be to ensure that all are included in the interchange of ideas and learn from it.

276. The leadership and management of English in the sixth form are satisfactory. Curriculum planning is thorough and because teachers know their students well they adapt their teaching approach to take account of the wide range of student competencies. Teachers are committed to further improvements in provision and the raising of standards including a greater proportion of higher grades for the highest attainers.