

INSPECTION REPORT

WHITLEY BAY HIGH SCHOOL

Whitley Bay, Tyne and Wear

LEA area: North Tyneside

Unique reference number: 108638

Headteacher: Mr A Chedburn

Reporting inspector: Dr A R Beaver
20224

Dates of inspection: 4 – 7 February 2002

Inspection number: 191607

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

© Crown copyright 2002

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

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 13 to 18 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Deneholm
Whitley Bay
Tyne and Wear

Postcode: NE25 9AS

Telephone number: 0191 200 8800

Fax number: 0191 200 8803

Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr M Dennison

Date of previous inspection: 10 February 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities (sixth form)	Aspect responsibilities (sixth form)
20224	Dr A R Beaver	Registered inspector		<p>What sort of school is it?</p> <p>How high are standards?</p> <p>a) The school's results and achievements</p> <p>How well are students taught?</p> <p>How well is the school led and managed?</p> <p>What should the school do to improve further?</p>
19741	Dr T Smith	Lay inspector		<p>How high are standards?</p> <p>b) Students' attitudes, values and personal development</p> <p>How well does the school care for its students?</p> <p>How well does the school work in partnership with parents?</p>
20729	Mr J Berry	Team inspector	Biology Chemistry	
15079	Mr A Boys	Team inspector	Physics	
17015	Mr L Denholm	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
2458	Mr A Hamilton	Team inspector	Physical education Sociology	
27416	Mr T Howard	Team inspector	Mathematics	
1994	Ms H Olds	Team inspector	Geography History	
3731	Mr W Robson	Team inspector and sixth form inspection co-ordinator	Special educational needs English	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students?
10053	Ms J Simms	Team inspector	Art Business Health and Social Care	
31838	Mr M Williams	Team inspector	French Religious Studies	

The inspection contractor was:

Cambridge Education Associates Ltd
Demeter House
Station Road
Cambridge
CB1 2RS

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

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

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	7
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL	15
WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED	19
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	20
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	22
PART D: THE SIXTH FORM	27
RESULTS AND STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS	27
STUDENTS' ATTITUDES, VALUES AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT	28
TEACHING AND LEARNING	28
CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS	30
THE SCHOOL'S CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS	32
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS AND STUDENTS?	33
THE EFFECTIVENESS OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT IN THE SIXTH FORM	33
PART E: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM	37

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Whitley Bay High School's students come from the small town of Whitley Bay and neighbouring urban and rural areas. Currently, the proportion of students who claim free school meals is below average. The school is comprehensive and provides education for 1351 girls and boys aged 13 - 18, of whom 972 are in Years 9 to 11. The numbers of girls and boys in each year group are similar, but there are 26 more girls than boys in Year 9. The school is larger than most other secondary schools. It is popular and 160 more students are on roll than at the last inspection in 1997. The number of students who joined or left the school, other than at the usual ages of 13, 16 or above, is below average. Three per cent of students come from minority ethnic backgrounds, and the school is the choice of the Bangladeshi community of North Tyneside. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is a little higher than in most schools, but very few students are at an early stage in learning English. The percentage identified by the school as having special educational needs, including those with statements of special need, is well below average. These students have a wide range of learning needs, including a few with physical impairment. When students enter the school at age 13, their attainment spans the full range, but it is above average, overall.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good school. Students attain well above average standards at all ages. Teaching is good, and much of it is very good. The very good leadership of the headteacher, senior staff and governors has gained great respect from parents and the local community, because high standards have been consistently achieved, while major improvements to accommodation and learning resources have been very well managed. However, more improvement to accommodation and resources is needed. The school provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Students of all backgrounds and competence achieve well, and attain well above average standards.
- Very good leadership has improved educational provision and teachers' expertise and has the confidence of staff and parents to provide fair and equal access to learning for all.
- Teaching is good and much is very good, enabling students to learn very well.
- Students concentrate very well on their work and their behaviour is very good; relationships among students and between students and teachers are very good.
- The curriculum and extra-curricular activities give students very good learning opportunities.

What could be improved

- Accommodation.
- Learning resources, including those in the library.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the last inspection in February 1997, the school has greatly improved its educational provision. Teaching was largely satisfactory in 1997, but little was judged to be of higher quality. Now teaching is good, and much is very good, indicating the beneficial impact of monitoring, training and performance management on raising its quality. As a result, students' attainment at all ages has improved at the national rate, but at a level that has been consistently much higher than the national standard. Considerable progress has been made in managing the key issues of 1997. Teachers are now much more effective in adapting work for students of all levels of competence. Much work has been done to develop teachers' skills to ensure that students' needs in learning are met successfully. Particular needs have been defined and met - for example, for gifted and talented students. Clever students achieve high academic standards, as shown by the above average proportion of top grades gained in GCSE and A level examinations. Substantial improvements have been made to accommodation. The school has worked very hard to claim additional funds to ensure that the school's exterior surfaces are safe, and

substantial internal improvement has taken place, much is still progressing, and more still is needed. The library has been transformed and has greatly improved accommodation and resources to benefit students. However, further improvement is planned and needed. The issue to improve social and private study facilities for sixth form students has been well met, but more improvement is planned and much needed for a sixth form of this size. Leadership of the headteacher, staff and governors shows very good capacity to take the school even further forward.

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	A	A	A	A
A-levels/AS-levels	A	A	A	

Key	
very high	A*
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E
very low	E*

+Reference to similar schools is to those schools that contain a similar proportion of students who claim entitlement to free school meals. This is considered to be a valid indicator by which to compare schools with students of similar backgrounds. Reference to all schools indicates all secondary schools across the country. There are no similar school comparisons at A level.

From entry to the school in Year 9, girls and boys of all ethnic backgrounds and academic potential make very good progress and achieve well. In the National Curriculum tests, they have consistently attained well above average standards in the three subjects tested, English, mathematics and science, in comparison with all schools and with similar schools. This was the result in 2001.

In GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11, students regularly attain standards well above the average of all schools and of similar schools. In 2001, students attained well above average standards in the attainment of five or more grades A* to C. Almost all attain at least five or more grades A* to G. Although girls attain higher standards than boys, the difference is less than that which applies nationally. The rate of improvement in boys' performance has been a little above that of girls for the last three years. Students from minority ethnic backgrounds make good progress and achieve well, enabling them to proceed to higher courses at age 16, if they so choose. In the last three years, students did particularly well in comparison with their other subjects in business studies, design and technology, German, history and Latin. They did less well in geography and classical studies, although standards in these subjects were still at the national average.

In work seen during the inspection, in English, students wrote imaginative and descriptive pieces, with a good range of vocabulary. In mathematics, after one term of Year 9, students' work exceeded national expectations and they applied their earlier learning to new practical situations very well. In science, students of all levels of competence managed practical work very well.

The trend in results in National Curriculum tests and in GCSE examinations has been at the national rate of improvement for the last five years, but standards have been consistently well above the national average. The targets set by the school to be achieved in examinations are set precisely and were met almost exactly in 2001.

In the sixth form, students attained well above average standards at A level in 2001, and have consistently reached this level in recent years. Attainment both of grades A and B and of A to E is well above average. Girls and boys of all levels of competence and ethnic background usually add considerable value in the results that they achieve, shown by comparison with their earlier GCSE

examination results. In 2001, for example, students achieved particularly well in art, business, computing, French and history. They achieved standards at least in line with what might reasonably have been predicted from their earlier GCSE results in other subjects, apart from mathematics and sociology. Year 12 students achieved well in AS level examinations in 2001. Almost all passed the examination and nearly half gained grades A or B. Students were able to continue to study at A level with confidence. In comparison with their other subjects, they achieved particularly well in business, English language, physics, mathematics and computing. Students attained well above average standards in 2001 in the advanced vocational courses of health and social care and leisure and tourism. Too few students took other vocational courses or Advanced-Supplementary examinations to draw meaningful national comparisons.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Students work hard and make the most of their opportunities.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Students behave very well in class. Behaviour around the school is very good, despite the difficulty of movement on narrow corridors.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are very good and support students' very good personal development effectively.
Attendance	Well above average. Unauthorised absence is in line with the national rate.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Year 9	Years 10 – 11	Years 12 – 13
Quality of teaching	Good	Good	Very good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses. (Judgements of all aspects and subjects are based on this 7-point scale.)

Teaching is good and much is of very good quality in Years 9 to 11. In the sixth form, it is very good, overall, and some lessons are excellent. The school meets the needs of girls and boys from different ethnic backgrounds and with different levels of competence, including those with special educational needs, very well. It ensures that students learn successfully and achieve well. Design and technology, mathematics, physical education and Year 9 personal and social education are taught very well. However, some lessons in classical studies in Years 10 and 11 do not involve students actively enough in the process of learning, although many say that they enjoy the subject. The teaching of English and science is good, and that of mathematics is very good. Literacy is well taught, and numeracy is well taught in mathematics, although the teaching of it across the curriculum is not yet well enough developed. Teachers expect students to achieve their best and they do so, by responding very well to the good teaching, and much very good teaching, that they receive. Teachers manage their classes very well with the help of the respect that arises from very positive relationships. Students learn successfully by working hard, concentrating in class and consulting their teachers freely when they need help.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the	Very good. Students have very good choice of subjects at all ages. The

curriculum	range of extra-curricular opportunities is impressive.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Effective support enables students to achieve well. Support with reading for students withdrawn from other lessons considerably assists their understanding and progress.

Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The very few students at an early stage in learning English are suitably supported.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Students' moral and social development is very well provided for. Provision for their cultural development is good, and they receive good experience of a wide variety of cultures. Provision for their spiritual development is satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school is very caring. Students of all ages and backgrounds are well supported to achieve their best.

Not all students have the opportunity to participate in a daily act of collective worship every day.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good and effective teamwork has led to substantial improvements in the quality of teaching, accommodation and resources.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very well. Governors are very supportive of the headteacher and the school. They inform themselves well of standards and developments, and competently monitor and evaluate progress towards targets in the improvement plan.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. Students' achievements, teaching and targets for improvement are closely monitored and evaluated. Action is taken to improve performance when necessary.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Funding is used very well to improve the quality of teaching, accommodation and resources for the benefit of students.

Leadership has enabled major improvements to accommodation and learning resources to take place. The school provides students with a very good quality of education for the income that it receives, and obtains best value when purchasing goods and services.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents recognise that the school has high expectations of their children and is enabling them to be mature and responsible. They are pleased with the high standards achieved. They think teaching is good. They are happy to approach the school with problems. They are pleased with the range of extra-curricular opportunities. They think that leadership is very good, especially that of the headteacher. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More information on progress. The school to work more closely with them. Homework.

Inspectors fully agree with parents' positive views. They do not agree with the criticisms of some parents. Information on students' progress is sufficiently provided in informative reports and parents' evenings. The school works well with parents, and responds readily to their concerns. During the inspection, homework was set regularly and was usually interesting and challenging so that students could extend their learning well.

ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM

WHITLEY BAY HIGH SCHOOL

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form comprises 379 students. It is much larger than most other sixth forms and the number of students has increased since 1997. Similar numbers of girls and boys are on roll. A few students claim eligibility for free school meals. The proportion of students who choose to continue in full-time education at age 16 is above average and most choose to stay on into the sixth form, including those from minority ethnic backgrounds. A few students join the sixth form at age 16 from neighbouring schools. Students are offered an extensive range of courses. They are admitted to advanced courses when they have attained five or more GCSE grades at A* to C; they are admitted to individual subjects if, in the school's view, they are qualified well enough to benefit from the experience.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form meets students' needs very well. It enables them to attain standards that are well above average. Teaching and learning are very good, and accommodation and subject resources have greatly improved. Students achieve highly and the quality of education is very good. Very effective leadership and management ensure that provision is highly cost-effective.

Strengths

- Students attain examination results that are well above the national average.
- Leadership and management provide a very good and very cost-effective standard of education.
- Teaching is very good and helps students to learn successfully and to achieve the standards that they should.
- Students have very mature attitudes and make an excellent contribution to the community, in and out of school.
- Relationships are very good, and sometimes excellent, and contribute very well to learning.
- The range of the curriculum and extra-curricular opportunities are very good.

What could be improved

- Accommodation.
- Learning resources in the library.
- Careers education and guidance.
- Consistent use of assessment data by all subject departments to support students' progress.

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Good. Teaching is very good and students achieve well in lessons. A level results are usually broadly average, and students achieve the standards that they should.
Chemistry	Very good. Students learn very well with very good teaching. They achieve the standards that they should, and attain above the national average at A level.

Biology	Good. Students attain standards above the national average at A level, because they learn well and achieve success with good teaching.
Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Physics	Good. A level results are usually average, and higher attainers regularly do very well. Teaching is good and students are achieving well in relation to their earlier attainment at GCSE.
Business	Very good. A level results were of a high standard in 2001. Teaching is of consistently high quality across the department. A diverse range of methods is used, enabling students to achieve very well.
Computing	Very good. Students achieve exceptionally well. Every candidate has passed at A level since the last inspection – an outstanding performance. Students respond well to the good teaching of an enthusiastic team, supported by excellent resources.
Physical education	Very good. Students' current standards are above average and indicate higher achievement than that shown by the average standards attained at A level in 2001 and other recent years. Teaching and learning are very good, and well supported by recent staff appointments.
Health and social care	Good. Well above average examination results were attained in 2001. Teaching and learning are very good, enabling students to achieve well.
Art	Good. Very high A level standards were attained in 2001. Students are currently achieving well with good teaching, although insufficient use of research work is being applied in Year 13 students' practical work.
Geography	Good. Students achieve the standards that could reasonably be expected of them and some do very well. Teaching and learning are good and lessons are well structured to stimulate students' interest.
History	Very good. Students consistently achieve very well to attain high standards in lessons and examinations. Very good, knowledgeable and enthusiastic teaching successfully enables students to learn successfully.
Sociology	Satisfactory. A level results in 2001 and in recent years were well below average. Standards being achieved during the inspection were above average and markedly better than those shown by A level examination results. Teaching and learning are now good. Standards have improved following changes in the staffing and management of the subject.
Religious studies	Good. Teaching is good and teachers' good subject knowledge enables students to learn successfully. Students achieved well enough at AS level in 2001 to continue to A level with confidence. There were too few A level candidates in 2001 to make meaningful comparisons; results were above average in 2000 and 1999.
English	Good. Good teaching and range of methods interest students in the subject, enabling them to learn successfully in lessons. Students usually achieve what they should. Standards in the two A level courses have been above average in most recent years.
French	Excellent. Teaching is consistently very good and much is excellent. In all lessons, students use French in a most accomplished way, as the

	natural form of communication. Standards in all linguistic skills are very high. Students attained very high A level results in 2001.
--	---

In other courses the standard of teaching was at least good, enabling students to achieve well. Some very good teaching, enabling students to achieve very well, was seen, especially in design and technology, German and the intermediate GNVQ course in business studies.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Students are well informed about the subjects available. They are well guided and supported through their courses, including application to higher education. Careers education and guidance are not provided well enough.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Very effective. Educational provision is very good and very cost-effective. Students of differing competence and ethnic background have equal opportunity to choose from a very wide range of courses. They achieve highly, with the help of very competent teaching which has been very well developed by highly effective in-house training.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers are friendly, give freely of their time and are very supportive to them individually. Teaching is good. The courses available suit their needs. They were helped to settle into the sixth form well. They like it well enough to recommend it to others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information on how they are getting on. Their views being listened to more. Careers advice and individual guidance.

Inspectors agree with students' positive views. Some students do not think that they are given enough information on how they are getting on, and inspectors agree that not all subject departments use assessment data well enough to be able to inform students accurately of their rate of progress. Students have opportunity to express views through a students' council and have easy access to the head of sixth form and his colleagues, who are based near to the main area used exclusively by sixth form students. However, although support for choices in higher education is very good, inspectors agree that careers education and individual guidance are insufficient.

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

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Students of all backgrounds and competence achieve well, and attain well above average standards.

1. Students of wide ranging competence and talents and from all ethnic backgrounds achieve well. It is a central purpose of school planning that the importance of equal opportunities for all to achieve what they should with the talents that they have is upheld as a right for all members of the school. The school ensures that no individual or minority group is neglected; all receive effective support to achieve what they should.
2. The successful application of the ideal of applying equal opportunity and meeting needs is reflected in the examination results of students of very varied abilities and backgrounds. Two terms after entry to the school in Year 9, students take National Curriculum tests. They have consistently attained well above average standards in the three subjects tested, English, mathematics and science, since the school's last inspection in 1997. Not only have standards in the tests been consistently well above average in comparison with all schools, but also in comparison with the performance of similar schools (those schools with students of similar social and economic backgrounds). The maintenance of such impressive standards is very difficult to accomplish, but the trend in results has still been rising at the national rate of improvement, yet at a much higher level.
3. Students maintain their good rate of progress in Years 10 and 11. They consistently maintain well above average standards in gaining five or more grades A* to C and five or more grades A* to G in GCSE examinations, in comparison with all schools and with similar schools. Students with high levels of competence in the subjects that they study do very well and the proportion of A* and A grades attained in GCSE examinations is regularly well above average. Students with learning difficulties, some of whom have special educational needs, achieve very well and almost all students attain at least five subject grades in GCSE examinations. Students' backgrounds vary and those from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve well and most continue their education in the sixth form. There are differences in the results attained by girls and boys in GCSE examinations and, on average, girls attain more highly than boys. However, the difference in performance is not as great as that which applies nationally.

Very good leadership has improved educational provision and teachers' expertise and has the confidence of staff and parents to provide fair and equal access to learning for all.

4. The very good leadership of the headteacher and his senior colleagues is well recognised by parents, staff and students. The headteacher has chosen his senior colleagues wisely and they make a very effective team. Governors have confidence in the headteacher's leadership and make their own valuable contribution to planning change and evaluating the quality of what is achieved by staff and students. The leadership of the school has maintained the morale of staff although the physical conditions in which all work have been below what should reasonably be expected.
5. Leadership has improved educational provision considerably since the last inspection. The quality of teaching has improved, because the headteacher is very supportive of staff and has created systems that recognise the central importance of the quality of teaching and learning to ensuring students' success. Teaching has improved partly because of the process of training adopted to enhance teachers' expertise.
6. The training of teachers is managed by senior staff. Much has been in-house. The quality and impact of this provision are impressive. Many different training activities take place and involve large numbers of staff. Training activities run at lunchtimes, for example, and often engage 50 members of staff. At least two-thirds of the staff have led in-house training. This provides

colleagues with good opportunities to extend their own professional training of adults. It has encouraged individual staff to lead others, who in turn monitor and evaluate the performance of those individuals. The importance of ensuring that students' learning is of high quality remains a key priority in school improvement planning, to be achieved through an extensive programme of staff development. This shows that there is no complacency in this school, although standards are consistently well above average. The good quality of teaching and learning seen during the inspection is a very positive indicator of the effectiveness of staff training. Techniques to develop teachers' methods through use of different styles of learning have been used and are continuing to support the raising of achievement by all students. The particular needs of newly qualified teachers are identified well; they receive very good support and recognise it as such.

7. The headteacher and the leadership group have been active in adopting worthwhile initiatives to improve the learning and experience of students with very varied needs. The appointment to the leadership group of a co-ordinator for initiatives arising from the school's involvement with *Excellence in Cities* has strengthened leadership's links with this development. Initiatives for gifted and talented students, support for those who have difficulty in making the most of their educational opportunities and care to ensure that students from minority ethnic backgrounds fulfil their learning potential ensure that students' very differing needs are well met. The *New Start* initiative for some Year 11 students who have difficulty in managing to meet the basic rules and expectations of the school is very supportive of them and adopts imaginative methods to meet their needs, so that they gain from the educational opportunities provided. No student was permanently excluded from the school in the last full year before this inspection. The inclusive ethos of the school is reflected in its work in raising achievement. Work with students identified as a Raising Achievement Group is undertaken to meet their particular needs.
8. Staff and students work in an improving physical environment. The quality of accommodation is no reflection of the high morale and achievement which are characteristics of the school. Leadership has worked very hard to secure additional funding from different sources to improve accommodation and substantial improvements have been made since the last inspection. Refurbishment of existing accommodation is planned and a great deal more is needed. The key issue of the inspection of 1997, to improve social and private study facilities for sixth form students, has been met well, but more improvement is planned and much needed. The leadership of the headteacher, his senior colleagues, staff and governors has the determination to improve accommodation further.
9. Leadership has also much extended the resources available for learning. The range of computers and other information and communication technology equipment has greatly improved since 1997. The school has acquired some equipment of excellent quality and it is used well. Purposeful use is made of the Internet in business studies lessons conducted in the library, for example, which has been reborn since the last inspection. It has been transformed by a vastly improved stock of books and it is now a valuable resource, providing excellent support from library staff to meet students' needs in learning. However, the range of books requires further expansion - and much is planned.

Teaching is good and much is very good, enabling students to learn very well.

10. Teaching is good, overall, with much work of very good and, sometimes, excellent quality. It was very good or excellent in 18 of the 50 lessons graded for teaching. It was at least good in almost three-quarters of the lessons seen. Teaching is of much higher quality than that seen at the last inspection. The training of teachers - which the school does so well - has enabled them to extend their skills very well. As a result of very good teaching, students learn successfully. They work hard, concentrate in class and consult their teachers when they need help.
11. A particular skill that teachers have is that of management of their classes. They do this so well because very positive relationships ensure that trust and respect exist between them and their students. For example, in a Year 11 lesson for students who find the school's expectations and rules very difficult to comply with, teachers and support staff made learning and understanding of how language is used a challenging means of enabling students to gain worthwhile experience.

Students were helped to explore and actively extend their use of language. The staff made the lesson a very good experience of learning for challenging students, some of whom might otherwise have been excluded from the school community. The lesson was an excellent example of the importance that the school and staff attach to ensuring that the needs of every student are met within the school community.

12. Teachers have high expectations of students and, in most cases, adapt work very well to meet their needs. This was identified as a weakness at the last inspection, but is now a regular part of teachers' planning of lessons. Teachers expect students to achieve their best and they do so, by responding very well to the good teaching, and much very good teaching, that they receive. For example, in a very good Year 9 English lesson on Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, the teacher's effective questioning of students helped them to analyse plot and characters very well, so that the self-righteousness of Malvolio and the moral implications of the actions of Sir Toby Belch were well understood. Higher achievers were guided to deepen their understanding with yet more challenging work. The identification of gifted and talented students, as part of the process of the school's response to the national initiative, Excellence in Cities, with which it is well engaged, has prompted subject teachers to define more accurately what the subject needs of talented students are. However, the process has further enabled departments to distinguish more clearly what the needs of all other students are too.
13. Teachers have very good knowledge of their subjects. This enables them to plan their lessons successfully and often helps them to enthuse their classes. For example, the teacher's subject confidence and skills enabled students to prepare a *Powerpoint* presentation for a target audience in a very well planned Year 11 information and communication technology lesson. Students were helped to use their own good subject skills effectively to assist their planning. They were enthusiastic to organise their presentations, and they wasted no time in needless browsing of the Internet.
14. An impressive range of teaching methods is used in lessons. Teachers explain clearly and their instructions make clear to students how they should undertake the work that is presented to them. Questions often open up a topic for students so that they are prompted to explore its implications and stretch their thinking. Teachers regularly enable students to work in small groups or with one partner, so that they have the confidence to discuss issues freely and participate actively in the process of learning. Very few lessons were seen in which students were not actively engaged in learning, through the choice of well-chosen methods by teachers.
15. Teachers use the learning resources that are available to them well. Although the library awaits and needs further resources and space, it is used very well. The library staff provide teachers with additional support for students and help them to find information and use it to extend their learning. Teachers also use the excellent support that they receive from sixth form students to benefit their classes. Sixth formers' mature and positive attitudes are great assets to teachers in providing help for individual students, who sometimes have considerable learning difficulties. These students get excellent one-to-one support from sixth formers who receive training and are deployed effectively. Their help is greatly appreciated and highly rated by the teachers whose classes receive this support.
16. Homework is used regularly by teachers to enable students to extend their learning. Work that is set is usually challenging and encourages students to work independently and gain further knowledge and understanding without direct supervision by the teacher.
17. The consistently good quality of teaching, with much work of very good quality, encourages students to enjoy their learning. Students develop an enthusiasm for the subject that teachers themselves frequently exemplify, enabling students to achieve well and become part of that extended community of subject learning - as teachers intend.

Students concentrate very well on their work and their behaviour is very good. Relationships among students and between students and teachers are very good.

18. In half the lessons seen during the inspection, students' attitudes to learning were graded very good or excellent. This is an impressive result and indicates the strong sense of purpose and determination to learn of the vast majority of students in Years 9 to 11. They concentrate very well in lessons, work hard and achieve well. They respect their teachers and work well with them.
19. Younger students work well together. In a Year 9 mathematics lesson for higher attainers, for example, students were presented with a challenging task to deduce a method to solve a problem. They applied themselves very well and worked at a very good pace. Their excellent attitudes enabled them to achieve highly and extend their knowledge and understanding of the subject very well. In a Year 9 lesson in personal and social education in the library, where students were researching a range of topics related to health education, students worked very well in small groups and their very positive attitudes to learning enabled them to achieve very well. Girls and boys, irrespective of their ethnic backgrounds, work sensibly and maturely together.
20. Older students have equally positive attitudes to their work. In an art lesson in Year 10, where students were working individually on their studies derived from Cubism, those at all levels of attainment in the subject worked intensely throughout the lesson. Several continued into the lunch-break with the teacher's approval and support to make further progress with their work. Similarly, in Year 11 design and technology lessons, for example, where classes were working on coursework projects, students listened most attentively to the teachers' well-focused guidance, before pursuing individual work with enthusiasm and intense concentration.
21. Students behave very well in almost all lessons. Their behaviour around the school is very good, despite narrow corridors that make movement difficult at busy times. They are courteous and considerate of each other's feelings and act responsibly. Relationships among students of similar age and from different age groups are very good. Students acknowledge that if oppressive behaviour or bullying occurs, the school deals with the situation quickly and effectively. However, throughout the whole school, relationships among students are very good and strongly support learning. Equally, relationships between students and teachers are also very good and help to extend learning very well. In a very powerful assembly seen during the inspection, for example, teachers were identified before a whole year group by students who had to guess which of them had had the personal experiences publicly described. Students' choice of teachers to whom to ascribe the stated experiences and attributes were very effectively used to illustrate how easily stereotyping and prejudice can occur. Teachers' willingness to be seen by students in roles other than that of teacher illustrated very well the warm relationships which exist across the school and which support learning so well.

The curriculum and extra-curricular activities give students very good learning opportunities.

22. The curriculum for Years 9 to 11 is very good. A school priority in planning is to ensure that provision is wholly inclusive. The school takes considerable care to ensure that learning experiences are available to meet the needs of all students. Girls and boys from all ethnic backgrounds and with differing levels of subject competence are provided with equal access to the learning experiences available. Students with special needs identified by the school receive a curriculum that extends their learning well. Learning mentors provide very good support to individual students to enable them to make the most of their learning opportunities where they have difficulty doing so. Staff and students' equal opportunities committees closely monitor provision, ensuring that access is fairly provided. Initiatives that have been pursued as part of the school's involvement with *Excellence in Cities* extended the range of worthwhile learning experiences very well for the students involved. Some of these initiatives - for example, an Africa Day - have also involved students from partner schools, extending the thinking of both present and future students across a range of valuable, culturally inspiring, learning experiences, using drama, music and journalism, very well. The appointment of a learning mentor through the *Excellence in Cities* initiative has enabled individual students who have difficulties making the most of their learning opportunities to have access to the curriculum.

23. In Year 9, students receive the learning opportunities that they should – and more. In Years 10 and 11, they have an extensive choice of subjects. This is further enlarged by weekly tutorials that cover a range of topics within personal, social and health education. Students have some choice of optional courses from the time that they join the school. This is an excellent preparation for the wider choices that they receive for study in Years 10 and 11. In Year 9, the programme of personal and social education is well provided and covers issues of great importance to students' lives in modern society. During the week of the inspection several very good lessons in personal and social education were seen. One enabled students to learn more about prejudice in the ethnically diverse society in which they live, echoing the theme of assemblies for that week; students gained greatly from the stimulus of a well-chosen video, and discussed reactions and implications very well.
24. The school's very good curricular provision is well shown by the advanced preparations for the formal introduction of education for citizenship, as required for September this year. The curriculum has been reviewed and each subject has identified what its contribution can be. Staff training has taken place and new materials for education for citizenship are under trial in Year 9. Assemblies, tutorial sessions and plans for personal and social education are all part of the school's preparations. Overall, the school is very well aware of what the new requirements specify and is planning to meet these in a coherent way.
25. Students have a very good range of extra-curricular opportunities available. For example, there are many opportunities for students to pursue a wide range of sports and games. The school holds the Sportsmark, awarded by Sport England, in recognition of the quality of its work; some activities take place at 7.30 am. Students regularly participate in musical productions and drama. Various activities where students make music together take place. There are many educational visits available, including residential experiences on recent visits to France, Germany, Holland and Greece, for example. Many departments provide opportunities for students to extend their experience in their subjects. Parents and students recognise the richness of the provision of extra-curricular activities. They much appreciate the commitment of staff in providing this range of worthwhile experience.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Accommodation

26. Since the last inspection in 1997, the school has greatly improved accommodation, which was then a key issue for improvement. The need for better accommodation remains an issue for the school, which, until very recently, has suffered from constant under-funding. Current funding is not overgenerous, given continuing needs. Since 1997, re-cladding of the outer surfaces of most buildings has made the concrete panelling safe for users of the buildings. Security fencing is providing better protection. However, further external improvements are needed - for example, replacements of window-frames in the hall.
27. Some internal areas have been greatly improved. For example, the library has been relocated and is now a valuable resource to support learning. Relocation and further extension are planned. A refurbished area for use by the special educational needs department is now well equipped and used well. Further phases of improvement to accommodation are planned. A new block is currently under construction. Refurbishing the interior of other areas is planned, although not all shabby classrooms are scheduled for upgrading; for example, some serviceable but old laboratories will remain in use. The new block will enable the school to relocate science, music and drama departments, which currently have scattered accommodation, unhelpful to departmental co-ordination and use of subject resources. The temporary accommodation in use while a new block is constructed is of acceptable quality, but the acoustics of the music room are unhelpful to the quality of sound there. The new block will also provide access for students and adults with physical impairments, unlike other areas of the school that will continue to be inaccessible to wheelchairs, for example. Nevertheless, the new building is planned to add greatly to the quality of accommodation and is due for occupation in September 2002.

28. However, some areas of the existing buildings will remain in urgent need of improvement when the new block is in use. Parts of the school are shabby and worn, including many corridors and stairways, which are narrow and quickly become congested when movement of students occurs between lessons. Sensible behaviour by students, when using the one-way systems for ascending and descending stairs, ensures adequate movement around the school. Some toilets, including those used by staff, have old fittings and require much improvement.
29. The headteacher and governors have worked hard to achieve the improvements to the accommodation. They have gained access to all sources of funding and used what has been granted very well. It is testimony to the high morale of headteacher, staff and students that the very good standards achieved across the school are gained in accommodation which is well below the standard usually found in maintained schools. The school needs to persevere to improve accommodation further, so as to provide staff and students with a quality of accommodation equal to the very good quality of learning that it achieves.

Learning resources, including those in the library

30. Since the last inspection in 1997, learning resources have been much improved. The ratio of provision of modern computers to students is adequate, but not yet at the average national standard. Existing equipment is well managed, of very good quality and used well. A networked system of 147 machines enables good use of equipment. The library has computers that are used well by students in and out of lessons. Some further improvement is planned. More machines easily accessible in all departmental areas would further extend opportunities for learning for students and teachers.
31. At the time of the last inspection, the library's range of books and other resources was of poor quality. Now the facility has been transformed and provides students and teachers with an improving range of resources. Books are of good quality and now number over 7,000 volumes. Other paper resources and a suitable range of periodicals and newspapers are available. However, provision of books and other printed resources is still well below what is required for a school of this size. Plans are in hand to relocate the library to provide more space and to expand the numbers of books available. Further improvement is essential if students are to have the opportunity for independent research from a good range of resources that cover all subjects well.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

32. In order to improve further its educational provision, the school should:

For Years 9, 10 and 11

- (1) Further improve accommodation, by completing current building projects and seeking additional sources of funding to refurbish those parts of existing buildings which are not, currently, part of planned improvements. *(See paragraphs 25 – 28. This issue is partly recognised in the school's improvement plan.)*
- (2) Improve further the range and quantity of learning resources available, including those in the library, by completing developments currently planned and expanding the numbers of books and information and communication technology equipment available to staff and students. *(See paragraphs 29 – 30. This issue is partly recognised in the school's improvement plan.)*

For the Sixth Form

- (1) Further improve accommodation for the sixth form, by completing current plans to enlarge space for private study in the library when it is relocated and provision of better common room

accommodation for students. (See paragraphs 84, 85. This issue is recognised in the school's improvement plan.)

- (2) Further extend learning resources in the library, by increasing the number of books and extending their range beyond the textbooks currently available. (See paragraph 87. This issue is recognised in the school's improvement plan.)
- (3) Provide students with more lessons in careers education and more individual careers guidance, by planning a better curriculum for careers and completing plans and training for the newly appointed sixth form tutor to provide advice, information and support for individual students. Make full use of any improved external support for careers which becomes available. (See paragraphs 56, 68, 71. This issue is partly recognised in the school's improvement plan.)
- (4) Ensure that all departments use assessment data fully to inform and support students' progress, by regular monitoring of departmental practice, and evaluation of students' performance, tracked against their earlier results. (See paragraphs 65, 70)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 9 – 11	50
	Sixth form	88
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		44

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

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

Years 9 – 11

Number	1	17	17	14	1	0	0
Percentage	2	34	34	28	2	0	0

Sixth form

Number	8	37	32	11	0	0	0
Percentage	9	42	36	13	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting the percentages for Years 9 –11, as each lesson represents two percentage points. In the sixth form, each lesson also represents less than one percentage point.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Years 9 - 11	Sixth form
	972	379
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	77	5

Special educational needs	Y9 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	7	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	91	11

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	17

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	18
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	11

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.5
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.6
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	157	160	317

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	121	129	128
	Girls	144	128	123
	Total	265	257	251
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	84 (83)	81 (80)	79 (79)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	50 (41)	54 (57)	44 (43)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	129	138	132
	Girls	149	132	135
	Total	278	270	267
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	89 (85)	86 (84)	85 (84)
	National	65 (64)	68(66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	61 (56)	59 (60)	46 (47)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	151	182	333

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	82	144	147
	Girls	120	176	180
	Total	202	320	327
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	61 (67)	96 (99)	98 (99)
	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	44.3 (46.9)
	National	39 (38.4)

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

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations	Year	Male	Female	Total
	2001	189	169	358

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	189	169	358
	Average point score per candidate	17.2	21	19
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	18	17.5

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	77	70	147	9	8	17
	Average point score per candidate	17.3	19.9	18.5	10.7	15	12.7
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.9	17.4	9.8	11.4	10.6

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	3
Black – other	2
Indian	2
Pakistani	3
Bangladeshi	9
Chinese	10
White	1290
Any other minority ethnic group	5

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	11	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y9 – Y

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	87.1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.5 :1

Education support staff: Y9 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	18
Total aggregate hours worked per week	465

Deployment of teachers: Y9 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	71.8
---	------

Average teaching group size: Y9 – Y11

Key Stage 3	22.3
Key Stage 4	21.7

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

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

	£
Total income	3,511,971
Total expenditure	3,497,851
Expenditure per pupil	2,731
Balance brought forward from previous year	-2,279
Balance carried forward to next year	11,841

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	25.0
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	32.0

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	3.8
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1353
Number of questionnaires returned	80

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	44	48	8	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	51	39	3	0	8
Behaviour in the school is good.	16	73	3	0	9
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	21	46	24	6	3
The teaching is good.	33	53	3	0	13
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	25	48	18	8	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	45	49	5	0	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	54	40	5	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	28	45	20	4	4
The school is well led and managed.	41	46	3	0	10
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	43	49	0	0	9
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	46	44	3	1	6

Figures do not total 100 because of rounding. The questionnaire gives the views of parents with children in Years 9 to 13.

Other issues raised by parents

At the meeting before the inspection, parents expressed strong support for the school in all respects.

PART D: THE SIXTH FORM

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

33. When students begin sixth form courses, they have usually attained at least a grade C from their earlier GCSE examination in the subject. Where there is no equivalent GCSE subject matching the course that a student wants to take, students' overall GCSE performance is taken into account. In general, students beginning AS courses have attained grade B in the subject in GCSE examinations. However, students' GCSE attainment is lower in advanced vocational courses. Most students taking the General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) intermediate business course have attained four grade C results in GCSE examinations. Students receive advice about which courses are most likely to suit their talents, but the sixth form allows enthusiastic students to follow courses if they have minimal qualifications. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds who take up sixth form courses has risen in recent years and, for 2001, a similar proportion to those from other backgrounds undertook sixth form courses.
34. At A level in 2001, students attained well above average results, overall. This has been the situation since the last inspection. The proportion of A and B grades and A to E grades attained at A level is well ahead of national performance. Students with minority ethnic backgrounds usually achieve the standards that they should, and some achieve highly. The few students with special educational needs in the sixth form usually attain well. The school is not required to set targets for A level, but it uses data well and uses analyses of earlier performance to inform future results. In 2001, students attained highly at A level in art, business and French. They attained well above average standards in computing, German and history. Of the other subjects reported in depth in this inspection, results were above or, at least, close to the national averages, except in sociology, where results were well below average. In 2000, results in sociology were below average.
35. Students usually complete the courses that they start, but some discontinued AS art in the last year, finding the requirements of the course more demanding than they had anticipated. However, most art students completed the courses that they began and there was a reasonable take-up for A level in 2001. Examination results in the sixth form do not usually show marked differences in the performances of girls and boys. Students from minority ethnic backgrounds also achieve the standards that might reasonably have been anticipated from their earlier attainment in GCSE examinations.
36. AS results for Year 12 students in 2001 were very good. Almost all students passed the examinations, and approaching half attained grades A or B. As a result, students were well equipped to continue their studies to A level, where they so chose. Achievement across the many subjects examined in the first AS examinations in 2001 was good overall. No subject achieved either significantly higher or lower standards than the others, based on the profiles of students' attainment when they began their sixth form courses.
37. Very few students took the last Advanced-Supplementary examinations in 2001 to be able to draw meaningful national comparisons, but most passed the examinations.
38. Results in the three advanced vocational courses in 2001 were strong. Standards were well above average in health and social care and leisure and tourism. Similar results have been attained in recent years. Too few students took the advanced vocational business course to make national comparisons meaningful in 2001, but standards were above average in 2000.
39. Students usually add at least satisfactory value to their performance at AS and A levels, when compared with the results that they attained at GCSE. They achieve standards that might, at least, have reasonably been expected of them. In 2001, however, students well outperformed

expectations at A level in computing and art. They achieved a level of added value well below that of their other subjects in sociology, textiles and religious studies. Students have achieved relatively weak A level results in sociology in recent years.

40. In work seen during the inspection in the 15 subjects inspected and reported in depth, students were achieving good standards, overall, in response to the high expectations of teachers. In no subject were students achieving below what might reasonably be expected at this stage of their courses, based on earlier evidence of their attainment in GCSE examinations. In sociology, where achievement has been unsatisfactory in recent years, standards in lessons were good and students were achieving at the levels that they should do. Latterly, there have been substantial changes in the staffing of this subject. In computing, French and history, students were achieving very well, and often attaining high standards in lessons and in their written work. In French, for example, Year 13 students spoke confidently in the foreign language and discussed issues with outstanding fluency and skill. In history, students analysed sources of evidence very well and evaluated these effectively. Students achieved good standards in work with information and communication technology in all subjects; they gain increasing skill and confidence in its use in lessons and in independent private study. Many students express themselves confidently and maturely and have excellent oral skills.
41. Achievement in lessons was good overall in the many sixth form subjects not reported in depth. Performance in design and technology lessons was particularly strong, especially in the application of electronic reasoning to projects. Students following the Year 12 intermediate GNVQ business studies course were achieving highly in the subject and also gaining greatly in maturity; one student, when asked what the best thing was that the course had enabled her to do, replied – “to grow up”.

Students’ attitudes, values and personal development

42. Students’ attitudes to their studies and towards the school remain very positive, as at the last inspection. In three in every four lessons observed, students’ attitudes to learning were judged to be very good or excellent. They are highly motivated learners, and are keen to take part in all aspects of school life. Although their courses are challenging and require considerable commitment in time and effort, students persevere and the vast majority complete their courses and are successful. Year 13 students have such a positive experience of learning that almost all aim to continue their studies into higher education. Students work very well independently and take responsibility for their own learning without the need for high levels of supervision.
43. Students’ behaviour in class and in their common room is very good. They act sensibly and responsibly at all times and provide good role models for younger students around the school. No sixth form student was excluded from the school in the last full year before this inspection.
44. Students’ personal development is excellent. They are impressively mature, fully recognising their roles as senior members of the school and as citizens. They are articulate and express their views with good sense and maturity. Ninety students provide excellent in-class support in the main school, and contribute to the local community through sport and links with a nearby special school – an impressive record of commitment to others. Students show high levels of respect for other people’s feelings, values and beliefs. Relationships among sixth formers and between sixth formers and teachers are excellent. This makes a significant contribution to the quality of education provided and enables students to be very successful, consistently attaining well above average standards in examinations.
45. Attendance is above average and similar to levels reported for the main school.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

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.

46. Overall, teaching is very good. Over half of the 88 lessons seen were very good or better. Eight were of excellent quality and only 11 were graded below good. No lesson was below satisfactory. This situation is in contrast to that at the last inspection, when very little teaching was judged to be very good. In general, the very good teaching that students regularly receive meets their needs very well and students of all levels of subject competence and from all ethnic backgrounds learn successfully and achieve at least what they should. Of the 15 advanced courses reported in depth, consistently very good teaching was seen in mathematics, chemistry, business, health and social care, physical education, history and French. Other subjects reported in depth were consistently well taught, often with many lessons also of very good quality. Other advanced courses were sampled and teaching was at least good in all. In design and technology, German, economics, leisure and recreation, and classical studies, teaching was, overall, very good. In the only intermediate level course, in business studies, teaching was exceptionally good, with some excellent work seen.
47. In all subjects, teaching has a powerful impact. It enables students to learn and achieve what they should. Students are expected to concentrate on their subjects and work hard, in and out of lessons - and they do. A significant feature of students' learning in most lessons is their interest and active engagement with the ideas of the subject and their willingness to explore these with the encouragement and support of teachers.
48. The skills of communication and use of number are taught well enough within individual subjects, but they are not formally examined. Students apply these skills well in their work. The component of key skills that covers information and communication technology is taught as part of the general studies course, and comprises one period a week over a five-week module. Teaching is effective in enabling students to apply information and communication technology well in all their subjects. Students are confident users of computers when working independently, during private study in the library, for example.
49. Teachers manage their classes very well through relationships that are very good and often excellent. Very good relationships among students and, equally, between students and teachers support learning very well. For example, excellent relationships and good humour between the teacher and students of all abilities and ethnic backgrounds in a Year 12 mathematics lesson, where students were solving a problem with algorithms to determine the best route for connecting computers, enabled them to exercise a high level of responsibility for their work in an excellent process of learning. Good relationships helped Year 13 students with their practical work in physics on the discovery of electron; they overcame their lack of confidence and attained above average standards in the lesson. Mutual respect and very good relationships assisted discussion of issues from *the Aeneid*, in Year 13 classical studies; the confident participation of students with their teacher enabled them to clarify their ideas in a very active and effective learning partnership.
50. Teachers' high expectations of what students should achieve are apparent in most lessons. Very good teaching enables students to attain at least the standards that they should, as measured from the starting point of their earlier attainment. In a Year 12 English lesson in which students were linguistically analysing names of chocolate bars, for example, the teacher's questions challenged their thinking very well and all were expected to apply technical vocabulary in their analyses. Students with high potential and competence achieve very well from the challenging work that they receive. For example, in a very good Year 12 French lesson on contemporary media, competent students were very well challenged from the range of language used, always in French, and very well supported with authentic recordings and printed extracts. Similarly, in a Year 13 history lesson on civil rights in the USA, the impressive level of debate that involved all members of the class reflected the teacher's very high expectations of the students. However, teachers' expectations that students will work hard and make progress independently are not always met in art. In some English lessons, lower attaining students do not always receive the

right level of challenge to enable them to achieve to the full. Teachers' determination to make subject work challenging sometimes leads them to use language which is too technical for the level of understanding of the class, as in some geography lessons.

51. The range of methods that teachers use is extensive. Questions often provoke discussion and enable students to reach a good level of understanding for themselves; they learn well because they are not expected simply to accept the teacher's conclusions. However, in some lessons in religious studies, teachers do not engage all students in discussion enough. The last inspection criticised teaching as too didactic. This is no longer the case. Teachers help students to explore ideas for themselves and often make learning a very active process. In a Year 12 chemistry lesson, where students were exploring the reactions of elements with water, the teacher's well-chosen questions constantly challenged students' thinking, so that lack of precision and error were minimised in what was a very good learning experience. Teachers often summarise the learning arising from lessons very well at the end, helping to reinforce students' understanding and retention of what they have learned. Explanations are almost always clearly expressed, and work in pairs and in small groups are regular features of lessons where students are consistently expected to participate actively in the process of learning.
52. Teachers' subject knowledge is very good and a feature of most lessons. It enables them to plan their lessons very well, because they are very well aware of the process required for the successful learning of their subject. They use their own knowledge to smooth the process of learning for students. Within the structure of most lessons that teachers plan, they encourage students to learn independently and actively, but they also provide very good personal support throughout lessons. Business studies lessons, for advanced and intermediate level courses, are consistently characterised by excellent planning of a sequence of work and active support for individual students as they work their way towards greater knowledge and understanding.
53. The learning resources available to sixth form students have improved substantially since the last inspection. For example, teachers now enable students to use information and communication technology very well. They are encouraged to make full use of the equipment in the library and in their social and working area. In biology, teachers make very good use of the world beyond the school, to extend students' experience and to support their learning very well. Teachers expect that students' private study at home and at school will extend learning, and encourage them to use all resources available to support the process. Students generally come to lessons very well prepared and share responsibility with teachers for what is often a true partnership of learning.
54. In general, teaching is very good and provokes an interested and, in many lessons, an enthusiastic response from students.

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

55. The sixth form curriculum provides a very good range of courses towards AS, A level, Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) and Intermediate GNVQ qualifications. Students can choose combinations of 24 AS and A level subjects, in addition to AVCE courses in leisure and recreation, health and social care and business education. The requirements of Curriculum 2000 have been successfully implemented and have resulted in students following a broader range of subjects than previously. For example, the curriculum is sufficiently flexible to allow students to combine the study of AS, A level and vocational courses. It is well planned and allows students to follow a coherent programme of study from Year 12 to Year 13. Most students follow four AS courses, or equivalent vocational units, in Year 12. They usually progress to study at least three of these subjects at A level or their vocational equivalent in Year 13. A few are able to finish studying one AS level course at the end of Year 12 and begin another in Year 13. A one-year intermediate GNVQ course in business education provides an appropriate, popular option for students who have been less successful at GCSE. The number of students taking this course has increased to 28 this year. Good links are developing with North Tyneside College, to enable

students to transfer after they have completed the course, if this is to their benefit. The school responds appropriately to local circumstances. For example, it continues to offer courses in classical civilisation, music and textiles technology, despite the comparatively small number of students, because these subjects are not available elsewhere locally. There are no vocational courses in information and communication technology, but the school intends to extend provision as more resources become available.

56. The sixth form curriculum meets the needs of students of wide-ranging abilities very well. Students have equal access to all courses, dependent upon their prior attainment. Students from minority ethnic backgrounds follow a wide range of courses at different levels. Teachers are aware of the needs of the few sixth form students on the special educational needs register and ensure that they have sufficient support to enable them to succeed in their chosen subjects.
57. All students follow a course in general studies, which adds further breadth to their worthwhile experience. In Year 12, the course is taught for two lessons each week, one of which prepares students for the general studies examination. The other lesson covers a wide range of topics, including aspects of personal, social and health education, careers education and key skills. This lesson continues in Year 13 and much of this work is further reinforced during weekly class tutorials. This arrangement caters well for students' personal and social development. Students also have good opportunities to experience optional short courses in, for example, psychology or modern languages as part of this programme. The general studies programme ensures that statutory requirements for religious education are met. However, the school does not meet requirements for a daily act of collective worship in the sixth form. The key skills (of communication, use of number and information and communication technology) are part of this programme. All students have ample opportunities to develop their communication skills through general studies, tutorials and their subject courses. Provision for the key skill of information and communication technology is adequate in subjects across the curriculum and is enhanced by a short course on the use of databases and mail merging as part of general studies. Some students gain accreditation for the key skills of communication and information and communication technology as a result of these arrangements. Provision for the use of number is not yet sufficiently identified in subject courses and some students have insufficient opportunity to develop this key skill.
58. Provision for careers education is good for students who take the intermediate GNVQ course in business education and they have regular contact with the local careers adviser. Other students have improving opportunities to discuss career possibilities with the sixth form counsellor who has recently been appointed as part of the *Excellence in Cities* initiative. In general studies, there is an appropriate number of lessons to help students understand procedures for applying to university. However, there is insufficient focus on opportunities for employment at ages 17 or 18, as many students are aware.
59. Since the last inspection, provision for private study at school, as an important part of students' curriculum, has improved. However, facilities are still inadequate for the number of students. For example, the library has insufficient resources to provide opportunities for independent research for a sixth form of this size and when main school classes use the library, conditions are sometime unhelpful to sixth formers' needs for private study. The sixth form social area also serves as a study facility, but as it is a corridor, circumstances make it difficult for students to settle down to concentrate on individual work or research there.
60. A very good range of extra-curricular activities enriches the curriculum. For example, there are exchange visits to France and Germany, for students of modern foreign languages. Numerous visits are arranged to universities for lectures and open days. There is a thriving *Young Enterprise* group and many students participate in the *Duke of Edinburgh* award scheme. Each year, several students take part in the *Engineering in Education* scheme and work with industry and higher education. Work experience is available for all students in Year 12. There are frequent music and drama productions, with rehearsals for a forthcoming performance of *Guys and Dolls* taking place during the week of the inspection. A history trip to London and a skiing trip to Austria set off from school on the final day of the inspection. Several students are currently raising money to enable

them to participate in a *World Challenge* expedition to Vietnam. There are ample opportunities for sport and physical recreation. Many students are keen enough to take advantage of swimming, rugby and badminton training - with staff to provide it - in the mornings at 7.30.

61. There is a very good range of opportunities to enable students to make a valuable contribution to the local and wider community and enhance their own personal development. For example, students run the school bank. They meet fellow students from a local special school in joint learning initiatives. They attend local middle schools to lead sporting activities, or do work experience there, if they are interested in a career in teaching. They help with the induction of Year 8 students to the high school. They make a particularly valuable contribution to in-class support in the school, by working closely with the special needs co-ordinator. Some students also provide a confidential listening service for younger students, to help them with their concerns about work, bullying and friendships. Overall, the range of opportunity for students to serve the school and local communities is impressive.
62. The school's provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development, is good overall.
63. Provision for students' spiritual development is satisfactory. Although the school does not meet the statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship, sixth formers gather together once each week for broadly Christian assemblies. These are well planned, tackling themes such as prejudice, and make stimulating contributions to the growth of values and beliefs. Regular tutorial periods provide good opportunities for further reflection and discussion over a wide range of issues. The school fulfils the requirements of the North Tyneside Agreed Syllabus for religious education through a compulsory AS general studies examination for all students. All heads of department have received training in how to raise sixth form students' spiritual awareness. In consequence, each department must identify opportunities to support spiritual development. However, subject plans are being revised so that students' experiences currently vary. The school has not yet undertaken an audit to ensure a systematic approach across the whole curriculum.
64. Provision for students' moral and social development is very good. The school stresses its commitment to equal opportunities. Support for minorities and individuals with particular needs are given importance in the way the school is run. For example, the current exhortation to, "Show Racism the Red Card", permeates the work and teaching of the sixth form. Community links with middle schools and, particularly, with local special schools make valuable contributions to sixth formers' personal development. Students help younger pupils settle into the school through a "listening service", and provide excellent in-class support. They contribute to the running of the school through the sixth form committee and take the lead in raising funds for charity. Extra-curricular activities provide very good opportunities for social development.
65. Sixth formers' cultural development is provided well through the breadth of the curriculum and extra-curricular opportunities. There are strong contributions from art, music, English, and drama within the Western European tradition. Cultural diversity is well provided, particularly through art, history, geography, modern foreign languages and comparative studies in physical education. The increasing involvement of the local Bangladeshi community with the life of the school emphasises the richness of an ethnically diverse society. Extra-curricular opportunities for foreign travel have included a *World Challenge* expedition to Brazil to broaden students' horizons further.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

Assessment

66. The school's procedures for assessing sixth form students' attainment and progress are very effective. In all subjects, assessment, verification and moderation procedures carefully follow the requirements of examining boards. In consequence, students are well prepared for public examinations. Assessment to track students' performance is good in most subjects.

Commercially produced data are generally used effectively to measure how well students are achieving on advanced courses relative to their GCSE performance and to their comparative performances across other subjects. The data are used well by most departments to guide their coverage of the curriculum and to refine the focus of teaching.

67. Despite training for all staff, there remain some inconsistencies in the precision with which data are interpreted and applied to support students' progress. The school intends to address this through further staff training and more rigorous monitoring. Students have regular meetings with personal tutors and subject teachers where progress is reviewed and action agreed. Progress is clearly reported to students and parents, or others who need to know, through very good written records. Appropriate targets to be achieved are set for each student. Increased support and guidance are provided for those students in need. An increased challenge is provided for others. Results are analysed carefully and appropriate action taken so that, in most subjects, outcomes of public examinations are consistently well above average.

Advice, support and guidance

68. The school continues to provide high levels of care, support and guidance for its students. Tutors and the sixth form team with responsibility for them have very good and sometimes excellent relationships with them and ensure that personal help is always readily available as and when it is needed. The head of sixth form monitors the standards achieved by individual students on a weekly basis. Sixth form tutor groups are deliberately kept small, enabling tutors to know their students well.
69. Arrangements for ensuring students' health and safety are good. Procedures for recording and monitoring their attendance are thorough and work well. Students are punctual to lessons, but not always punctual to tutor meetings in the mornings.
70. Students are well informed about the courses available to them in advance of starting in the sixth form, and are closely monitored during the first few weeks of their studies to check how well they have settled in. The information and guidance they receive about higher education is also very good but, overall, there is insufficient planned careers advice in and out of lessons to meet the needs of all students. This supports the views expressed by a large number of the student body through questionnaire and discussion. The school is aware of the situation regarding insufficient careers education, advice and guidance, and has appointed a non-teaching tutor through the *Excellence in Cities* initiative to help to fill the gap in this area of its provision.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS AND STUDENTS?

71. Parents of sixth form students expressed positive views about the school through questionnaires and the meeting for parents prior to the inspection. These parents had no significant reservations about the school's provision for sixth formers. Parents and sixth form students fully recognise that the school's expectations of achievement are very high. Sixth formers like the school enough to recommend it to others.
72. Students are pleased with their teachers. They consider that they are well taught and supported by them. They regard teachers as friendly, willing to give freely of their time and very supportive to them, individually. They think that the courses available suit their needs and they were helped to settle into the sixth form well. Inspectors agree with all the positive views expressed by students.
73. Concerns expressed by some students about the need for better information about how they are getting on are supported by inspection findings. Some departments do not use assessment data well enough to inform them about their rate of progress. Inspection findings also support their views about the quality of careers advice, as it is currently inadequate to meet the needs of all students, although advice and guidance on choice of courses in higher education are very good. Inspectors do not, however, support students' concerns about the school not always listening to their views. All students have opportunities to express opinions through the school council and have easy access to the head of sixth form and their tutors.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

Leadership and management

74. The quality of leadership of the sixth form, as part of that of the whole school, by the headteacher, leadership group and governors is very good. The effectiveness of leadership is shown by the well above average standards attained in examinations by the sixth form. Students achieve high standards because leadership ensures that the quality of teaching is very good and the process of learning across the sixth form is equally very good. Overall, sixth formers have confidence in what the school provides for them and numbers of students have increased since the last inspection.

75. The headteacher is highly respected by staff, governors, parents and students. Staff have confidence in his support and in his commitment to ensuring that they gain improved accommodation for sixth form work and better resources. He and the governors have worked very hard to win additional funds to make these much-needed material improvements. However, improvements since the last inspection have included the priority of raising further the quality of teaching and learning. This is now very good, unlike the situation at the last inspection, when very little teaching was judged to be of this quality. The headteacher and governors have built a very committed and hard working leadership group. Most members of this group have been promoted from other posts in the school. They have a very good range of skills and support the headteacher very well in ensuring that teaching is very good and that students achieve the standards that they should. These senior staff have particular responsibilities and have helped teachers to improve their skills well, through, for example, very effective and well-received staff training which is recognised by all as of exceptionally high quality.
76. The governors are very supportive of the headteacher and contribute well to the very good standard of leadership that the sixth form enjoys, within the school as a whole. Governors have no special committee for sixth form matters, but make themselves aware of the standards achieved. They monitor its work and evaluate performance through, for example, presentations from subject leaders and sixth form students.
77. The combined leadership of headteacher, senior staff and governors gives very clear educational vision to the development of the sixth form, within the school as a whole. This is illustrated very well by the emphasis given in detailed improvement planning to equal access and opportunity for all to the educational opportunities that are provided. The very firm commitment and systematic practice of making provision highly inclusive for every student, irrespective of background or ethnicity, as of right are priorities of leadership.
78. The sixth form has its own well-informed leadership team. This team, comprising a deputy, an assistant head of sixth form, a newly appointed non-teaching tutor and a clerical assistant, supports the head of sixth form. Together they provide day-to-day management that is readily accessible to sixth form students. The head of sixth form, who is an assistant headteacher and part of the school's senior management, leads the team and ensures good links between senior management and decisions affecting the sixth form.
79. Subject leadership of the 15 subjects reported in depth in the inspection is never less than good, and many departments are very well led. Business, modern foreign languages and physical education have excellent departmental leaders who provide exceptionally clear educational direction to the work of their sixth form subjects. Subject leaders are increasingly taking on responsibility for monitoring and evaluating the work of their departments, as part of the process of performance management that is being used well to extend the efficiency of departmental practice.
80. Monitoring and evaluation of the performance of the sixth form are very effective in ensuring that students achieve the standards that are, at least, as high as should reasonably be expected. In practice, standards are usually higher and sometimes much higher than this, as shown by the analysis of the value added to students' achievements between GCSE and A or AS levels. Where performance has not been what it should be, headteacher and senior staff have taken action to improve the situation. For example, changes of departmental management and of staff have taken place where there has been under-performance, as in sociology, where the quality of teaching and learning seen during this inspection are now good, and of a higher standard than that indicated by past A level results. School improvement planning has clear criteria for evaluation to enable management to judge progress towards the targets set. All of these have direct bearing on the sixth form, although they apply to the school as a whole. Plans to improve teaching and learning further, for example, have direct implications for work with the sixth form and have benefited students considerably. Overall, planning for change and improvement and evaluation of outcomes are effective in ensuring the continued progress of the sixth form.

81. Funding is used in a highly cost-effective way. The average income provided per sixth form student enables the school to provide students with a very good curriculum with impressive subject choice. The quality of teaching is also very good. The school does not currently need to spend the full amount allotted per sixth form student and funding can be deployed to benefit other parts of the school. However, the sixth form has been a particular beneficiary in the past of some significant improvements to accommodation, through provision of its social and private study facilities. Management recognises that where classes are large, as in some business studies courses, additional staffing is needed, and is planned. However, the importance of appointing only teachers of good potential is equally recognised.
82. Overall, the school achieves very good value from the highly cost-effective provision it makes for sixth form students. The results attained are well above the national average; provision is very good, as shown, for example, by the quality of teaching; parents and most students who have expressed a view are satisfied with the opportunities for consultation provided.

Resources

83. Provision for sixth form teaching is very good. Teachers give students a very good quality of education and offer an extensive range of courses. The school has been able to recruit specialists as vacancies arise. However, on occasion, individual subjects need to combine groups when the numbers become too small for effective learning. In Year 13, English language was reduced to one group, but in other subjects it was necessary to continue to teach small groups. Business studies courses attract a large number of students who achieve at a high standard. Some classes in this popular subject are very large, but the school has planned additional appointments to meet the need. Sixth form students are involved in interviews for new staff.
84. Provision for the professional development of staff is excellent in the sixth form. The school has identified strategies for teaching the sixth form and raising standards. These are very effective. Newly qualified teachers are given the opportunity to gain experience in sixth form teaching. Teachers are encouraged to 'take risks' in their teaching and to evaluate their success. The school has placed much emphasis on staff training and it has raised the quality of teaching and learning very well.
85. The librarian is involved in training sixth formers in library skills. She acts as network manager for information and communication technology, but with increasing demand there is need for the appointment of a network co-ordinator. Library staff are competent to give students effective support for the work that they do using the library's computers, and they do so.
86. Overall, accommodation for the sixth form is inadequate. Improvements to accommodation have benefited students in the sixth form by providing a large area for social and study activities. However, it is still small for the size of the sixth form and acts as a corridor for students and staff. The mixed function of the room makes private study difficult because of movement through the area. The library, which is on the upper floor of temporary accommodation, is too small for regular use as a study and resource area and is often in use by main-school classes. There is no lift to allow access for students with physical impairments.
87. Many departments used by sixth formers are in dispersed locations about the school, as in science, for example. However, classrooms and laboratories are adequate to allow learning to take place, although some are very old, worn, shabby and uninspiring. The provision of several areas housing banks of computers about the school allows good access to research. Although accommodation is good for mathematics, French and physical education, there is urgent need of re-decoration to improve students' learning environment in many areas. The art department lacks a studio to allow development of substantial pieces of work by students. There is currently no drama studio.
88. The development plan for the new building, due for completion in Sept 2002, proposes re-siting and developing the library resource area, to provide more quiet study facilities, and the re-

allocation of rooms, to provide suites of subject rooms with more departmental study areas containing facilities for use of information and communication technology by sixth formers.

89. The resources for use by the sixth form are inadequate overall. A main area of concern is the library. While very considerable progress has been made with its development since the last inspection and a new and improved facility is in the course of construction, the present position is unsatisfactory. There are too few books, computers and software for the number of sixth formers. However, the books are mostly modern and well looked after, although, for many subjects, limited in range as well as in numbers. There are few books other than textbooks among the sixth form collection in the library. Although there are some shortages of books in religious education and biology, and a lack of access to the computer network in geography, departments' resources are at least satisfactory, overall. They are good in French, geography and science and very good in mathematics, information and communication technology and physical education.

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

In the inspection, 15 subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall information 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
Biology	4	75	52	0	2	0.75	0.79
Mathematics	4	50	62	25	15	1.5	1.5
Sociology	2	100	63	0	7	1.5	1.2

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and Design	15	100	96	100	46	9.33	6.6
Biology	42	93	88	33	34	5.48	5.5
Business Studies	29	100	92	62	32	7.10	5.5
Chemistry	20	95	90	50	43	6.60	5.9
Information technology	23	100	86	35	23	5.91	4.6
English language	43	79	91	40	30	4.98	5.3
English literature	29	90	95	38	37	5.45	5.9
French	5	100	89	100	38	9.20	5.6
Geography	28	96	92	39	38	5.71	5.7
History	12	92	88	42	35	6.67	5.5
Mathematics	30	77	87	27	43	4.27	5.8
Religious studies	4	50	92	0	38	2.50	5.8
Physics	21	86	88	43	40	5.62	5.6
Sociology	18	39	86	11	35	2.33	5.3
Physical education	23	91	92	35	25	5.30	5.1
Health and social care	6	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	16.00	10.8

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit	
		School	England	School	England

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

90. Advanced mathematics, chemistry, biology and physics courses were inspected and reported on in depth. One lesson was sampled in the course for students wishing to improve their GCSE grades in mathematics. The teaching was very good because the teacher set work at an appropriate level to interest and motivate the students. The brisk pace of the lesson ensured that students worked hard throughout and extended their understanding of formulae for calculating area and circumference.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- The standard of teaching is very good.
- Very good relationships develop students' independent learning skills well.
- Very good subject leadership.

Areas for improvement

- Results at A level.
- Take-up of the subject by girls.

91. In the 2001 A level examination, students gained results that were below the national average. This halted the trend of improvement apparent in the previous three years, in which results moved from being below the national average to being above it. This fall in standards coincided with staffing concerns that directly affected students' ability to complete their programmes of study and revision. Year 12 AS results in 2001 showed some improvement beyond expectations, but these results were also influenced adversely by the staffing situation. Despite this, students' performances at A and AS level indicated satisfactory achievement for most when their performance was compared with their earlier attainment in GCSE examinations. Most successful students continued to the A level course in Year 13. At both A and AS levels, competent students achieve well. There is little evidence of exceptional variation in the achievements of different groups of students, including those from minority ethnic backgrounds. Although boys attained more highly than girls in 2001 examinations, so few girls took the subject that no firm conclusions can be drawn on this issue.
92. The standard of A level and AS work seen in students' books and in lessons is good. Achievement is good. Year 13 students are learning very well and are progressing through their course at a challenging pace. Their files show knowledge and skills of how to use integration, methods of differentiation, partial fractions and curve sketching and other elements of their programmes of study. Higher attaining students show good understanding and provide fluent mathematical solutions. Less competent students lack precision in presentation and methodology. In a Year 13 lesson, students showed very good understanding of the quotient rule and were able to perform, mentally, the evaluation of differentiation of functions given on their computers. Year 12 students are learning very well. Their files show detailed coverage of topics for their AS modules; mechanics of moving bodies, vectors and various problems from the 'Decision Mathematics' course. Their work indicated good understanding of the assumptions required when modelling the real world. Weaker students make frequent mistakes in using basic mathematical ideas and terminology and require assistance in organising their work for revision.
93. A significant feature of the work of students in both years was acceptance of responsibility for their own learning and their positive attitudes to their work. The very good relationships that exist

in the groups were evident in good-natured banter and in the amount of peer-tuition which took place. All groups of students are equally involved in lessons and make progress in line with their subject potential. In a Year12 lesson on networks, students from different minority ethnic backgrounds made good contributions and some were among those who rapidly grasped the process of solution.

94. Teaching is very good. The high quality of teachers' subject knowledge ensures that students develop insight into mathematical concepts well. Lessons are well planned. Very good relationships between students and teachers within the classroom provide a friendly learning environment in which students feel comfortable when sharing ideas or seeking help. For example, in a Year 13 lesson, a student acted as recorder on the whiteboard, while others offered ideas and directed her through the process of proof of the quotient rule for differentiation. Students experience a rich variety of teaching styles, which add interest and often fun to their learning. Computers have become integral tools within the department and are used well in lessons. Teachers' enthusiasm for the subject is a striking feature that communicates itself to students and helps maintain a brisk rate of work. Marking of students' work is thorough and includes helpful comment.
95. The department is very well led and managed and provides the best opportunities for students to learn well. There is an ethos within the department of a love of the subject. This provides a rich environment for learning and frequent glimpses of the mystery in mathematics. This was seen in a Year 13 lesson, in which the teacher challenged students to study the proof that " $1=2$ ", which presented, apparently, sound mathematical validity; this stimulated much thought and discussion among the students. Well-qualified and skilled teachers teach the sixth form. Resources are good, providing students with good support for their learning. Since the last inspection, the quality of teaching and the range of teaching styles have improved. A new 'Decision Mathematics' course has been introduced to give students the best opportunities for success. Accommodation has been improved to provide a departmental computer suite. The department must strive to improve results at A level and look for ways to encourage more girls to take up A level mathematics.

Chemistry

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

Strengths

- Very good teaching from well-qualified teachers, inspiring very good learning.
- A very well organised and efficient department, which is raising standards.
- Effective and developing use of information and communication technology to enhance teaching and learning.

Areas for improvement

- More involvement of students in forming and developing their own ideas.
- A better stocked main library and more encouragement and guidance to support independent learning.

96. In the 2001 A level examination, students' attainment was above the national average and well above it in the proportion gaining grade A. Achievement for all candidates was good in the light of their earlier GCSE grades. While there was no difference in the performance of girls and boys at the higher grades, girls did better overall. However, in lessons and work seen, there is no apparent difference in performance of students on the basis of sex or ethnic background. Over the past three years, standards have been rising steadily in line with national improvements. The high standards found in the last inspection have been maintained. At AS level in 2001, half the students obtained grades A or B, but a fifth failed to attain a grade in the range A to E. Girls outperformed boys. Many students choose to study chemistry, and numbers increased this year. Nearly all the students who begin AS and A level courses complete them.

97. The standards of work of Year 13 students are high, and students' achievement is impressive when compared with the grades that they attained in the GCSE examination. For example, a class considering the Born Haber cycle in relation to lattice enthalpy and sodium chloride managed to sequence and to explain the steps in the process involved very successfully.
98. Year 12 are achieving well. For example, students extended their GCSE knowledge of groups very well to justify and check, by experiment, some of the patterns in the properties of group-two elements. Another class extended their understanding of oxidation states successfully, by tackling redox reactions in terms of half equations.
99. Teaching is very good and students learn very well as a result. The teachers have strong subject knowledge, which they use effectively to develop interest and to give perspective. There are crisp objectives, which are made clear to students. Usually the knowledge from the previous lesson is rehearsed to establish a suitable starting point, but less frequently is enough time allowed to consolidate the new learning at the end. Knowledge from GCSE courses is checked and reinforced well. Strong features of the teaching are the clear explanations and logical development of ideas in sequence, punctuated at intervals by questions to test students' understanding thoroughly before continuing. This process governs the pace of lessons and supports learning very well. Good use is made of information and communication technology to aid understanding and to access data. Teaching is very good and enhanced by a wide range of methods. However, some lessons do not involve students in generating and developing their ideas enough, although students still learn successfully in them. Students' work, well linked to requirements of the examination, is usually well marked with useful corrections and suggestions for improvement. Homework is usually set that complements, challenges and extends learning. Teachers' assessment provides students with a good indication of their standards in relation to grades in examinations and assists their curricular planning well.
100. Students' learning is very good. They take their tasks seriously and work hard at them. Their learning is enhanced by good relationships with teachers. Students listen to their teachers, appreciate them and make good use of their help when they do not understand. In most classes, students learn in a pleasant, but purposeful and productive working environment. They are keen to answer questions and to ask when they are confused, but they generate few questions of their own. They are encouraged to become independent learners, but their approach is not very well organised or supported. The library has computers, but it has very few books to extend students' learning; those it has tend to be mainly textbooks and there are no scientific periodicals available. Therefore, there is little to encourage independent learning from extended reading in the subject.
101. The department is well led and managed. This ensures very good teaching and learning. There is an effective scheme of work. Well-qualified staff cover the curriculum in sufficient depth to enable students to gain the highest grades in examinations. The curriculum is enhanced by visits, such as those to the University of Newcastle Spectroscopy Department and the AS update conference. Future plans include visits to industry. An efficient team of technicians maintain and deploy the resources. Information and communication technology resources have been greatly improved since the last inspection. Data loggers, CD ROMs, the intranet and Internet are used well. Accommodation is satisfactory, but fragmented and in need of refurbishment. It reflects very well on the efficiency of the teaching and technical staff that they have not allowed this to affect teaching and standards adversely.

Biology

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

Strengths

- Well-informed and enthusiastic teachers promote good learning.
- Above average standards at A level.
- A very well organised and effective department.

Areas for improvement

- More student involvement in forming and developing ideas, especially from basic subject principles.
- More time at the end of lessons to consolidate learning.
- Better library provision to support and to encourage independent learning.

102. At A level in 2001, attainment was above the national average. Students' achievement, relative to their GCSE grades, was satisfactory. At AS level in 2001, a good pass standard was attained and almost half the grades were A or B. Over the last three years, standards have been maintained above the national average. The numbers of students opting for advanced biology have been rising and it is the second most popular subject in the school. Almost all students who join the AS and A level courses complete their studies. Girls did better than boys at A level in 2001, but in work seen there is no apparent difference in performance between the sexes or in the performance of students from different ethnic backgrounds.
103. The standards of work seen in the current Year 13 are good, when compared to the grades achieved at GCSE. Students showed sound knowledge and understanding of a variety of methods for sampling populations, for example. They appreciated how plants, such as marram grass, pitcher and CAM plants, were adapted to fill various niches. They were able to link their learning to experiences that they had had on field courses.
104. Students in Year 12 attain good standards in lessons. Most are extending their GCSE knowledge and skills well. For example, a class learning about the respiratory system of bony fish were not only able to demonstrate the system's structure and describe its function, but also to comment upon how well it fulfilled the ideal characteristics of a gaseous interchange system.
105. The quality of teaching is good. Three-quarters of the lessons seen were good or very good: no lessons were unsatisfactory. Teachers plan their lessons well. They teach to well-defined objectives, which are made clear to the students. Teachers' knowledge of the subject is very good and used well to produce interesting and challenging lessons, informed by broad subject perspectives. Most lessons involve a wide range of teaching methods, promoting students' interest and wider understanding. Teachers effectively consolidate students' previous learning well at the start of lessons. However, they often do not leave enough time at the end of lessons to summarise the topic that they want students to learn and remember. In the best lessons, students' ideas are sought and they are stimulated to develop them with skilful questions. However, in some lessons, students are not much involved in the generating of ideas, and these lessons are more like lectures punctuated by questions to test their understanding. The marking of questions based upon the standard expected in examinations is good. Students are given advice on how to improve, by understanding what went wrong. Assessments are related to examination grades and enable students to gain a useful insight into their present standards. The good system of assessment enables teachers to adapt work effectively to meet the needs of students and the requirements of the curriculum.
106. Suitably challenging homework is frequently set, requiring thought and research. Teachers are good at relating the work that they are doing to the real world by linking it to the fieldwork students have done and to their own experiences.
107. The quality of learning is good. The students work hard and most are keen to learn, although some prefer to be told and reassured by questioning, rather than to reason for themselves. The enthusiasm of some students, such as those who were studying the structure and function of breathing mechanisms of osteohyels, was well shown by a group who opted to continue their investigations during break. Students carefully note down the good summaries provided by teachers on the whiteboards, but many do not use the opportunity to think them through, or to record an amplified version. Learning is greatly helped by good relationships, which give them confidence to talk freely with teachers. Although teachers encourage and guide students to learn for themselves to some extent, this aspect of learning could be improved. The main library provides computer facilities, but it lacks a sufficient range of sixth form books and any scientific periodicals to support research and wider reading.

108. The subject is well led and managed. This is an effective and well-organised department, always seeking ways to improve. The staff are well qualified and enthusiastic; they work well together. There are good schemes of work, which guide teaching in sufficient depth for students to achieve high grades. The curriculum is enriched by much fieldwork, including a one-week course at Ingleton and much use of the local seashore. In addition, students have attended helpful AS and A level revision conferences. The department has useful outside links, such as those which allowed a student to gain work experience in the Newcastle University Neurological Laboratories and another in the Dove Marine Laboratory, where two staff are involved in the development of subject resources. The resources, apart from some book shortages are good; they are effectively deployed and maintained by hard working technicians. Accommodation is satisfactory. At present it is scattered in several blocks and much in need of refurbishment, but it is due to be improved in the near future. The good standards noted in the last inspection have been maintained.

Physics

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

Strengths

- Good improvement in the proportion of A level grades A and B during the last three years.
- Students make good progress in relation to their GCSE results.
- Teaching is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge, teach with enthusiasm and enable students to learn well and understand new ideas.

Areas for improvement

- The quality of marking is inconsistent and does not always make clear to students what they need to do to improve.
- The targets set for students focus on final grades without defining how they can improve their work in order to achieve these grades.

109. The proportion of students gaining A level grades A to E in 2001 was close to the national average. The proportion gaining grades A and B was slightly above the national average. In 2000 and 1999, results overall were similar. The proportion gaining the higher standards has increased steadily over the last three years. This represents an improvement in standards over this period. There were some differences between the performances of boys and girls during this time, with boys achieving comparatively better results, although accurate comparisons cannot be made because of the small number of girls on the courses. Students from minority ethnic backgrounds attained similar standards to other students but the numbers were, again, too small to make accurate comparisons.

110. The standards of work currently being produced by students in Years 12 and 13 are at least average, with more than half the students producing above average work that is better than this. The overall standard is, therefore, above average. Students in Year 12 are achieving well in relation to their GCSE results, with approximately three-quarters of them predicted to gain ahead of what might reasonably be expected. Their current work shows a good understanding of the topics covered and includes some difficult calculations, which are usually completed correctly. The work of Year 13 students is also above average overall, with some students producing work that is very good. The topics covered are dealt with in sufficient depth to stretch the students and the work completed shows good understanding. Many students handle complex calculations, for example on particle physics, with confidence and are able to get accurate answers with correct units. Graph work is also done well and students are able to derive information from graphs and use it to calculate answers from experimental work. Practical work, for example on light and mechanics, is done well. The work of many students is well presented and gives them a good basis for revision, although some work falls below this standard.

111. Teaching is good overall and this helps students to learn well. Lessons are well planned to meet students' needs, teachers have very good subject knowledge and they use appropriate teaching methods to ensure that students understand key ideas. For example, in one lesson seen the

teacher used a simple demonstration to illustrate the Doppler effect and this was followed up with more challenging work on the Michelson-Morley experiments in order to introduce the topic on relativity. The time in lessons is used well and teachers expect high standards of their students. All these factors help to ensure that students learn successfully.

112. Formal assessment of students' work and progress is done through testing at the end of each module. The results are converted to A level grades and help to set targets for final grades. However, targets for improving learning in the shorter term are not always clearly identified and this is an area that should be developed. Day-to-day marking concentrates mainly on practical results, trial examination questions and assignments done for homework. Some of this marking includes comments to help students to know what they need to do to raise the standard of their work, but there are some inconsistencies in the quality of advice provided between different teachers. This is also an area that should be improved. Homework is used to good effect to extend students' learning and sometimes involves them in independent research and the use of books or information from the Internet or other computer resources.
113. Students' attitudes to work are very good. They are conscientious when working in class and they co-operate well with each other when carrying out work in small groups. For example, in one of the lessons seen, students were carrying out practical work to calculate an unknown mass from experimental findings. They organised themselves well and allocated roles within each group so that the work could be completed effectively. In another lesson, students discussed possible ways of carrying out a calculation before trying it out and comparing results. Although some students are rather diffident and passive in lessons, they contribute well when teachers ask probing questions that make them think hard about their work. This is an area that could be developed more in order to challenge students' thinking and to raise standards.
114. The department is well led and managed. There is a clear focus on developing teaching methods that will help students to learn successfully. Teaching is co-ordinated to make the most of individual teachers' strengths. New schemes of work are being developed for each A level module and they are supplemented by materials to support staff and students. For example, guidance is given on the mathematics needed for A level physics, and background reading material is provided for each topic. Although there are no formal arrangements for identifying and supporting students who are finding the work difficult, teachers are available at all times to advise students and help them to overcome problems. Students know this and they feel that the arrangements work.
115. Resources for the subject, including equipment for information and communication technology, are adequate and spending is targeted on improving learning. Appropriate uses of information and communication technology are being included in the new schemes of work. Accommodation for physics is adequate, but some laboratories are drab and uninspiring. This does not help to create a positive atmosphere for learning. However, new laboratory accommodation is under construction and this should provide a much better working environment.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

116. No courses were inspected in depth within this area of the curriculum, but all were sampled. Results in A level design and technology systems and control were above average in 2001, and students achieved what could reasonably be expected from their earlier GCSE results. In Year 13 and Year 12 lessons seen, students showed good skills in the design and manufacture of a variety of practical electronic devices. Lessons were well planned and the specialist teacher's considerable depth of knowledge extended students' learning extremely well. Very good teaching stimulated and encouraged students to use the information technology resources available to them well. They worked hard and thoughtfully at their designs employing a logical approach, good evaluations and competent use of programmes such as Picaxe, PCB wizard, Croclips and Pro desktop to produce very good project folders and artefacts. The examination board exhibited the work of one student last year, as an example of work of the highest standard.
117. A small class of Years 12 and 13 students following A level food technology is currently taught together. Good teaching was seen which supported students' collaborative and independent

learning when they planned and evaluated rice and bread-based recipes. Students were achieving well when taking into account their earlier GCSE results.

118. Results in A level textile technology were well below average in 2001. In one lesson seen, very good teaching helped students to evaluate their designs of playsuits for children. Students showed good insight and understanding of the processes of design and manufacture.

BUSINESS

119. The school's Business Studies A level and AS level courses were inspected and reported on in depth.
120. There were too few candidates for the AVCE examination in 2001 to draw meaningful national comparisons but results in 2000 were above average. Two lessons of the AVCE course were sampled, where Years 12 and 13 were combined. One involved very good teaching that enabled students to pursue independent work well, but with effective guidance and support. The other involved students in producing an induction programme for trainee managers and they achieved competent outcomes, but some could have been more fully involved in the work.
121. Two intermediate GNVQ lessons were seen. In one teaching was excellent and in the other very good. The challenge and organisation of the work was an exceptionally strong feature of teaching. Students achieved very well, working as individuals or small groups in planning promotional campaigns, which they would later execute. Useful strategies for different media were very well developed as were students' key skills.

Business

Overall, the quality of provision in AS and A level business is **very good**.

Strengths

- Consistently very good teaching and learning across the department.
- High standards and good achievement in the subject.
- Excellent leadership and management of the department.
- Enthusiastic and knowledgeable staff.

Areas for improvement

- The use of information about students' attainment at the start of courses to determine their relative success and individual achievement.
- The use of data for staff and students to determine students' targets for improvement and to measure progress.

122. Very high A level results in 2001 placed students' attainment among the highest five per cent in the country. They also represented a very considerable improvement from 2000, when results were below average. The school took part in the pilot scheme for the new AS level, so has two recent sets of results, both of which show very high attainment. About half the AS level candidates in each year gained A or B grades.
123. Standards seen in students' work in the current Year 13 are also above average, but not as high overall as those shown by last year's results. Students' oral skills are particularly strong and support their standards of attainment well in both years, enabling them to contribute to lessons through debate, argument and discussion. Students learn business related ideas very well and express their ideas very well. Students also use oral work effectively to extend their learning, for example when taking a role in debate or arguing a point with which they do not agree. For example, in a Year 13 lesson where students were debating the advantages and disadvantages of joining the single European currency they could argue convincingly a viewpoint counter to their own. Debate is very lively, but students also listen intently to others', simulated, points of view. A

similar debate in a Year 13 lesson about local business issues again showed students' competences when debating proposed growth in local service sector industries. Students showed very good understanding of the impact such growth would have on the locality. Work in small groups, seen in a Year 12 discussion of ethical considerations, also showed good understanding of business. Subsequent presentations of their conclusions to peers also confirmed the high level of oral competence in Year 12. Other students in Year 12, studying workforce motivation, used their own knowledge effectively in discussions, combining these with primary research that they had done through questioning people about their reasons for working.

124. Girls and boys and students from all ethnic backgrounds are learning very well through their active involvement in lessons of this type. Teachers' very careful planning and organisation of lessons extend students' knowledge and understanding very well, starting from students' own experience. Students apply learning well to the world that they know, subsequently extending this very effectively into business theory and into the wider world of organisations.
125. Students' written work is of much more variable quality but, overall, it is above average. Some assignments and essays show students much less able to link theory with its application to the world of business than their oral contributions indicate. Written work is sometimes less effective than expected because much less of it than is usual is done using computers. Thus, problems that some students have of weaker handwriting, spelling and general presentation, which can be eradicated by the use of word-processing, remain. Students' achievement is generally good in both years in business studies. Many started the courses with good grades in GCSE or AS level and most apply their earlier learning very well to their studies.
126. The subject has recently become a very popular option for students in the school. Very large numbers doing GCSE produce many potential candidates for the extensive range of business courses provided in the sixth form. Numbers in AS level and A level groups are rising fast because students at all levels have a very positive view of the subject and its usefulness to them. Students understand that they will achieve well and they do. This results in unusually large classes in the sixth form, which both staff and students themselves manage very well. All students feel confident to contribute to lessons, understanding that their questions and views will be valued. Relationships in classes are very good, showing mutual respect between students and teachers. Students do homework and research diligently but the written presentation of their work is sometimes compromised by unsatisfactory provision of information and communication technology in the department. Students are thus not coming to appreciate the use of computers as an everyday, normal tool for business presentation. It is particularly disadvantageous to the appearance of some lower attaining students' work that appears much less business-like than it could.
127. Teaching is very good and a great strength. All teaching seen was very good, with some excellent teaching observed. Most lessons include excellent features. Among these are the outstanding quality of planning of all aspects of work to provide an unusually rich variety and range of teaching approaches to engage and interest students. Teachers' high level of subject knowledge ensures that students have good intellectual challenge to involve them actively in their learning. Teachers enable students to have confidence and to enjoy the subject. Very effective liaison among teachers ensures that all classes enjoy this very high quality of experience. Even with large classes, teachers ensure that all students get the regular opportunity to present ideas formally in class. Teachers' assessment of students' work is good and judgements on where students are in relation to examination standards are secure. Further refinement of assessment procedures to include tracking of progress, related to individuals' earlier achievement, would help students and teachers to measure progress more accurately, particularly if precise targets are set.
128. Departmental management is excellent. The head of department has built a highly effective team, which is already too small to match the demand for the subject in the school. Close informal and formal monitoring of all teachers' plans and work ensures that the department's commitments to very high standards are met. All staff make very good use of accommodation that is not all helpful to good learning in the subject. The department also manages well with too few resources, particularly information and communication technology, to meet the current demands of these

courses. Standards have risen sharply across the whole department and improvement since the last report has been very good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

129. AS and A level computing courses were inspected and reported on in depth. The information and communication technology component of key skills is taught, as part of general studies, in one period a week over a five-week module. There were low levels of attainment in the key skill of information and communication technology in 2001, but the school has developed improved methods to improve the situation. There is good evidence of skilled use of information and communication technology across the curriculum. In geography, for example, students use MS Excel to analyse scattergrams and coefficients of correlation. Data logging and control technology are in evidence and students make excellent use of word-processing and presentation graphics in the production of coursework and classroom presentations.

Computing

Overall, the quality of provision in AS and A level computing is **very good**.

Strengths

- Very high attainment at A level and exceptionally high indices of added value show high achievement.
- Teaching is consistently good and challenges all students to achieve highly.
- Excellent computing resources, an excellent school intranet and very good wall and corridor displays.

Areas for improvement

- Take-up and access to the subject by girls.

130. Examination results at A and AS level are consistently well above the national average. The subject record is a 100 per cent pass rate over seven successive years. High standards have been maintained since the last inspection. Students achieved the highest added value in the subject over all others in the school in 2001. A similar profile of achievement was gained at AS level. Subject performance in all recent years is high. Very few girls take the subject, but those who do achieve well. Students achieve equally well irrespective of their ethnic backgrounds.
131. Current work of students in Years 12 and 13, in lessons and on paper or in electronic form, shows standards appropriate to the level and stage of their courses. The best folders are an excellent learning resource, containing extensive handouts and website printouts, which are scrupulously indexed. In their database projects, for example, Year 12 students show they are able to apply the rules of normalisation up to level 3, using MS Access as the design tool. From some Year 13 students there are images of web pages that they have designed, supported by printouts of the underlying HTML program. All indicate good design values and facility in HTML programming language. However, some students' work is scruffy, disorganised and incomplete.
132. Teaching was good, overall, and some was very good. It was grounded in excellent subject knowledge, thorough preparation and good rapport with the students. Pace and variety were achieved using a range of methods, including individual work, discussion, well prepared quizzes, and challenging questions to help students recall previous work. Teachers keep scrupulous records of attainment, supported by good use of target-setting and tracking of progress. Quiet good humour and high levels of energy from teachers ensure that the working environment is purposeful and that students concentrate hard on their work. A particular strength is teachers' skill in directing students to questions that allow them to find their own solutions, rather than just solving problems for them.

133. In all the lessons observed there was evidence of effective learning, not only during the time-span of the lesson but also in the achievements students were able to show in coursework folders and work in progress on the system. Year 13 students write competent programs in MS Visual Basic, are able to track errors and - in one of the classes observed - learned valuable lessons about the need for precision in the use of nested loops. Year 12 students were comfortable dealing with one- and two-dimensional arrays. In class, students help each other, talk enthusiastically of their work and bring high levels of attention and diligence to it. Students respond to advice and help given by the department to those who plan to use the subject in their university studies or career.
134. Leadership and management of the department are very good. Meticulous schemes of work chart subject specifications across the year, as well as providing a context of projects and topics on a week-to-week basis. Regular checks ensure that students are on course for targeted grades, which are calculated both from commercially produced analysis and from students' current performance in module examinations. In 2001, eighteen out of twenty-four entries were at or above their target grade.
135. The school's intranet is an excellent and developing resource that is used well by sixth form students. It contains specialist data for most subjects, including task-sheets, Internet links, photographic and textual material, curricular outlines and examination dates, as well as providing internal e-mail facilities to all students.
136. The poor uptake of the subject among girls, and the absence of certificated vocational programmes in the sixth form, are issues to which the department is alert and which form part of its longer-term planning when bringing new resources into commission.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

137. AS and A level physical education was inspected and reported on in depth.
138. The AVCE course in leisure and tourism was sampled. Few students have taken the course in recent years, but standards attained in 2001 were well above average and above average in 2000. Very supportive attitudes among students and excellent relationships with teachers have a very positive effect on students' learning. One lesson was seen which was very well taught. The teacher skilfully maintained interest and helped students to develop their skills in financial planning. It centred on analysing the balance sheets of various football clubs and resulted in most students being able to analyse balance sheets for such matters as profit margins and return on capital, leading them to informed comments on financial viability.

Physical education

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

Strengths

- Teaching is very good; teachers have excellent subject knowledge and expectations are high.
- The quality of learning is very good.
- The attitudes of students are very good; they have a mature, responsible approach to their work and are very enthusiastic about the subject.
- Relationships between teachers and students are excellent and have a very positive effect upon students' learning and achievement.
- The quality of leadership and management is very good, with some excellent features.
- Very good use is made of excellent resources for learning.

Areas for improvement

- To further raise attainment in external examinations.

139. In 2001 and 2000, average results were attained at A level overall. The proportion of students attaining grades A or B in 2001 was above average. In 1998, results were well above the national average and in 1999 they were below. More boys than girls take the subject, but a reasonable number of girls take both AS and A level courses.
140. Inspection evidence shows that students in Years 12 and 13 are producing work of above average standard. Students of varying competence in the subject achieve well. In practical performances many students reach very high levels of achievement in soccer, hockey, athletics and swimming. Almost all students have high levels of physical fitness. Competent students, who learn quickly, observe and analyse practical performance effectively. They talk fluently and confidently about how theory relates to practice, and about how improvement can be effected. Most students in Years 12 and 13 have good knowledge and understanding of the important factors influencing the acquisition of skills. Most students are making good progress in planning and structuring written answers so as to gain maximum marks in a short time. Physiology lessons on the effects of exercise have inspired some students to relate their principal practical activity to theory, and have increased their understanding and improved their performance as a result. The quality of students' written work varies from very good to unsatisfactory. The least competent demonstrate weaknesses in their knowledge of technical language and there are concerns about the amount and quality of their homework and the range of their extended reading.
141. Almost all students in Year 12 have made good progress since they started the course. In physiology lessons, able students show that they have a very good understanding of the vascular system and how changes occur during exercise. They draw upon their own experiences for illustrative purposes. They understand how blood pressure changes during exercise and how blood velocity decreases and then increases after it has passed through capillaries. There is evidence of good research skills and understanding of topical issues in contemporary studies by most students.
142. Teaching is of a high standard. In two-thirds of the lessons seen, teaching was very good and excellent in the others. Some aspects of teaching are excellent. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and understanding, plan their work meticulously and have very high expectations of students' work-rate and commitment. They plan their work in meticulous detail, maintaining a very good pace in lessons by using a succession of time-limited activities well. The quality of teaching is further enhanced by an infectious enthusiasm that motivates and inspires students. Procedures for assessing attainment, monitoring progress, informing students of what they must do to improve further and setting work-related targets are very good. Very good use is made of the excellent resources for learning. Very good teaching and excellent relationships between teachers and students and among the students themselves result in very good learning.
143. Students have a very responsible attitude to their work. Their enthusiasm reflects that of their teachers. Students concentrate well in lessons, pose and answer questions and complete tasks diligently. Most are able to express themselves clearly in discussion. Their work is well researched and they show good understanding in their writing and in their answers to parts of the examination questions which are features of most lessons. Students make good use of information and communication technology and use statistical methods in their presentation of data.
144. The department is very well led and managed. Leadership and management have some excellent features. Monitoring and evaluation of subject performance, changing practice, using a good range of teaching styles and making perceptive analysis of students' strengths and weaknesses are of high quality. There is a commitment to high standards throughout the department and a determination to maintain standards and raise attainment. A high proportion of students hold representative honours in school teams and also at county level. Overall, the level of attainment in practical activities is high and contributes to students' confidence and skills; it also reinforces their understanding and learning at A level.
145. The school has an extensive range of extra-curricular activities, with large numbers of students involved in early morning, lunchtime, after-school and weekend activities. Apart from taking part in

these activities, A level students assist teachers in running clubs and coaching teams of younger students.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Overall, the quality of provision in health and social care is **good**.

Strengths

- Very good teaching, particularly in planning and preparation and setting of very high expectations.
- Very good assessment, enabling teachers to help students to know what to do to improve their work.
- Very useful in-house resources, such as worksheets.

Areas for improvement

- More contributions to lessons by students.
- Linking students' extended oral contributions to assessment of the key skill of communication.
- Accommodation and resources, particularly for information and communication technology, to provide students with more vocationally oriented learning.

146. The school has provided GNVQ Advanced Health and Social Care for many years. Numbers have often been small and results have not always provided the means of making valid national comparisons. In 2001, however, results were very high, compared with the national average, and all candidates gained merits or distinctions. Present provision is for the AVCE qualification. Students in Years 12 and 13 are taking either a single A level equivalent qualification, by studying six units of the course, or a two-A level equivalent, by studying twelve units. Students attend lessons in the appropriate units and both year groups are taught together. There are more Year 13 students than Year 12.
147. The standard of work of students studying the six-unit course is lower than that shown in last year's results. Standards are mostly in the middle of the expected range. No very high or very low attainment is evident in students' current work. Attainment on the twelve-unit course covers a very wide range, reflecting the national average spread. Some higher attaining students are working at an A grade level. The work of a few less competent students shows some under-achievement. Some candidates' written work is of a much higher quality than their oral contributions to lessons indicates. Many are often unresponsive in lessons, reluctant to discuss the knowledge that they possess. Achievement is broadly good, but the department does not use data to show added value enough or to set short-term targets for students. Students on vocational courses generally say that they would welcome more personal targets to establish how much progress they are making. Progress is more apparent from scrutiny of students' written work than from listening to their contributions to most lessons. Given their standards when they started the course, most are making good progress.
148. Most students on the course display more enthusiasm for the health-related aspects of the course than for those of social care. Many aspire to careers in the health professions and are applying to higher education for places on such courses. They recognise the value of the course in fulfilling these aspirations and enjoy their work. They concentrate on written work and portfolios are neat. They use information and communication technology much less in their presentation of work than they should. Students' social development is well extended through their experience of the subject. Their work with children, for example, develops social understanding well. They are very interested in health-related matters, such as diet. This interest was well displayed in a lesson on nutrition. Students' portfolios show good, in-depth knowledge of appropriate dietary considerations in diabetes in one assignment.
149. Teaching is very good. Teachers mostly drawn from the food and textiles section of the technology department teach different units. These teachers work closely together and have developed a great deal of expertise in the subject. They plan and integrate their teaching

extremely well as a team, and have produced a very good range of in-house resources to support learning. Many lessons take place at a very brisk pace, with teachers' input well directed towards expanding students' practical experience. For example, playing with small children is well combined with the development of students' theoretical knowledge. Teachers use the restricted range of external resources well, such as the work placements where students gain the practical experience. Teachers later use this well, relating it to the theoretical aspects of the curriculum. Students would benefit from more opportunities to contribute orally to lessons and to have these contributions regularly assessed for competence in the key skill of communication.

150. The management of the subject is very good. Systems for managing GNVQ and AVCE subjects across the school have changed since the time of the last report, when these subjects were centrally managed across the curriculum. Current subject management has been highly effective in developing and embedding the new AVCE requirements, for example in maintaining the strengths developed in GNVQ systems of assessment. Accommodation in a relatively old food technology room does not match the requirements of a modern vocational course. Staff and students manage the situation well, but students' ready access to information and communication technology and other professional, subject-relevant resources is very limited and restricts the ways in which the health and social care vocational curriculum can be provided. Very few boys have taken the subject for three years, despite the career opportunities for men in this area.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

151. Art was inspected and reported on in depth.
152. Theatre studies and drama and music were sampled. Students achieved the standards that could reasonably have been expected in A level theatre studies in 2001. Very good teaching was seen in a Year 12 lesson that helped students to evaluate live drama, following a theatre visit on the previous evening. In Year 13, good teaching developed students' confidence to direct and perform a scene from *The Beggars' Opera*. Very few students study music in most years and meaningful national comparisons of attainment are not possible. Numbers have increased slightly this year. AS and A level students are taught together in most lessons, because of the small numbers involved. In the single lesson seen, very good teaching took account of students' different levels of attainment well and ensured that they improved their skills in musical notation.

Art

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good.
- Year 12 students have high standards and considerable potential.
- Achievement in both Years 12 and 13 is good.

Areas for improvement

- Year 13 students do not integrate critical research into their visual studies enough.
- Single lessons have adverse effects on the depth of sixth form work.
- Students have no sixth form studio in which they can regularly have access to work in progress.

153. During the last four years, students' standards of attainment have usually been above average or higher. In 2001 results were outstanding - among the highest five per cent in the country. AS level results in 2001 were very much weaker. Few students attained the A or B grades. Over a third chose not to continue with the subject after AS level, but several lower attaining students continued with the course to become the current Year 13.
154. Current attainment in Year 13 reflects these lower standards. Students took a long time to settle into the rigorous demands of the AS level course last year, being particularly weak in their understanding of how to link research and theory into their practical studies. All assessment evidence shows teachers making constant references as to how to improve this to meet the assessment objectives of the examination. However, students' work still shows that major improvement is needed in these aspects. Students are generally much stronger in their practical two- and three-dimensional skills work. Here standards are often good. Sometimes the standard of mark-making, for example using paint, in students' visual preparation and exploration is better than that shown in their final pieces. Year 13 students are starting, this year, to understand how to synthesise research and practical work better and the minority of higher attaining students can do this effectively. Examples were seen in three-dimensional work, where work experience in a pottery, combined with research into theory of glazes, is informing some ceramics work. Another example shows an interest and competence in illustration, which is contributing to a project linking a student's English studies about writing for children and an art project on illustrating a book. In such examples, the integration required between critique and practical work is occurring to the expected degree. However, in most other students' work, research is shallow, insufficiently developed and too dissociated from their practical work. The range of attainment in Year 13 spans the range expected nationally. Given their low starting points from AS level, students' achievement this year is good. The current Year 12 students are very different. These students have started with much more positive attitudes and show much greater potential. A wide range of standards exists in this group, but they are above average overall. These students are already achieving well in all aspects of their work and show good understanding of the need to link theory with practice in their critical studies and other work.

155. The two-year groups have different attitudes to the subject. Students respond very differently to the very useful lunchtime seminars that the department offers to discuss and evaluate students' work. Year 12 generally recognise the value of these and welcome the opportunity. Most of Year 13 were reticent about these sessions and did not learn from them as much as they could. However, attitudes in Year 13 are beginning to change. Students' personal development through the subject is much more evident in Year 12. In one lesson, mini-presentations to their peers of work in progress, for example, showed students of differing levels of competence to be progressing well.
156. Teaching overall is good. The team is quite newly formed and knowledge and understanding are now good among them. One-to-one support in classes is the key method of providing advice, help and challenge to meet students' individual needs. This process has been much more successful with the current Year 12 students than it was for students last year. Students' own response is making the main difference rather than the quality of teaching. Teachers place appropriate emphasis on each aspect of the assessment objectives and guide students appropriately towards accomplishing these. Skills are taught well, in students' prior phases of art education, because standards in mark-making in various media and in construction techniques in three-dimensional work are strong in the sixth form. Refinement of these skills is appropriately taught. Teachers' expectations that students will develop work independently are high, but not always met.
157. Management of the department is good, as it was at the time of the last inspection. Students' progress is regularly checked and tracked and good advice is given about improvement needed. Two factors adversely influence standards and quality for sixth formers. Single 60-minute lessons are very unhelpful, especially for lower attaining students who cannot settle to develop the required degree of depth in work in this limited time. This difficulty is made worse by students having no separate sixth form space or studio where they can leave work in progress, so that it is readily accessible during the day. This situation will remain when the projected new art block is brought into use, as no sixth form studio is planned for it.

HUMANITIES

158. Geography, history, sociology and religious studies were inspected and reported on in depth.
159. Economics, classical studies and some elements of humanities in the general studies course were sampled. In economics, students achieved average standards in 2001; in a Year 13 lesson, a very good variety of teaching methods and activities helped students to revise their knowledge and understanding of aspects of the U.K. economy well. In a very good Year 13 lesson in classical studies, teacher and students achieved a very effective learning partnership, like that of a university seminar, in discussion of aspects of the *Aeneid*, and very effective learning resulted. Two lessons in general studies were observed. In both teaching was good. The course has a positive impact on students' learning over a wide range of other subjects. The modules on society, values and beliefs fulfil the requirements of the local Agreed Syllabus for religious education for sixth formers.

Geography

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

Strengths

- Very good AS level results.
- Students achieve well and make very good progress, given their earlier attainment.
- Teaching and learning are good; teachers have good knowledge and understanding.
- Lessons are well structured and interesting, and well planned to raise attainment.

Areas for improvement

- Better access to resources to accelerate the learning of all students.
- Information and communication technology and network facilities in the department area to better support learning and attainment.

160. Standards are above average. In 2001, A level results were average, overall, and 11 of the 28 students entered achieved Grades A or B. Half the students performed better than expected from their GCSE results, although one student was unsuccessful. There were no significant gender or ethnic differences in performance. The few minority ethnic students achieve well. AS results were high and represent good achievement. Of the 21 candidates, eight achieved an A or B grade. Many students achieved better than expected from their earlier attainment, and two students achieved grades much higher than could reasonably have been expected from their previous results in GCSE examinations. Following the last inspection, A level results initially declined, particularly in the attainment of grades A and B. Since 2000, standards have risen significantly to be above average in the proportion of higher grades attained. A positive ethos to ensure further improvement is apparent.
161. Standards of work in lessons and as judged by an analysis of the students' work are above average. Year 12 students have good knowledge and understanding of the introductory topics and have clear ideas of weathering processes. Higher attainers identify the odd one out from groups of four examples, to reinforce their prior learning well. Lower attaining students confuse weathering and erosion features. Students make carefully constructed transects of the salt marshes and the coastal vegetation, showing a good theoretical application of geographical skills. Fieldwork continues to be of a high standard, as at the last inspection, although the completion of students' fieldwork investigations was cancelled because the dunes were closed by concerns over foot and mouth disease. Nevertheless, students' studies show well how moisture, soils and vegetation cover change on the sand dunes. Data were collected in the field and carefully analysed. Competent students make particularly good use of graphs. Although the application of fieldwork techniques is not as diverse as reported in the last inspection, lower attaining students need more support. Students attain high levels of knowledge and understanding in Year 13, both from lessons and over time - for example, in explaining why people move from rural to urban areas in Africa. One talented student explained very clearly why the Masai people were drawn from the rural areas to the urban centres. From personal experience, she was able to explain why men and women accepted low paid urban jobs to support the rural family. Case study presentations help students clarify their thinking.
162. Overall, teaching and learning are good and in two lessons out of the four observed very good standards were observed. Lessons are well planned and teachers use a variety of thinking skills to encourage students to learn successfully. In a Year 13 class, for example, students sorted statements referring to earlier work on volcanoes and then extended their learning to locate more detailed examples. In discussion, they identified case studies of hazardous volcanic environments well. Teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of the subject. The skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology are used well, although occasionally the language becomes too sophisticated and students who are unsure of the meanings of geographical terms make spelling errors. However, in the better lessons, the good quality of support by individual teachers encourages students to learn as well as they can and to achieve high standards. Teachers have high expectations and give good guidance to discussions in small groups. In response to very good teaching, students often learn at a good pace, seen, for example, in their analysis of data to graph the growth of Tokyo's population successfully. Relationships are very good and students are enthusiastic. Study techniques are reinforced during lessons and students are encouraged to consider examples on a global scale. Independent study makes good use of the Internet and resources in the library, although students need easier access to information and communication technology to assist their independent learning.
163. The department is very well led. The head of department and the school's leadership group have co-ordinated the development of a new team for geography. Their priority was to raise attainment. In 1999 and 2000 GCSE results were lower than in previous years, although at the national average. More students joined the advanced course with lower GCSE grades. Following staff changes, three teachers were appointed from September 2000, two of whom were newly qualified. The department's leader has guided their professional development very effectively.

Documentation has focused on curricular change. The revised schemes of work are very clear and well structured to guide teaching and learning. Classroom practice is monitored regularly. Good practice is disseminated throughout the department. Students are given additional tutorials. The three-year monitoring and evaluation action plan and the use of prior assessment records have begun to raise attainment at A level. Mock examination results at AS and A level have improved. Standards are beginning to rise towards their previous levels. Overall, resources are good, although there is no access to computers for students in the geography rooms. The accommodation is satisfactory but rooms are in considerable need of the scheduled programme of renovation.

History

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

Strengths

- A level results in 2001 were well above the national average, with most students adding good value to their earlier attainment.
- The teaching of history is good overall; one lesson seen was excellent.
- Teachers have a very good command of their subject and plan interesting ways to encourage students to discuss and to learn.

Areas for improvement

- A better understanding of how to link and evaluate historical events.
- More opportunities for all students to benefit from practice in examination techniques.
- Resources to support students' research better.

164. A level results in 2001 were well above average and were at this standard in two of the last three years. There is a rising trend in the number of students gaining higher grades, and this shows further improvement from the well above average results reported at the time of the last inspection. In the most recent examination, almost half gained grades A or B and all but one student, who did not attend lessons, gained at least a pass grade. This success rate is above the national average. All students were successful in the first AS examinations and improved on the high level of their results in GCSE examinations. There are no significant differences in attainment by those of different sex or ethnic groups. All students completed the course satisfactorily, with most showing good achievement in relation to their previous attainment.
165. Observation of lessons and from the analysis of students' work confirm that current Year 13 students' standards are well above average, and they are achieving very well. Attainment in the two Year 12 AS groups is a little above what might reasonably be expected at this stage of the course. The performance of the current Year 13 group is well above average, because students are enthusiastic, and read and research widely. The level and breadth of discussion are very well informed. Students are fully committed to succeed and have benefited from the new programme of study.
166. Students analyse sources of evidence critically and evaluate them effectively with impressively balanced and convincing arguments. Year 13 have benefited from the opportunities to extend the depth and breadth of their knowledge and understanding of historical periods. The Russian Revolution and American Civil Rights issues have enlightened and challenged students to understand historical themes better. Year 12 students have good understanding of historical events, and show a deeper understanding of topics such as Nazi Germany and social conditions in Britain after the Second World War. Talented students make very clear and concise notes from working in small groups and contribute well to discussion. Students in Year 13 articulate their views with confidence and persuasion when working in small groups and produce well balanced and convincing arguments in full class debate. A Year 12 group, however, did not readily discuss in pairs and preferred to learn independently. There are occasionally marked differences between girls' and boys' skills in class discussion, although different groups vary in this respect. Students' work in small groups and with *Powerpoint* presentations is well considered and prepared.

However, there are few opportunities in lessons for the use of information and communication technology, although students make considerable use of the history web site in independent work.

167. Students' written work provides good opportunities for them to improve their style of writing and develop a more mature examination technique. The writing of the most competent students is fluent and persuasive. Arguments are coherent. They achieve very well. Although lengthy, writing of less competent students lacks sufficient analysis and interpretation in answering questions. Some students need to develop a greater awareness of what is required.
168. Students learn very well in their sixth form history courses and show clear progress in the quality of their thinking and writing. Teaching is well focused and teachers are very experienced in sixth form work. This, together with very positive attitudes and commitment to scholarship and independent work of higher attainers, raises the attainment of all students.
169. The quality of teaching is good, overall. It was very good in one lesson and excellent in another of the five lessons observed. Teachers' subject knowledge is very good. Lessons are well planned and challenge students to meet the required examination standard. Rapid fire question and answer techniques help students to develop the key skill of communication very well. In a Year 12 lesson this technique drew very well on students' prior knowledge to improve their understand of the methods that Hitler adopted to gain power in Germany in the 1930s. Teaching methods encourage students to enjoy history and to achieve very well. Individual support from teachers enables students to become more familiar with the interpretation of sources of evidence. Teachers are all very knowledgeable and their own enthusiasm for the subject encourages students to make links between the methods that leading politicians used to dissipate racial tension in America. The positive rapport between the teachers and students is clear. Students appreciate that they are taught well and respond accordingly. Teachers mark and assess students' work carefully to help them to improve.
170. The department has responded to the last inspection positively and teaching has improved. However, resources are restricted, and there are too few reference books to support students' independent learning.
171. Leadership and management of the department are very good and effectively support very good teaching and learning. A confident and enthusiastic teacher leads the department very effectively. The new courses at AS and A level are well supported by detailed schemes of work. Good effective teaching and learning enable students to attain well above average standards in examinations. Teachers regularly observe each others' lessons and compare successful methods.

Sociology

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good and ensures effective learning.
- Students' presentations are well researched and well structured.
- Almost all students use information communication technology confidently and well.
- Students' attitudes to learning are very good.

Areas for improvement

- Raising attainment in external examinations.
- More comment in the marking of students' work, especially that of lower attainers, and more precise targets for improvement.
- To ensure that all students contribute orally in lessons.

172. In 1998 and 1999 A level results in sociology matched the national average. In 2000 and 2001 results were below average and well below average respectively, both for the proportions of students achieving pass grades or grades A or B. Students did not achieve the standards that they should have done, based on their overall performance in GCSE examinations. Current achievement of students in Years 12 and 13, based on standards observed during the inspection, is above average overall. The observed improvement in achievement has followed recent changes in the management and staffing of the subject. Achievement in Year 13 is markedly better than that shown by recent examination results. Students in Year 12 have made a good start to their course. Their conceptual understanding is better than that normally found at this stage, especially as they have not previously studied sociology. Their achievement is good. Many more girls than boys take the subject.
173. Year 13 students have a good understanding of the theoretical foundations of the subject, of individual theorists and some research studies. They are able to interpret in detail findings from qualitative and quantitative research. A particular strength of Year 13 students is the detailed content of their well-researched presentations. Written work is well expressed. Competent students who learn quickly give polished presentations; they are articulate and expand key points and phrases well. Less competent students rely upon reading of their text. Most students use *Powerpoint* technology with increasing confidence and almost all have well developed information and communication technology skills. The planning of presentations is impressively good, especially that of higher attainers, who have very good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the research methods that they use. Competent students are adept at analysing and interpreting data, and drawing conclusions from it. Most students have well-organised files containing a good volume of personal work, including much with use of information and communication technology. Higher attainers achieve high standards of written accuracy and presentation. However, much of the written work of lower attainers in Years 12 and 13 lacks the detailed information necessary to provide a good basis for revision for the examination.
174. Teaching is good. It shows secure and confident understanding of the subject. Planning of lessons and of units of work is good. Clear explanations are given. Intended learning outcomes and key questions are well identified. Tasks present a good challenge, especially for higher and middle attaining students. Expectations of attainment and work rate are satisfactory. However, the pace of lessons is not always brisk, and too much time is allotted to some activities to extend students enough. Relationships between teacher and students and among students are good. Teaching recognises students' strengths and shortcomings well. Resources for learning are satisfactory and are used effectively. In most lessons, searching questions are asked which enable students to extend and reinforce their learning. Homework is set and marked promptly. Evaluative comments on students' work, although often short, are generally helpful; however, they do not consistently point out precise targets for improvement.
175. Learning is good overall. Students extend their knowledge and understanding well enough in most lessons. Their attitudes are very good. They are attentive and conscientious and make good progress in improving their research skills. In discussion, they show interest and insight. Most are keen to express their ideas but many remain passive, but interested, listeners.
176. The head of department provides satisfactory leadership and management. Issues for development have been suitably identified. Schemes of work are informative and the reference files provided for students are good. Worksheets and other departmentally produced resources are helpful to learning.

Religious Studies

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

Strengths

- Students now achieve well; examination results are improving.
- Students show good understanding and apply their learning well.
- Teaching is good; varied activities help students develop their knowledge and understanding well.

Areas for improvement

- Students in Year 12 are often reluctant to draw conclusions.
- Formal assessment systems are not firmly established, to track progress and to set targets for improvement.
- The quantity of resources is low and there are no links with non-Christian places of worship.

177. For several years examination results have been broadly average, with a regular decline in the number of candidates. In 2001, A level results were low, although the number of candidates was insufficient to draw realistic national comparisons. Those students did not do well for reasons of absence, illness and, more pertinently, GCSE performances below those usual for A level candidates in the school. By informing students more of the philosophic and ethical content of the courses, the school has been successful in attracting increasing numbers of students who combine their studies with a wide variety of other courses. Of the 17 AS candidates in 2001, ten attained grade A or B. No students abandoned the course, despite acknowledging that it was by no means an easy option. Moreover, 16 of them are following the A level course with great interest and enthusiasm. The success of the school's approach is clear, and 17 students are currently following the AS programme in Year 12.
178. The work seen during the inspection, both in lessons and in analysis of samples of students' writing, confirms that both girls and boys are achieving well and attaining above average standards. The highest attainers in Year 12 demonstrate a good degree of independent thought and systematic reasoning - for example, in essays contrasting the dualism of Plato and Aristotle. Effective arguments in favour of monotheism were also well balanced by the empathy a committed Christian student showed towards the perceptions of an increasingly secularised society. Some Year 12 students have been slow to develop fluency in whole-class debate and Year 12 students in general have been reluctant to draw conclusions, despite good analyses of the pros and cons of arguments. Such a response is also apparent in their written work. This is not the case in Year 13, where students reveal good judgement and a strong awareness of the risks of assuming an absolute stance. One student expressed their approach very well: " We argue, but we don't put people down. Of course, we expect them to give reasons for what they believe." Debate is regularly sharp but fair. Students' deepening knowledge and understanding are apparent from the ease with which they cite, for example, Freeman, Cupitt, and Jenkins to support differing interpretations of the resurrection of Jesus. Wide reading and research are evident in written work. Students put clearly into historical perspective the cosmological arguments of Aquinas and Russell; they grasp well the application of ethics to medical, social and environmental issues. However, not all students structure and illustrate their essays well enough.
179. Teaching is good. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject and share their enthusiasm very well with students. Lessons move at a good pace and make effective use of a variety of techniques to develop understanding. For example, a recording of music from a mass by Berlioz and a print of a Michelangelo mural helped to illustrate perceptions of life after death and stimulate discussion in Year 13. The use of a selection of puzzles in a Year 12 lesson well illustrated teleological arguments for the existence of the universe. The cry of one student, "That's Paley's watch!", demonstrated not only the effectiveness of the illustration, but very good recall of earlier learning by the class. Lessons are well planned and the different components of the courses are well linked so that students learn in a balanced way. Teachers consistently use and explain correct terminology so students express themselves correctly. Questions are usually well focused and responses valued, but at times the more reticent students are not drawn sufficiently into discussion so their learning cannot readily be assessed.
180. While work is regularly marked with care, the formal assessment systems already prepared by the newly appointed head of department are not yet running. In consequence, it is not possible to monitor precisely the progress of individual students. The quality of resources is good but there are too few books for all students to have personal copies of the most helpful texts. Although there are strong constructive links with local Christian clergy, similar links with other faiths have not been developed.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

181. English language and English literature courses were observed and collectively reported. French was also inspected and reported. Students of German attained well above average standards at A level in 2000 and 2001. In both lessons seen in Years 12 and 13, very good teaching enabled students to develop their confidence, accuracy and ideas in the foreign language to attain well above average standards.

English

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

Strengths

- In most years a high proportion of students achieves the highest grades in A level examinations.
- Teaching is good; teachers use effective methods that result in successful learning.
- Very good relationships between teachers and students have a positive effect on students' learning.

Areas for improvement

- Some lower attaining students do not achieve as well as they should.
- The department does not make full use of prior assessment to establish challenging targets for students.

182. A level results in English literature in recent years have been above and sometimes well above average. However, in 2001 they fell to slightly below average. The proportion gaining the highest grades, A and B, was in line with the national average, but a few students did not pass the examination. In A level English language, results have varied from above average to well below average in 2000. In 2001, they improved after the previous weak year, and results were close to average. The proportion gaining the highest grades was higher than average, but one fifth of the students did not achieve a pass grade. Girls and boys gain similar grades in English language in most years, but girls did much better in 2001. There is no apparent difference in the achievement of students as a result of their different ethnic backgrounds. Relatively few boys study English literature. In 2001, most students achieved as well as could reasonably have been expected in English language, from their standard at GCSE, but slightly below expectation in English literature. Results in AS examinations in 2001 were good in both English literature and English language. In both subjects, nearly all students passed and over half gained the highest grades.

183. The standard of work of current Year 13 students is well above average in English literature and above average in English language. Students are building well on their success at AS level. In English literature, they read challenging texts with interest and understanding. For example, a student of average competence was able to discuss the opening pages of Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* with insight. She showed how the author portrays the lack of confidence of the central character, Stevens, through his obsession with minutiae in his conversations and thoughts. Students have excellent note-taking skills, which help them to record and learn from the different viewpoints that they and their teachers express in lessons. Most develop their ability to structure critical essays very well and make close reference to the text to back up their ideas. In English language, high attaining students develop confidence and skill in the close analysis of a variety of texts. Less competent students are still dependent on teachers to help them to structure their analyses. Students have recently completed short research projects. Most have a good grasp of appropriate methods for carrying out small-scale investigations into the use of language. However, some average and lower attaining students do not refer to a wide enough range of literature, with the result that analysis of their findings lacks depth.

184. In Year 12, students are making good progress from their earlier GCSE level of work. English literature students, especially, plan and re-draft essays carefully, with the result that their final versions are very well organised. They confidently express well-informed views about set texts in class discussion. When they read aloud they show their insight into characters and the relationships between them. For example, one class gave a sensitive reading of the first scene of Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie*, which brought the text to life. In English language, most students have developed a good understanding of specialist vocabulary, which helps them to analyse texts more precisely. Some can write gripping, imaginative narrative and use their skills of analysis to identify the way in which their own writing appeals to a specific audience. However, several average and lower attaining students still make mistakes with spelling, punctuation and syntax.

185. Overall, the quality of teaching in the four lessons seen was good and helped students to learn well. Teachers use a variety of teaching methods and plan a range of appropriate activities that interest and motivate students. For example, a Year 12 class consolidated their knowledge of specialist vocabulary through a quick quiz at the start of the lesson. In small group and whole-class discussion, they then used a stylistic framework to classify the names of well-known chocolate bars and opticians. This developed their skills of textual analysis and communication. The lesson ended with a grammar-bingo game, in which they practised their knowledge of grammatical terminology. Teachers have very good skills in managing students and move classes smoothly from one activity to another. Their sound knowledge of texts enables them to ask challenging questions that help students to build on their existing knowledge. Relationships between students and teachers are very good and make a significant contribution to students' learning in all lessons. Students recognise teachers' expertise. They share their views willingly with teachers and are prepared to ask questions when they do not understand. Teachers often help students to improve the organisation and structure of their essays considerably by writing full, helpful comments on the initial drafts of their work. However, their marking of some lower attaining students' work is sometimes too critical, and provides them with insufficient support or advice about how to improve. Occasionally, less competent students are also given insufficient guidance in lessons. For example, some students in a language lesson had difficulty in analysing articles from journals because the teacher did not provide them with a clear framework for the analysis.
186. Leadership and management of English in the sixth form are good. Teachers work well as a team and support each other through the sharing of resources and ideas for teaching. The head of department has identified possible reasons for the fall in attainment last year and this has led to an appropriate action plan and further monitoring of teaching. Recent staffing problems have been overcome. Resources in the department are adequate but the range of literature in the library is insufficient. It does not encourage students to read very widely and does not sufficiently support their independent learning. The department has access to information about the performance of students at GCSE, prior to their studying in the sixth form. However, not all teachers make full use of this prior assessment data to establish challenging targets for students.

French

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

Strengths

- Students' use and understanding of French is increasingly fluent, accurate and authentic.
- Teaching is very good, overall, and much of it is excellent.
- Examination results are very high compared with national averages.
- Students learn very well, especially independently, with a very high degree of motivation.
- The subject is very well led, contributing strongly to increasingly high standards.

Areas for improvement

- Accommodation is dispersed.
- More resources in the library.

187. Students' results at A level have risen steadily over recent years. In 2001, nearly two thirds of candidates attained grade A. No student attained lower than grade B. The average points scored approached twice the national average, and results were in the top five per cent of schools, nationally. Students' achievement of added value from their GCSE results has been very good. They achieved well also when compared with their other subject results. Virtually all students passed the AS examination in 2001; three-quarters of them attained grades A or B. Once committed to the course, all of them completed it. The vast majority were also motivated to continue their studies to A level. Many students express their intention to read French at university. Fewer boys than girls study French, but their numbers are rising. Their achievements are comparable to those of girls.

188. The evidence from work seen in lessons and in students' files shows that standards are well above average. In Year 12, students use French naturally in conversation. They discuss a wide variety of topics, exchanging well-informed and well-considered views. Students themselves confirm that they develop their own ideas and opinions just as positively as their linguistic skills. They employ a broad range of words and structures with increasing fluency. By Year 13, a simple graph of the incidence of violence in French schools is all they need to stimulate a thought-provoking and exhilarating debate, where both content and language are complex but expressed with precision. The very good French they regularly hear from teachers, the French assistant, and recordings ensures that students' accents regularly convey the distinctive features of authentic intonation, which are characteristic of work at the highest grades. Students manipulate language very well. In written work, they reveal an awareness of style and register appropriate to the task. They sustain full control of the language, whether invoking powerful emotions in poetry, as in Year 12, or in Year 13 students' sharp journalistic criticism of the behaviour of celebrities.
189. Teaching is of high quality. Teachers are knowledgeable and experienced linguists, who use French themselves, and expect students to use it, as the natural medium of communication. In consequence, lessons cease to be French lessons and become lessons in history, politics, philosophy, morality, or anything - which just happen to be conducted in French. English barely features, and when it does, it is used only to clarify a complex grammatical point or to illustrate a stylistic improvement. Very good planning enables students to bridge the gap very well between GCSE work and the much higher demands of AS in Year 12, where students delightedly stress the extent and quality of the French they now feel confident to use. They rightly ascribe much of their achievement to the constructive feedback from teachers that each regularly receives. Grammatical points are integrated smoothly into lessons, supporting accurate and idiomatic communication. Regular assessment and detailed marking show students how to refine their skills even further. Teachers provide students with very good strategies to research and apply their skills independently, using the language for real purposes. Files show that students are well used to locating and re-using authentic material from newspapers, magazines and the Internet.
190. Leadership and management are of high calibre. The recently appointed head of department is committed to the same ethos of development and improvement so firmly established by his predecessor. Critical analyses of examination results have helped sharpen the focus of teaching and learning. The present staff forms a very well co-ordinated team so that students have the benefit of a wide range of expertise. Accommodation is dispersed over different floors, which compromises the atmosphere of a distinct French area. There is a very good range of resources, including satellite television and a computer room. These help students to learn the most up-to-date and authentic French. The library contains an appropriate range of books and magazines which, given the high competence of the students, should be expanded even further.