

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **BAINES SCHOOL**

Poulton-le-Fylde

LEA area: Lancashire

Unique reference number: 119813

Headteacher: Mr R J M McCowan

Reporting inspector: Mr D Morton  
13154

Dates of inspection: 18 – 21 February 2002

Inspection number: 191636

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	11 - 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr D Jesson
Date of previous inspection:	February 1997

**INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM**

<b>Team members</b>			<b>Subject responsibilities (sixth form)</b>	<b>Aspect responsibilities (sixth form)</b>
13154	David Morton	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it? How well are students taught? How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students? How well is the school led and managed?
31779	Janet Harrison	Lay inspector		Students' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
23926	Douglas Howorth	Sixth-form inspection coordinator	Geography	The school's results and achievements
27803	Joseph Clark	Team inspector	Religious education	
2644	Mel MacLeaod	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
11975	Thelma McIntosh-Clark	Team inspector	English	
19452	Anthony Pearson	Team inspector	History Physical education	
23709	Ann Powell	Team inspector	French	
31680	Philip Redican	Team inspector	Art and design	
22985	Jacqueline Sparkes	Team inspector	Biology	
21866	David Tracey	Team inspector	Chemistry	
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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Baines School is a co-educational, non-denominational, voluntary-aided comprehensive school for pupils aged 11 to 18. There are 1047 pupils on roll of whom 213 are sixth-form students. The school, established by foundation in 1717, serves pupils from the immediate area, but many of the students who join the sixth form from other schools travel considerable distances. The pupils' background is mixed but generally better than the overall national picture. Pupils start school in Year 7 with overall levels of attainment that are above the national average. The school's population is stable, only 0.4 per cent of pupils joining or leaving the school except at the usual times. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals, 4.8 per cent, is below the national average. The percentage of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds, 1.4 per cent, is low; of these, those speaking English as an additional language, 0.7 per cent, is low and none is at an early stage of language acquisition. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs, including statements, 8.9 per cent, is below the national average; the proportion with statements is also below the national average. Just over half of pupils enter the sixth form, which also attracts around 30 per cent of its students from other schools. The school has gained the Sportsmark Award and Investor in People status.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

Baines School is a very good school with a very good sixth form. Relationships with staff and between pupils and sixth-form students are excellent and contribute significantly to the good quality teaching and learning. Throughout the school, achievement is good in relation to pupils' and students' earlier attainment. Results in national tests at 14 and public examinations at 16, 17 and 18 are consistently well above national averages. The leadership and management of the school are very good and contribute significantly to the outstanding achievements of the school. The school provides good value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- Results in National Curriculum tests and public examinations are well above average and pupils achieve well.
- Relationships and the personal development of pupils and sixth-form students are excellent.
- The school provides a very effective learning environment.
- Teaching is usually good, often very good and occasionally excellent.
- There is a full curriculum enjoyed by pupils and sixth-form students; it is significantly enriched by a wide range of additional activities and opportunities welcomed by pupils and students.

#### **What could be improved**

- There are pockets of underachievement amongst some of the highest attainers, within some subjects and by some boys.

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

Improvement since the previous inspection in 1997 is good. Results have seen a steady overall trend of improvement and are now well above average. The quality of teaching and learning has improved significantly so that now pupils and sixth-form students have far more opportunities to contribute to lessons, and enhance their own learning through research and independent study. Improvements have also been made to further areas of concern expressed at the previous inspection: the school is now more open and pupils, sixth-form students and staff play a more active part in decision-making processes; the use of information and communication technology [ICT] is more widespread in its support of learning; the school

has recently committed itself to a trial provision of lockers for younger pupils. Systems to manage wet or inclement lunchtimes still do not always work, with the result that many younger pupils, in particular, are not always in the best state of readiness for afternoon lessons.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 11 and 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	
well above average	A
above average	B C
average	
below average	D E
well below average	

Results in national tests for 14-year olds were well above average in 2001 and an improvement on previous years, especially in English. Results in mathematics and science have been well above average in the last few years; in 2001 English results, too were well above average. These results indicate good achievement for boys and girls of all levels of attainment when compared with their attainment on entry to the school. Compared with the results of similar schools, results were also well above average in English and science and higher than this in mathematics. Results are improving at a rate that is above the national trend.

GCSE results have been well above the national average in all of the last four years. Results are improving at a rate similar to the national improvement. Results overall in 2001 were well above average compared with all schools and with similar schools. They indicate good achievement when compared with pupils' prior attainment two years earlier in the national tests for pupils aged 14. Girls' results were better than boys in 2001 but boys' results have improved significantly in the last two years. Across the full range of grades A\* to G, a slightly higher percentage of boys achieve five or more grades than girls. However, girls achieved a significantly higher proportion of the higher A\* and A grades than boys. In history, religious education, physical education, media studies, French, German, music and art and design no A\* grades were achieved by boys. In all, 4 per cent of all grades achieved by boys and girls were at A\* and 11.4 per cent were at A. Gifted and talented pupils are beginning to be formally identified through assessment strategies; the school hopes that this will result in a larger proportion of A\* and A grades being achieved as well as the overall proportion of five or more A\* - C grades improving further. In food technology, resistant materials, systems and control and art and design very few pupils achieved grades A\* and A. In history and design and technology approaching half, and in art and design a third, of all pupils entered for GCSE examinations did not achieve A\* to C grades. This represents significant underachievement in these subjects in comparison with other subjects taken at GCSE level in the school. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in all years. The performance of pupils from ethnic minority groups and those with English as an additional language was in line with other pupils in the year group. The school exceeded its appropriate yet challenging targets set for performance in GCSE examinations in 2001.

At AS and A-level in 2001, results were maintained at well above average levels. At A-level, results were highest in biology, chemistry, English literature, design and technology, and physical education. Results in art and design, French, and religious studies were well below average and in history and communication studies below average.

Standards of work observed in classes are generally above average; pupils and sixth-form students are on track to achieve the very good results of the recent past. Pupils' and sixth-form students' achievement is good; this is a reflection of good teaching. Standards are above average in literacy and numeracy and most pupils make good use of their emerging ICT skills to enhance their work in most subjects.



## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	<b>Very good.</b> Pupils have very positive attitudes, are attentive and concentrate well in class. They are keen to do their best.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	<b>Very good.</b> Behaviour about school is good and in lessons almost always very good.
Personal development and relationships	<b>Excellent.</b> The personal development of pupils and sixth-form students, their attitudes to their work and whole-hearted participation in all that the school offers have a significant impact on their achievement. Excellent relationships between pupils and students and with staff are an outstanding characteristic of the school.
Attendance	<b>Good.</b> Attendance is above the national average. Unauthorised absence is below average.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of learning and teaching is good throughout Years 7 to 11 because pupils and teachers enjoy excellent relationships and high expectations. Pupils work hard and enthusiastically and teachers use a good variety of methods to maintain their interest throughout lessons and meet the learning needs of all pupils. For example, in the best teaching the approaches to learning applied for boys and that for girls is sometimes different. Such variety is sometimes seen amongst the Shooting Stars Club, whose members tackle demanding tasks suited to their particular learning needs and aspirations. Pupils are curious and keen to discover things. Teachers give opportunities for this through research and independent study; resources for this have been well developed and pupils benefit from expertise and effective guidance when working in the main learning resource area. For example, younger pupils have presented work to a high standard about the care of pets through detailed research and good use of ICT. Through effective marking and discussion with pupils, teachers set suitable targets for pupils to improve their work. The school's assessment practices also inform what goes on in lessons, although a minority of teachers do not sufficiently use the data that exists to help them when planning lessons. Lessons usually proceed at a brisk pace. Pupils know what they are expected to learn and how they can improve, because teachers share learning goals and review pupils' progress through lessons. The work is usually sufficiently difficult to make pupils think hard; they respond to this challenge. On the few occasions when this challenge is missing, for example when the highest-attaining pupils have too little demand made of them, achievement is muted. Teachers respond well to sixth formers' keen approach to their learning and their will to succeed. More than at the previous inspection, teachers create opportunities for independent research with students taking significant responsibility for their own learning. They are helped enormously at such times by their immediate access to excellent learning resources and professional support within their own first-rate resource centre.

Pupils and sixth-form students learn well because, on balance, the quality of teaching is good in all years. It is often very good: in one lesson in four in Years 7 to 11 and in two lessons out of five in the sixth form. Occasionally, teaching is excellent. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen during the inspection. The teaching of English, mathematics and science in Years 7 to 11 is always good and frequently very good. Teachers effectively develop pupils' skills of literacy and numeracy and have responded well to the new

demands made of them in Years 7 to 9. In the sixth form, the key skills of communication, numeracy and ICT are integrated well within teaching and learning. The school is effective in striving to meet the needs of all its pupils.

#### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	<b>Very good.</b> With the exception of religious education in the sixth form, the curriculum meets statutory requirements. Provision for personal, social and health education has developed well since the previous inspection. The curriculum provides a good mix of traditional subjects with modern approaches to teaching and learning. Additionally, pupils have opportunities, that a large proportion take, to enrich their learning experiences through active participation in a very good and wide-ranging programme of regular and one-off additional extension and extra-curricular activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	<b>Very good.</b> Pupils with special educational needs do well as a result of teachers' awareness of the targets set to meet their needs.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	<b>Good.</b> Fewer than one per cent of pupils have English as an additional language and all speak English fluently. The work of all pupils is monitored and appropriate support given.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	<b>Very good.</b> The school promotes pupils' personal development and learning effectively. It provides many opportunities for all pupils to develop understanding of themselves, their relationship with others in the school, the community and beyond. The school 'feels good' as a result of its efforts to encourage pupils' personal growth, maturity and sense of responsibility.
How well the school cares for its pupils	<b>Very good.</b> The school cares very well for its pupils. Appropriate child protection procedures are in place. Heads of year and form tutors work hard to maintain a very good oversight of pupils' personal and academic development. Extensive support, monitoring and counselling are given if difficulties arise.

#### HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	<b>Very good.</b> The headteacher is effective. He has a clear sense of direction and purpose for the future development of the school. The senior management team works successfully in support of this. The management in subjects is good and heads of year successfully contribute to management's effectiveness. As a result of the features, the quality of teaching and learning is enhanced.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	<b>Good.</b> Governors are well informed and work in critical collaboration with management in the strategic planning for improvement of the school's existing impressive practice. However, the school does not meet the requirement to have a daily act of worship for all pupils or to provide religious education throughout the sixth form.
The school's evaluation of its performance	<b>Good.</b> The management structure is an effective tool in the maintenance and improvement of this very good school through thorough systems of self-evaluation.
The strategic use of	<b>Good.</b> The management of resources is strong and financial planning is good.

resources	The school seeks the best possible value for money in all aspects of its work. It relates its spending decisions appropriately to the priorities of its school improvement plan.
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### PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children like school, are expected to work hard and make good progress.</li> <li>• Behaviour is good.</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed.</li> <li>• Children's personal development is good</li> </ul>	<p>Some parents want improvements in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the amount of homework set,</li> <li>• the quality of some teaching,</li> <li>• being informed about their child's progress,</li> <li>• the readiness of the school to work with parents,</li> <li>• the lack of lockers to store books.</li> </ul>

Inspectors strongly support the positive views of parents. They also agree that the school should communicate more clearly that it understands the concerns of parents, for example about the provision of lockers, and shares their concerns. It has decided to trial lockers for younger pupils within the advice it has received from the Fire Prevention Officer; it now accepts that parents should be kept more aware of its work in attempting to resolve this issue. Inspectors disagree with parents' concerns about reports; they consider the end-of-year reports to be very good. An appropriate number of consultation evenings is held for parents to discuss their children's progress with teachers, but inspectors agree that more guidance should be given to staff to ensure that appointments are kept to time. They also find that the quality of teaching is good and often better; parents need have no concerns about the overall quality of teaching. In respect of homework, this is usually of good quality and suitable amount, but inspectors agree it is not set consistently by some teachers.

**INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM**

The sixth form is larger than average and there are 213 students on role. It has grown gradually since the previous inspection. There is a wide range of traditional academic subjects at AS and A2 level supplemented by a core of extension studies. In Year 13 there are more girls than boys. There are two students from ethnic minority backgrounds and one of these has English as an additional language though she is not at an early stage of language acquisition. Two students are identified as having special educational needs. The criteria for entry are a minimum of five grade Cs at GCSE, including English language and mathematics. Standards at the start of Year 12 are above average overall. Just over a half of pupils from Year 11 continue their education in the sixth form. A third of students join from 14 other schools and they quickly integrate and many become senior prefects. The majority of students obtain their first choice of higher education place; 96 per cent of all students continue their education in this way, including some who gain places at Oxford and Cambridge universities.

**HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS**

The sixth form is very good and deserves its high reputation in the local area. It is cost-effective. Results in A-level examinations have consistently been well above average. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, very good in two out of five lessons and occasionally excellent. Consequently, achievement is good overall with half of the students achieving very well. The quality of advice, guidance and support is outstanding. The sixth form is very well led and managed.

**Strengths**

- Results have been consistently well above average and over one third of the grades are at the higher A and B level. Results in 2001 were particularly good in biology, chemistry, design and technology, English literature and physical education.
- Teaching and learning are good and overall the students achieve well with significant numbers achieving very well.
- Leadership and management of the sixth form are very good.
- Excellent support and guidance underpin the personal and academic development of students.
- The school provides a wide range of academic courses and a very good programme of enrichment.
- The very positive attitudes, maturity and confidence of the students create a distinctive ethos in which students become excellent role models and sustain the tradition and reputation of the school.

**What could be improved**

- Results and achievement in art and design, communication studies, French, history and religious studies were not good enough in 2001. There is scope for improvement in these subjects.

*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.*

**HOW THE SIXTH FORM HAS IMPROVED SINCE THE PREVIOUS INSPECTION**

Results have remained consistently well above average and good achievement has been maintained as the sixth form has grown and become more inclusive. The quality of teaching and learning has improved and is better than the national average in the proportion that is very good or better in sixth forms.

### 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	<b>Good.</b> Results are average. Teaching is good and most students achieve well. Marking is regular but needs to be followed up more consistently.
Biology	<b>Very good.</b> Results are well above average and students achieve significantly higher grades in biology than in their other subjects.
Chemistry	<b>Good.</b> Teaching and learning are good and students achieve above average standards.
Design and technology	<b>Very good.</b> Teaching is consistently very good and as a result students achieve very well. Results are well above average and standards of work are high.
Business studies	<b>Good.</b> Teaching is good and standards are rising. Students' attitudes are very good and contribute to their good achievement.
Information and communication technology	<b>Good.</b> Results were above average in 2001 as in previous years. Students achieve well because teaching and learning are consistently good.
Physical education	<b>Very good.</b> Standards and results are consistently well above average. Teaching is always at least good and sometimes better. This, and very good attitudes, lead to good achievement.
Art and design	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Results in 2001 were well below average. Students learn to use colour thoroughly and the subject makes a good contribution to their cultural development. The pace of lessons is not rapid enough.
Geography	<b>Very good.</b> Teaching and learning are good and students achieve well. In recent years students have attained significantly higher grades than in their other subjects.
History	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Results have declined over time and are below average. Standards are now above average as teaching and learning have improved. Achievement is good.
Religious studies	<b>Good.</b> As a result of good teaching and positive attitudes students achieve well. The subject is gradually gaining popularity. Results were well below average in 2001.
English literature	<b>Very good.</b> Standards and results are well above average. Teaching and learning are very good. Students' achievements are high in relation to their prior attainment.
French	<b>Good.</b> Teaching is good, students achieve well and standards are above average. A-level results are not good enough.

In five other subjects eight lessons were seen. Teaching was very good in German and almost consistently good in the other subjects except general studies where it was satisfactory.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	The support and guidance for students through the tutorial programme are excellent. Careers guidance is very good. The use of assessment to monitor progress makes a very effective contribution to good standards and achievement.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	The sixth form is very well led and managed. Development planning has a clear focus on teaching and learning and the results are analysed and evaluated so that the senior managers and governors are aware of the strengths and weaknesses. The governing body effectively fulfils its important role in developing the sixth-form provision.

## 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"> <li>• It is friendly and teachers know and support students effectively, treating them as adults.</li> <li>• Induction, guidance and careers advice are appreciated.</li> <li>• There are good facilities for independent study.</li> <li>• There is good range of subjects and enrichment activities, suiting students' aspirations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are too few opportunities for organised sport, especially on Wednesdays.</li> <li>• Some students feel more effort should be made to integrate the sixth form and main school, although acknowledge that the school forum achieves this to a degree.</li> </ul>

Overall, students are very positive and supportive of the sixth form. Inspectors consider their views of its strengths and areas for development to be spot on.

## COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL**

#### **Results in National Curriculum tests and public examinations are well above average and pupils achieve well.**

1 When they enter the school at the age of 11, pupils' overall attainment is usually above the national average. Pupils' results in national tests at the age of 14 and in GCSE examinations at the age of 16 are well above average. When compared with their previous attainment, these results represent good achievement. Pupils of all backgrounds and levels of prior attainment make good progress as they move through the school. Standards of work seen in lessons and in scrutiny of samples of pupils' work indicate that pupils are on track to achieve similar results in 2002 to those attained in external examinations in 2001 and the previous two years. Pupils are making good progress in lessons, acquiring new knowledge, understanding and skills as a result of their own positive attitudes to their learning and the overall quality of teaching.

2 Pupils achieve very well in English in all years because the teaching is consistently very good and pupils are very keen to do well. The very effective management of the English department ensures that it is focused on the progress that pupils make in lessons and that they achieve very well in relation to their prior attainment. Pupils learn at an appropriately fast rate. When marking work, teachers indicate what pupils must do to improve further and most pupils respond diligently to this guidance. Teachers of English share a common vision for the development of work through the school. Through working and talking together, they enable pupils to receive consistently good learning experiences in the subject. Pupils' literacy skills are well developed. The quality of written work is above average and pupils read fluently, accurately and with understanding a wide variety of texts. Pupils' writing is detailed, substantial and largely accurate. There is some accomplished use of ICT in presenting work. Pupils write successfully in a variety of forms; this is seen in the writing of most pupils, not just the higher attainers. Pupils' listening and speaking skills are good; girls and boys play a full part in discussions and talk fluently and purposefully in a range of situations. For example, in a Year 11 lesson where pupils were studying 'To Kill A Mocking Bird', pupils contributed well during discussion in response to skilful questioning by the teacher. Pupils spoke fluently and with some feeling on the issues of courage and prejudice and were able to put the novel in its geographical and time context. Teachers ensure that pupils of different levels of attainment take a full and active part in discussions.

3 In mathematics, pupils achieve very well in their work, in Year 11 in relation to their standards on entry to the school. In Years 7 to 9 the national strategy has had some positive effect in raising standards further. In a Year 9 lesson, although not slavishly following the pattern of the three-part lesson encouraged by the strategy, the principles of guided support were applied well to a lesson about simultaneous equations. All pupils were working to levels that were above or well above average, although the highest attainers were not given extension activities. Pupils' very positive attitudes to their work and their very good behaviour are important factors that enable them to make good and often very good progress in lessons. In a Year 11 lesson, the teacher's very good and enthusiastic knowledge of the subject meant that clear explanations of algebraic functions were given so that pupils learned effectively and coped well with the level of work. Pupils are very attentive, for example in a Year 11 lesson on the Pythagoras Theory they rose to the challenge of calculating diagonals in cuboids; the teacher skilfully showed how daunting tasks can be broken down into a series of simple steps. As a result, pupils could identify the lengths of sides and diagonals and compute their values correctly. These lessons provide examples of why standards are well above average. The good and appropriate methodology of the teacher leads to effective learning with pupils in higher groups achieving the top grades in their work, reflecting GCSE successes. In addition, pupils in almost all lessons bring very good skills of concentration to their work. Teaching encourages pupils to think about and understand mathematics rather than merely make pupils repeat exercises mechanically.

4 In science, pupils generally perform well. They achieve standards that are well above average. In a Year 9 lesson, for example good teaching about microbes ensured that pupils understood health and safety issues related to bacteria. Pupils were very interested to investigate the results of their practical work on microbes and as a result collaborated well together in examining the number of colonies of bacteria that had been produced during a controlled incubation period. Their investigations allowed them to locate areas where bacteria flourished the most. This practical and applied approach to learning, well managed by the teacher, promoted interest and commitment and ensured that learning was acute and high standards were achieved. An analysis of work in Year 11 indicates that this attention to detail and a desire to apply learning to real situations is a reason for pupils' success in science from the moment they start courses in Year 7. Work is marked with helpful comments so that pupils can improve on past learning. The work on microbes and disease in Year 9 has a focus on the real world and pupils gain a good knowledge and understanding of how digestion works. Pupils know how to account for their investigations correctly when they come to write about them. They learn the skills of working independently and with each other. The schemes of work provide stimulating experiences in relevant scientific and real contexts that motivate pupils to maximise their progress. The good, and sometimes very good teaching, combined with pupils' purposeful and positive approaches to their work leads to good achievement.

5 The qualities evident in pupils' achievement and learning in English, mathematics and science are apparent in some other subjects sampled during the inspection. In design and technology in a Year 9 lesson there were links with their work in science as pupils considered high risk food related to food poisoning. Pupils approached their work enthusiastically and with care in a lesson where the teacher set up learning in which pupils participated actively and fully. This lesson laid down significant challenges to pupils and proceeded at a fast pace. In a music lesson with Year 9, pupils worked effectively in groups with high levels of cooperation. This, too, meant that learning was effective and progress very good. Pupils understood about the relationship of sound and time, dynamics and pace whilst working independently on composition. The work combined established instruments and keyboards, thus catering well for pupils with a range of musical skills. Good teaching of ICT with Year 7 encouraged pupils to work individually in creating spreadsheets in a task that was stretching for most pupils. High expectations of teachers that are inculcated in pupils are a further reason for the successful learning and achievement of results that are well above average in the school. At best, this is a feature across all groups of pupils. For example, the small group of Year 10 and 11 pupils identified for the 'Shooting Stars Club' is expected to succeed. All have achieved the bronze award in the Compact 2000 scheme, and many are well on the way to completing the silver award. These awards acknowledge the success of pupils in achieving a range of demanding targets, often in areas of work-related learning. These, and most other pupils in the school, achieve self-esteem through success. This in itself generates further success and when combined with effective teaching that focuses on how pupils learn, the reasons for the results achieved across the school in public tests and examinations become clear. In all subjects, pupils' standards are influenced positively by the quality of the teaching, which is seldom less than good. Pupils make a very positive contribution to their own standards through their very purposeful and enthusiastic approach to learning. The school is not complacent about the results it achieves. It is constantly seeking ways to do even better. It sets demanding targets for improvement.

### **Relationships and the personal development of pupils and sixth-form students are excellent.**

6 The school has a friendly and positive ethos within which staff, pupils and sixth-form students work hard to contribute to the overall life of the school. They value the rich learning opportunities the school provides. Pupils are generally happy at school and proud to belong to it. The good provision of care and support and the excellent guidance given to sixth formers achieves excellent relationships between all those who work in the school. This is noted as visitors cross the threshold at reception and is generally sustained throughout the inter-personal contacts that characterise a working school. This helps to create a purposeful environment for learning and personal development. Teachers contribute enthusiastically and industriously to all aspects of life within the school. The morale of teachers is high. The excellent relationships create a very good team spirit within the school. A very large proportion of pupils make very good advances in their academic and personal development through active participation in a wide range of extra-curricular enrichment activities of high quality.



7 Pastoral heads and heads of subject track carefully the overall wellbeing and development of pupils in their work and relationships in school. There is a strong correlation between the attitudes pupils bring to school, well supported by parents, the care shown to pupils by staff and their success in examinations and good achievement whilst at school. They persevere at difficult tasks, help each other, are curious and anxious to do well for its own sake. Parents are pleased their children are expected to work hard and most pupils develop a thirst for learning in subjects and about life generally.

8 In response to many of the opportunities provided for them through initiatives such as charity work, foreign exchanges to diverse cultures, experience of the arts of poetry, dance, music, galleries, theatres, journeys and programmes undertaken during visits, for example, to India, pupils develop values that help them have a view of themselves and the world of which they are a part. They form views and opinions of what is happening in the world and the values that prevail amongst their community and the wider world beyond. They puzzle about the strife, suffering, starvation, unhappiness and cruelty that exist. In discussions they show an optimism that they will make a difference when their time comes. They respond to lessons that raise issues of morality and conscience at an intellectual level but also with feeling and empathy for their view of what is right. Such learning has an impact on the way they conduct their lives and is seen in their attitudes to school and their own learning. Personal development is effective in the school because pupils transfer thought and discussion in lessons, and experiences gained through the wide range of activities, to the way they lead their lives on a daily basis. They sometimes make mistakes and behave inappropriately, but there is evidence that they learn from these. The school forum provides examples of pupils' emerging sense of the sort of world they want to inhabit. During the inspection our use of language in everyday life was a theme for assemblies and form periods. Pupils have clear views of the diverse ways people can use language for a particular impact - for good or ill effect. They recount how language is abused to misinform or fan prejudice, often in the media. Their common sense expresses itself in the knowledge that it is a simple fact that people of different faiths and backgrounds need each other. They puzzle that political leaders seem to fail to realise this, but lessons in English, history, geography and religious education tell them, they say when asked, that the motivation of people is complex. Pupils and sixth-form students grow to understand that a personal commitment to the values by which they want to live is their own responsibility to nurture. However, they appreciate the opportunities the school provides to put their emerging values to the test, to bounce their ideas of right and wrong off their friends and teachers and make up their own minds. The opportunity to debate in this way is much greater than at the time of the previous inspection. It is a more open school and pupils have greater freedom and responsibility to come to terms with their views of the world and express them in a secure and empathetic environment.

### **The school provides a very effective learning environment.**

9 The very good leadership of the headteacher and senior management team have ensured that Baines School provides a good climate for learning. Senior members of staff have a good knowledge of pupils and staff and have ensured standards and approaches to learning that serve as good role models for all pupils and sixth-form students. An ethos of success has been established and teachers and pupils mostly aspire to flourish accordingly. The school knows what it is there to do, has established clear identification of its priorities and set systems in place that ensure that these are met. The governing body, well informed and clear of purpose, plays an important role in sustaining the school as an effective place of learning.

10 A feature of the school now in contrast to the time of the previous inspection is the quality of support provided for pupils and sixth-form students. In particular, the two learning resource centres are up-to-date in their approach to the storage and retrieval of information. Pupils have excellent access to a range of resources and in the sixth form the centre provides an excellent environment for individual study. There are keen and committed members of staff who take a pride in providing effective support and devise learning programmes for younger pupils so that they know how to get the best from the resources available to them.

11 In lessons, the quality of learning is generally good and teachers have a greater awareness than at the time of the previous inspection of how pupils learn effectively. Pupils respect the teachers and enjoy

excellent relationships with them. They want to learn and have a positive and purposeful approach to their learning. Pupils respond well to the school's high expectations of them. They have a commitment to work hard to achieve their best standards. The large majority of pupils completes homework conscientiously and well. Pupils' attendance is above average and this contributes to the continuity of their learning experiences. These features have grown out of a steady insistence, especially over recent years, by senior management that the quality of personal development and learning should be at the heart of the school.

12 Pupils express pride in their school. One 11 year old, astonishingly, claimed that a key feature of the school was its long tradition, having been founded in 1717. They wear their blazers with a sense of pride yet without affectation. They care for the environment and the absence of significant litter and graffiti bears witness to this. The walls in many classrooms and corridors are alive with very good displays of pupils' work and other stimulating material to generate learning. The corridors, wider than those found in most schools, are often hives of animated discussion as pupils move between lessons. This is often about work just experienced or anticipation of work to come. Sometimes it is learning of a different sort as pupils grapple with their own lives and the business of growing as emerging adults, exchanging experiences with friends and gathering an increased sense of themselves, usually in a responsible and maturing way.

13 Younger pupils value the system of prefects. They look to older students as good role models. Pupils act maturely and help establish a very good atmosphere for learning and a secure and friendly environment. Amongst the many strengths in the learning opportunities provided, some opportunities are missed by the school to build on the goodwill of pupils. For example, assemblies are not always occasions that give a sense of reflection and expectation at the start of the day. They sometimes begin too casually; as pupils enter the hall, registers are marked by tutors from afar and there is a missed sense of ritual and focus. There is not always a silence that can be telling and expectant, or music that can set a contemplative tone.

### **Teaching is usually good, often very good and occasionally excellent.**

14 The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection. On balance it is good. The proportion of very good teaching has increased. The quality of teaching is good in all years. Teaching is often very good and occasionally excellent; this is especially true in the sixth form. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Teaching is good at meeting the differing learning needs of pupils most of the time. There are exceptions to this in all subjects from time to time, especially when lessons have not been as clearly linked to the assessment of pupils' prior learning as usually occurs. For example, the provision for the highest attainers varies from being excellent at times in subjects such as English, mathematics, science, design and technology, French, geography, German, history occasionally, music, physical education and religious studies, to satisfactory in other subjects. Throughout the school, teaching is very good in English, science and design and technology. The teaching of literacy is good in most subjects and skills of numeracy are taught effectively, but not extensively. Parents are justified in their view that teaching is good.

15 Pupils achieve well because they make good progress in many lessons. They consolidate their knowledge and increase their understanding of work in most subjects through conscientious completion of homework that is of a suitable length and quality. It is usually set consistently but parents are right to point out that this is not always the case with a minority of teachers. Pupils respond very well to teachers' high expectations. Teachers encourage pupils to work hard and pupils expect to do so. Parents are also pleased that the school has such expectations and tries to insist on their realisation. Most teachers use a variety of activities to keep pupils' interest throughout lessons. This is an improvement on that found at the previous inspection. Although there remain some examples of too fixed approaches to teaching and learning, generally teachers are now more varied and imaginative in their approach. The degree of independence that pupils and sixth-form students are now encouraged to bring to their learning has improved significantly. Pupils and sixth formers make good use of the excellent resources centres and professional guidance available in them.

16 Teachers set suitable targets for pupils to improve their work. Marking is diagnostic at best, helping pupils to see where they need to improve. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 are beginning to be set and agree targets

across subjects and form tutors, at best, keep track of how pupils in their care are progressing. There is a good learning ethos that encourages pupils and students to strive to achieve the success that will help them to realise their aspirations. Very good relationships among pupils and between pupils and teachers create a purposeful atmosphere for working. Pupils of all levels of attainment have very positive attitudes so that work proceeds at a brisk pace in the majority of lessons. Pupils know what they are expected to learn in lessons for objectives are clearly stated and shared with them and their progress checked as lessons proceed. Pupils enjoy their work because it is usually of sufficient difficulty to make them think hard, yet is within their grasp.

17 Teachers know their subjects well, are enthusiastic about them and present them to pupils in a lively and motivating manner. This helps towards effective learning. For example, in a personal, social and health education lesson in Year 10, the lesson opened with a brisk and effective brainstorming session about the impact of alcohol abuse. Pupils showed that they were well informed about this drug and articulated clearly the emphasis that people had for personal moral responsibility in relation to their drinking. Pupils enjoyed the challenge of different arguments and the teacher intervened skilfully so that arguments progressed and hypotheses were considered. In a dance lesson with Year 9, the energy of boys in devising staged fights was well harnessed by the imaginative impulse that the teacher created to stylise their work. Boys working in groups refined the sequence of movements on the 'Stars Wars' theme with satisfactory awareness of pace, action and reaction and the controlled use of space.

18 Teachers use questions skilfully to extend thinking and check understanding. They expect answers to be thorough and comprehensive. As they move through the year groups, pupils' facility to respond in depth in discussion increases and is a significant feature of effective learning. For example, in a religious studies lesson with Year 9, pupils considered the function of a church and its different parts. Lack of regular experience of church-going meant that pupils had limited knowledge but the prompting questions of the teacher encouraged understanding. Pupils began to articulate the nature of belief and devotion as they understood them and in doing so began to understand the part artefacts like the cross, altar and font play in the devotional life of people. The teacher's style needed to be rather cajoling to generate this level of thought and for pupils to grasp that a church was not an arid place but one of spiritual support and symbolism: they knew what the bread and wine symbolised in the act of communion. In a French lesson with Year 9, speaking mainly in French, pupils were helped to construct simple sentences. The higher attainers explained illustrations of their future ambitions using the future tense in response to questions carefully formed.

19 A key reason for the examination results being well above average is the consistently good and sometimes exceptional and inspirational teaching. The most successful teachers are hardworking, committed to the pupils' success, knowledgeable, imaginative and enthusiastic. There is an intensity of endeavour in the best lessons, whether working on a dance sequence or trying to account accurately for the culture of bacteria in science. Teachers assume that pupils will do well and this is realised in their efforts and attainment. The school's management and governing body expects pupils to do well and teachers to be effective in facilitating this. Pupils increasingly acquire the skills to assess their own effectiveness. Learning is good because pupils behave well, acquire the skills demanded by different subjects and have very positive attitudes and mature approaches to their learning.

**There is a full curriculum enjoyed by pupils and sixth-form students; it is significantly enriched through a wide range of additional activities and opportunities welcomed by pupils and students.**

20 The school defines its curriculum as the opportunities for learning and involvement that it provides for its pupils. This embraces lessons and the wide range of learning opportunities and enrichment activities that form an important part of the school's provision. Many teachers are involved in providing these further opportunities for pupils.

21 Curricular provision is very good overall. The time-tabled lessons in Years 7 to 9 meet the requirements of the National Curriculum and religious education and are enhanced by the study of drama and personal, social and health education. There is a good range of choices in Years 10 and 11 and very

good provision in the sixth form. However, at present the school offers few opportunities apart from work experience for work-related learning. Some pupils are not concerned about this. Sixth formers, for example, state that they chose to come to this school for what it offered and its reputation in providing well for academic success. Other places offer vocational courses. This is a valid view at one level, but the school realises it would benefit from careful mixing and matching of courses and it takes a positive view about giving consideration to broadening further the level of choice. This would facilitate the individual needs and aspirations more fully in the sixth form for the minority of students who would benefit from a mixed diet of advanced vocational courses and the traditional pathways to higher education. By the same token, a small percentage of pupils in Years 10 and 11, of all levels of attainment, might learn more effectively with a similar mixed diet.

22 However, for the majority, the school provides well. In addition to the range of choices available in Years 10, 11 and the sixth form a rich range of further opportunities exist. These sometimes enrich subjects being studied, sometimes they stand alone. A strength is the many contacts the school has established in mainland Europe and beyond. Exchanges to enhance language learning are strong and educational visits further afield are well established and pupils and sixth-form students speak with appreciation of how much they have valued such experiences. Sporting opportunities are a strength of the school, although sixth-form boys regret more is not available during Wednesday afternoons; however, they appreciate that this is a staffing constraint rather than some form of deliberate under-provision. Pupils enhance their musical skills through attendance at after-school practices and through instrumental tuition in individual and small groups. The ICT facilities are appreciated by pupils and sixth-form students and used heavily at lunch-times and after school. Many pupils enhance their personal and social development through participation in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme. The school offers regular careers conventions and opportunities and the sixth form is involved in Young Enterprise.

## **WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED**

### **There are pockets of underachievement amongst some boys, some of the highest attainers and within some subjects.**

23 No unsatisfactory teaching was observed during the inspection. The overall quality of teaching was good and often very good and sometimes excellent; this teaching sets a marker for all teaching, especially that deemed to be satisfactory, to aspire to emulate. Satisfactory teaching usually leads to satisfactory learning; this is not good enough for a school constantly striving for high standards.

24 Satisfactory teaching does not always match the learning and teaching styles to the learning needs of different pupils. In effect, therefore, such teaching prevents full access of such pupils to their effective learning and is not inclusive. For example, it is known that some boys learn better when objectives are short term and clear and the satisfaction of success comes frequently. Some lessons take no account of such learning needs and the opportunities to experience success and acclamation take longer to come, for example at the end of a six-week unit of work. This can be too far off for some boys to really engage with their learning. When such needs are not taken into account and appropriate teaching methods are not consistently used during lessons, learning becomes less effective. If insufficient attention is given to identifying pupils' individual learning needs and work planned to meet them, pupils will not learn effectively. For example, in some subjects opportunities are missed to provide extension activities for the highest-attaining pupils. These pupils are not always sufficiently challenged and their attainment is retarded and they sometimes become restless and even disruptive. There is a limited range of enhancement and enrichment activities for the highest-attaining pupils. The school has scope to raise its overall results by more pupils achieving A\* grades in GCSE examinations. The best teaching helps to achieve this; satisfactory teaching sometimes provides the same activity for a whole class and too often led entirely by the teacher. Sometimes teachers tell pupils what they should know and understand rather than using questions skilfully and expecting full answers. The questions asked of higher attainers can be more demanding than those for others in the class in order that these pupils work at levels of which they are capable.

25 If the teacher is more fully aware of pupils' prior attainment and plans work to meet resultant learning needs it is more likely that pupils will achieve their potential. There are examples of day-to-day assessment not always being used to inform modifications to medium-term and lesson planning. There is sometimes a need to revise and consolidate before moving on; on other occasions the need is to move more quickly to the acquisition of new skills or knowledge because previous learning is secure. In such circumstances achievement is limited even though the quality of the lesson overall is satisfactory.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

26 In order to sustain and extend the successes achieved by the school, the governors, headteacher and staff should focus on:

- (1) eliminating pockets of underachievement amongst some boys, some of the highest attainers and within some subjects by:
  - establishing how boys learn most effectively, especially those of average and below average attainment, and devising learning and teaching methods that tackle these approaches to learning;
  - ensuring that lessons are planned to meet the differing learning needs of all pupils, even when within groups of similar overall attainment;
  - as circumstances allow, trying to staff all departments with specialist teachers;
  - sharing good practice in approaches to learning in order that standards in art and design, design and technology, drama, history and physics match performances in other subjects;
  - seeking to provide a wider range of extension activities in lessons and enriching opportunities beyond lessons for those pupils the school is beginning to identify as gifted and talented.

See paragraphs: 3, 5, 14, 24, 29, 30, 72, 74, 82, 113, 119, 122, 131, 133, 146, 150, 157.

### **Sixth form**

- (1) improving A-level results and achievement further still in art and design, communication studies, French, history and religious studies.

See paragraphs: 132-140, 149-154, 155-163, 174-180.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### *Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection*

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 - 11	36
	Sixth form	63
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		41

### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection*

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
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#### **Years 7-11**

Number	1	9	21	5	0	0	0
Percentage	3.0	24.2	57.6	15.2	0	0	0

#### **Sixth form**

Number	2	23	27	11	0	0	0
Percentage	3.2	36.5	42.8	17.5	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.*

### *Information about the school's pupils*

#### **Pupils on the school's roll**

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	834	213
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	35	2

#### **Special educational needs**

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	9	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	91	2

#### **English as an additional language**

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	10

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	4
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	5

### *Attendance*

#### **Authorised absence**

	%
School data	6.2
National comparative data	7.7

#### **Unauthorised absence**

	%
School data	0.02
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	91	77	168

<b>National Curriculum Test/Task Results</b>	<b>English</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	76	85
	Girls	73	75
	Total	149	158
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	89 (81)	94 (91)
	National	63 (63)	66 (65)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	55 (34)	77 (72)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)



Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	64	84	83
	Girls	66	69	74
	Total	130	153	157
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	77 (85)	91 (93)	93 (90_)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	29 (34)	76 (74)	63 (56)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	2001	82	72	154

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	48	78	80
	Girls	56	68	70
	Total	104	146	150
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	68 (66)	95 (96)	97 (97)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	48.8 (39.0)
	National	39.0 (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-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	53	66	119

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	20.8 (20.1)	22.9 (21.9)	22.0 (21.0)	N/a	N/a	N/a
National	16.9 (17.8)	17.9 (18.6)	17.4 (18.2)	N/a	N/a	N/a

*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	1
Black – other	0
Indian	6
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	4
White	1032
Any other minority ethnic group	4

**Exclusions in the last school year**

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	12	
Other minority ethnic groups		

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

**Teachers and classes****Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 - - Y13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	61.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.1

**Education support staff: Y 7 – Y13**

Total number of education support staff	12
Total aggregate hours worked per week	335

**Deployment of teachers: Y7 - - Y13**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	77.9
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**Average teaching group size: Y7 - Y13**

Key Stage 3	24.0
Key Stage 4	23.4

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

**Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	14
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	17

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	2
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

**Financial information**

Financial year	2000-2001
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	£
Total income	2822738
Total expenditure	2729193
Expenditure per pupil	2592
Balance brought forward from previous year	117250
Balance carried forward to next year	210795

**Results of the survey of parents and carers**

**Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	1047
Number of questionnaires returned	265

**Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	38	58	3	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	34	63	1	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	35	60	3	1	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	31	49	17	2	1
The teaching is good.	24	57	16	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	27	47	25	1	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	33	57	8	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	37	60	3	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	25	45	26	2	2
The school is well led and managed.	32	58	4	0	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	33	58	6	2	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	29	55	10	2	4

## **PART D: THE SIXTH FORM**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and students' achievements**

27 Students start the sixth form with standards that are above average. Given this starting point students achieve above what might be expected. Results in A-level examinations have consistently been well above average in recent years and reflect sustained high standards and good achievement. In 2001 they were well above average in comparison with all maintained schools. Over a third of the grades were at the higher A and B level. The best results compared to national averages were in biology, chemistry, design and technology, English literature and physical education. Results were below average in communication studies and history and well below average in art and design, French and religious education. The attainment of girls was slightly higher than that of the boys particularly so in communication studies, geography, history and physical education.

28 Course completion rates are very high and 96 per cent of students move into higher education with many gaining their first choices. A few take a gap year and the small numbers seeking employment are successful.

29 In the new AS examinations at the end of Year 12 virtually all students gained a pass in one subject and many obtained four. Some achieved five including general studies: a commendable achievement. Out of all the subject entries there was a 90 per cent pass rate and this was slightly above the national average. The best results were in design and technology, English language, English literature, general studies and physical education. Of the relatively few failures 21 did not pass mathematics, which had the weakest results.

30 A number of statistical analyses indicate that the students achieve well overall with half of them achieving very well. Over the last three years students have gained significantly higher grades in biology and geography than in other subjects. In the same period there was significant underachievement in French, general studies, history and mathematics. In 2001 at A-level there was significantly good achievement in biology and significant underachievement in art and design and French. At AS level students did relatively well in English language, general studies and physical education and less well in art and design, history and mathematics.

31 In the lessons observed and in the samples of students' work seen standards are above average overall. They are well above in chemistry, design and technology, English literature and physical education; above average in biology, business studies, French, geography, history and information and communication technology; average in mathematics and religious studies and below average in art and design.

32 At present standards are above average but students' achievement is good and they are on course to sustain well above average results in the external examinations. This good achievement is the result of good or better teaching that is very effectively planned. Standards in the key skills of communication, number and ICT are above average.

#### **Students' attitudes, values and personal development**

33 Students have very positive attitudes towards their learning. They consider that the sixth form is the right size, being small enough for them to know their fellow students, tutors and teachers well. Relationships are excellent. Attendance levels are very good.

34 Students have a high regard for their teachers and tutors and say that they feel very well supported both academically and on a personal level. Students organise sporting events between staff and students and arrange activities for the rest of the school, such as the popular leavers' ball. Students use their social and study facilities sensibly. There is a lively, yet friendly atmosphere in the common room and an industrious atmosphere in the resource base and study area.

35 Sixth formers play an integral part in the smooth running of the school. Prefects make a strong contribution to the school's orderly and friendly ethos. Students participate enthusiastically in the wide range of activities offered. Form representatives organise charity and social events. Several students have trained to support and counsel younger pupils as part of the 'CHIPS' mentoring and support team. Many students help with paired learning with those younger pupils who need extra support. Students help to run sporting teams at local junior schools and several take part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme.

36 Inspectors engaged in discussions with a considerable number of students, either in planned interviews or in the course of lessons, to determine their views of the school. Those that emerged from these discussions are thought to be broadly representative of the sixth form as a whole and the inspectors agree with all of the students' main opinions. Students are pleased with the choices of courses available to them and feel they were given appropriate advice in Year 11. They settled easily into sixth-form life and their timetables run smoothly. They consider that the sixth form has a friendly ambience and that they are taught well, whilst still afforded sufficient independence.

37 Students find that their tutors and teachers take a keen overview of their progress and give them good support. They feel that they are treated as adults and listened to, although more formal procedures to take their views into account are only just starting to be effective, for example through the recently established school forum. Some students would like a greater choice of courses, in particular AS and A2 courses in theatre studies and psychology.

38 Students feel the school expects them to work hard and provides good research and study facilities to enable this. They appreciate the good range of enrichment activities open to them, although a few would like some more sporting opportunities, especially on Wednesday afternoons. Students feel that they play a full, active and integral part in school life.

## **HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?**

39 Teaching and learning in the sixth form are good. In two out of five instances they are very good and occasionally excellent; this proportion is considerably higher than the national average, although the proportion of teaching and learning that is good or better, just over four out of five instances, is below that found in most sixth forms. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed during the inspection. In all subjects, teachers pay appropriate attention to the development of the key skills of communication, number and ICT.

40 Teaching and learning are very good in biology, design and technology and English literature and good in mathematics, chemistry, ICT, business studies, physical education, geography, history, religious studies and French. In art and design teaching is satisfactory.

41 A key reason for examination results being well above average is the consistently good and frequently very good and occasionally excellent teaching. The most successful teachers are hardworking, knowledgeable, imaginative and enthusiastic. Sixth-form students show a keen appreciation of the teaching when talking of what they like about the school. Those who have moved through the school from Year 7 and those who joined the sixth form from other schools have the same view: the sixth form's strength is its range of academic courses well taught, by and large, by sixth-form teachers. In the very best lessons there is an atmosphere of challenge with students and teachers determined to be successful.

42 For example, in a biology lesson with Year 12 about genes and genetic engineering, the lesson was well introduced by the teacher who described the symptoms and effects of cystic fibrosis; this immediately caught the interest of the students. The teacher knew the subject well and gave thorough explanations to aid understanding. Although the teacher led the ten students throughout the lesson, skilful use of questioning in response to first-hand information given early in the lesson ensured that students were keen to contribute to discussion. This showed they understood a number of key concepts such as 'gene carrier' and 'genetic code', were very interested in the topic since it related to humans and enjoyed a warm, friendly working relationship with the teacher.

43 In contrast, 13 students in Year 13 in a design and technology lesson concerned with product design worked independently. Students were working on a variety of products, from a child's toy to a graduation ball gown. They were very well motivated, took pride in their product and all achieved well. They showed developed skills of analysis, research, design and making. They were well challenged by the teacher to improve on their previous best work. A good pace was maintained in the lesson and students rarely wavered from task. The teacher had high expectations and intervened to ask questions and extend pupils' aspirations for their product. Confidence in the subject and enthusiasm for it was passed on to the students. The teacher also knew the potential of the students and who to cajole and who to commend. This is an example of successful work where the relationship of teacher and taught was excellent.

44 In an excellent literature lesson about Shakespeare's 'Measure for Measure' where Angelo's character and behaviour was examined in a moral context, a feature of the teaching was the scholarship of the teacher and the students. The students were exhilarated by the quality of their learning and the placing of the fictional context in a parallel with contemporary moral dilemmas of personal moral codes and scruples. The students understood clearly conventions attached to nobility, and the indications of hypocrisy within the character of Angelo. The excellence of the lesson lay in the teacher's skill in promoting a high level of textual debate that allowed students to deconstruct passages of text to discover Angelo's vulnerability, in being trapped by his own apparent moral high ground. The questioning embraced the different levels of attainment that students were bringing to the study, with the result that all were fully engaged with the discussion. Higher-attaining students learning was sophisticated enough to understand the differences between characters communicating and Shakespeare putting themes to his audience. These students also were able to compare the language style and sentiment of Angelo's soliloquy with the romantic idealism of some of Shakespeare's sonnets. The students valued fifty minutes of good scholarship in this lesson.

45 In a geography lesson about climate with Year 13 the objective was to produce a detailed case study of an intense winter depression and its human impact. Students showed a developing understanding of the inter-relationship of the social, environmental, economic and political effects of storms. The teacher gave strength to this teaching through good knowledge of the subject. This was enhanced by very good use of resources, including a video of a storm to remind students of the impact of storms, newspaper accounts and maps of 'gusts' over Scotland supported by a synoptic chart. Good presence and relationships engaged the students' learning. As a result students achieved well in their work and increased their understanding of the topic.

46 In a physical education lesson, seven Year 12 students looked at sport in emerging countries and considered, for example, why Kenya produces such good middle distance runners. The lesson took the form of a debate over reasons for such examples. The teacher carefully structured prompts so that students had the chance to try out ideas on each other to see if their views were sustainable. They did this confidently and the teacher intervened from time to time to ensure that each individual's thinking was suitably challenged. They were put on the spot as the teacher demanded absolute clarity of sustainable thought. This example, of how successful teaching requires the teacher to intervene purposefully to deepen learning, illustrates how students' moral awareness can be raised within practical activity. For example, students considered the relationship between Brazilian soccer and the poverty of the country, yet the teacher raised other issues, such as disproportionate funding, in order that the students did not simply respond emotionally. This department has developed its own website and students were required to continue this study by accessing it for homework tasks. This forms another example of the thoroughness and richness of the experience for learning that the best teaching brings.

47 Good use of such resources is a feature of much of the teaching in the sixth form. The selection of what to use indicates the teachers' insight into students' learning needs. In all the best teaching, resources are chosen to assist the lesson's objectives or the demands of the examination's specifications and to support the quality of learning and teaching. Some teaching is outstanding in the imaginative approaches it brings to learning. For example, questions are posed carefully in ways that involve all students whatever their level of attainment. Discussions are purposeful, well managed and also involve all students. At best these demand intellectual rigour as in the example from the lesson about 'Measure for Measure' or the

thorough understanding of practical matters as in the study of the impact of storms or the reasons for sporting traditions in under-developed countries.



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

48 The curricular provision is very good. The school has managed successfully the recent changes of Curriculum 2000. The programme of courses meets the aspirations of most students, whatever their different backgrounds. A third of the sixth form is made up of students from other schools who are attracted to the range of academic courses offered. All students value an outward bound induction programme at the start of Year 12. It sets an identity for the sixth form that allows them to settle into a more mature style of learning as senior members of the school community. Results in the first new AS courses reflect their thorough preparation. A good match is emerging between AS and A2 courses that suit the needs of most students. The curriculum is accessible and of equal value to male and female students, for schemes of work reflect the interests of both. However, unless undertaking an examination course, students do not take religious education; this means that the school is failing to meet statutory requirements in this area. Sixth formers do not participate in a daily act of collective worship; this is a related area where the school does not meet statutory requirements. All students take general studies in Year 12, but this is optional in Year 13. There is a mixed response to this course when discussed with students. It is valued most when outside speakers with specialist or practical knowledge are invited to speak to students. Resources available for sixth-form students are well managed, up to date and factually accurate. Students are provided with opportunities for discussion and the exploration of opinions on relevant subject issues.

49 The sixth-form curriculum is well managed. Students appreciate the range of opportunities provided. However, there are no vocational courses, although the school is considering some small-scale introduction of some courses. At present, governors and management believe that the school meets the aspirations of parents and students. Sixth formers were quick to comment that there is very good vocational provision nearby if that is what they had wanted. However, a small number of students put a contrary view and would value the opportunity to mix and match their portfolio of advanced courses. The senior management is open to justifiable change. Advanced vocational courses have not been sufficiently examined to see if they might add to the opportunities for students to achieve their aspirations as a mixed portfolio with traditional AS and A2 courses. Governors have not demanded that such options should be considered. At present, work-related learning is underdeveloped. However, apart from such considerations, the range of courses and variety of approaches represented in the sixth-form curriculum meet the aspirations of students.

50 The time allocations to subjects match specification requirements. There are a few large class sizes that means, sometimes, that traditional and not always the best approaches to teaching have to be adopted. The sharing of ideas is managed but debate is not always easy. Students demonstrate good levels of attainment in the key skills of communication, number and the application of ICT. At present departments provide key skills development within their subjects. Some consideration of key skills occurs in extended form periods once each week. The school is aware that this remains an area for further development, especially in ensuring that all students achieve level 3 in each of the three main areas. Provision for two students with special education needs is effective and they respond well to the support provided. There is a well-designed and planned programme of careers education for sixth-form students, including preparation for entrance to higher education. In 2001 95 per cent of students who left obtained places in higher education.

51 The programme of extra-curricular and enrichment opportunities is very good. Activities meet interests and aspirations and promote an understanding of self, other people and the nature of community. Many activities continue the provision of Years 7 to 11. The enrichment programme often leads to greater engagement with all aspect of sixth-form life. Students have a wide range of choice. Often they participate in special events. An ethics conference raised issues of science and technology, genetics and morality and was valued by students. Essays following this conference indicated the depth of enquiry and thought many students undertook. Similar experiences occurred in a day devoted to deepening understanding of the Holocaust and visits to battle sites heighten students' awareness of responsibility and remembrance.

52 Provision for students' personal development is very good, especially their social and moral development. Most subjects seek to enhance personal development during the course of lessons. In a geography lesson for example, the impact of human changes to the coastal system or the effects on others of building dams such as the Aswan dam caused students to consider moral and social issues. In biology, Year 12 students considered the effects on sufferers and their families of cystic fibrosis and the implications for gene therapy and the arguments for and against cloning. In art and design, students consider aspects of faith and culture in studies into Islamic and Christian architecture and artefacts. Students in art and design lessons learn to value the work of their peers and sensitively discuss each other's expression of thought, feeling and vision in an artistic form. In English literature, students tackle many moral issues, for example drawing personal connections with situations in plays and the themes of poems. Much of the work touches on spiritual experience and the quality of relationships, such as those found in their study of Lawrence's 'Lady Chatterley's Lover' and the author's use of religious symbolism and its importance in the social context of the time.

53 Personal development is also enhanced through enrichment activities, notably the many educational exchanges and visits abroad, especially perhaps those beyond Western Europe to Poland and India. The international events of the current school year emanating from 11 September are likely to have a deepening impact on students' traditional visits abroad, the study of other cultures in religious education and, for example, their response at first-hand to battlefield sites and remembrance rituals during the visit to Poland. Sixth-form students show a sensitivity when discussing these issues and the growing notion of the need 'to treat others as you wish to be treated yourself'. The outcome of such engagement is found in the heightened commitment students bring to certain aspects of their lives. In school they consider which charities to support with care and concern. Sixth formers are aware of their responsibility in relation to younger pupils. Prefects take such mentoring and supporting duties very seriously. The excellent relationships throughout the school are a further outcome, not only of parental support and values, but of students' awareness of the sort of society to which they want to contribute.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?**

### **Assessment**

54 Procedures for monitoring and supporting students' academic progress are excellent. The head of sixth form has produced an outstanding guide with the title of 'Sixth Sense – Baines Sixth Form – A Natural Progression'. Excellent assessment procedures ensure that students know almost from day to day how well they are doing. The extensive use of assessment data informs the monitoring processes and allows staff and students to ask pertinent questions of how they are performing. Assessment is regular, rigorous and informative. Subject teachers keep good records. As a starting point, the marking of students' work has a high priority. It is diagnostic, thorough and gives detailed guidance upon how to improve performance.

55 A very thorough programme of student review and academic monitoring occurs throughout the sixth-form career of students. Parents are involved fully at key stages. Students speak highly of these processes and the built in mentoring and support that are a part. The student reviews are discussed between students and tutors and both contribute to the resulting written document. The sixth form establishes minimum subject targets. These are based on GCSE scores; the school realises that target-setting is more effective the sooner these targets become specific to the subject being studied. Targets and mentoring, as students work to meet them, give students a sense of direction and purpose. These are heightened further when they are offered places in higher education and the grade requirements are stipulated. Year 13 students were animated in their sense of endeavour having recently been given these real, enhancing targets. Members of staff are aware, however, that all of this brings pressures. The support they give to students is exemplary at best and never less than very good. Sixth-form tutors work with students to devise strategies for the successful achievement of their aspirations. The processes in place for this are well thought out, consistent and effective.



## **Advice, support and guidance**

56 Students receive excellent personal support and guidance. The handbook for tutors in the sixth form is of high quality and documents some exemplary practice. This practice is evident in the high day-to-day standards of care and guidance.

57 Induction procedures are very good. All students are interviewed prior to joining the sixth form and there is an early formal review in the first term to sort out any potential problems. Students particularly enjoy the one-day residential team-building visit to Ullswater, which helps foster good relationships with their form group and tutor.

58 Students are allocated to small, cohesive tutor groups. The form tutor plays a key and effective role as a mentor to help and guide students. Students meet with their tutors for individual personal and academic monitoring sessions. These sessions are well structured and targets set are regularly reviewed. However, in some instances targets are not related to the subjects students are studying; this diminishes their usefulness. Nonetheless, students find these sessions with their tutors valuable. Successful additional support, counselling and mentoring are available for students, provided by staff and an external counsellor.

59 There is a very well planned programme of revision strategies, careers and higher education preparation in the extended tutor contact time on Friday mornings. This provision is effectively complemented by a one-week career placement in Year 12. Students have the opportunity to complete a computerised package for university guidance and have good support from the external careers service and the school careers adviser. There are weekend link courses arranged at some universities to give students a taster session of their proposed course. There is a very good range of literature on higher education options and careers, together with computerised materials, so students can research their proposed choices thoroughly.

60 Students find that their teachers and tutors are approachable and helpful.

## **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

### **Leadership and management**

61 The leadership and management of the sixth form are very good. The head of the sixth form, who is an assistant head of the school and a member of the senior management team, pays great attention to detail in leading the sixth form team with a sense of vision and purpose for the continuing development of the sixth form. Her energy and commitment and that of her assistant and administrative staff play a significant part in the sixth form's success. The senior tutors and the strong tutorial team ensure that the sixth form has an identity of its own. They strive for the highest academic standards within a healthy and rich learning environment. A part of its special identity is its integration as part of the whole school. The aims and values of the school are reflected well in the life and work of the sixth form.

62 The sixth-form team provides clear educational direction for students and as a result they feel secure in their pathway to life beyond the school. Students are very appreciative of the nature of the Baines sixth form and act as very good role models for younger pupils. The headteacher and senior management team play a full part in the monitoring of sixth-form effectiveness and provision. The governing body fulfils its role effectively and is well aware of the strengths of the sixth form. It is beginning to join with management in considering needs for the further development and broadening of sixth form courses. The head of the sixth form is leading discussions with senior management and governors, for example, of how best to accredit students' competence in key skills and the possible introduction of advanced vocational courses. These moves indicate a sharp awareness of current national initiatives relating to the development of education with older students. Governors play a full part in strategic planning and endorse the importance that the school development plan places on continuing improvement of teaching and learning in the sixth form, as well as the whole school, in order that the highest standards possible are

maintained and improved. The school does not meet the statutory requirement to provide religious education for all students in the sixth form.

63 The monitoring and support of students' performance is thorough. All tutors have a clear view of their role in this, as it is well laid out in an excellent guidance booklet. There is a very good system of records kept of students' attainment and achievement; individual target minimum grades [TMGs] are agreed, based on overall grades achieved by students in their GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11. These give challenging and achievable goals, but need to be based more rapidly in Year 12 on targets that are specific to each subject taken by students. Nonetheless, the process of support given by heads of subject and form tutors is effective and valued by students. Achievement based on students' prior attainment is tracked carefully on an individual basis; as a result, the head of sixth form ensures that sixth-form staff focus academic monitoring and target-setting on the expectations and aspirations of students. At the same time, an overview is obtained of the standards being obtained within departments. In addition, at the start of each year, previous results are reviewed with departments and improving goals agreed. This information itself generates short and longer term target-setting for departments. These measures help to maintain the school's drive for high standards and underpin systems of accountability.

64 Such systems depend on the effectiveness of heads of department and form tutors. Generally the leadership and management of subjects in the sixth form is good. They are very good in English, design and technology, geography and physical education and good in biology, business studies, chemistry, ICT, mathematics, French and religious studies. Leadership and management of art and design and history are satisfactory. Most heads of department have a clear vision of how they wish their subject to develop and the emphasis that gives the subject its character, within the specification of the examination. Form tutors usually have a clear overview of the readiness of students in their groups for their examination preparation.. Form tutor periods are used effectively, especially the extended time on Friday mornings. The Friday sessions represent a well-planned enrichment programme that contributes to students' overall learning, as well as providing opportunities to counsel individual students about the progress they are making. Students remark upon how approachable and helpful are the sixth-form members of staff.

65 A particular strength of the sixth form management lies in its support for teaching and learning. It is a well-stated development issue led by the head of sixth form and part of the school improvement plan. Some classroom observation and the sharing of good practice occurs to good effect; there is scope for this being more systematic and frequent. The quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form is frequently very good; sixth formers state their appreciation of this quality. Management's focus on forever trying to improve on its quality, however, is well placed; it is evidence of a commitment to continuous improvement.

66 The administration of the sixth form is very good. There is a useful weekly bulletin for all staff and students which includes a thought for the week, taken up in assemblies and tutor periods. The programme of support for students and consultations with parents is well managed and valued by both. The roles of sixth-form staff are clearly defined and appropriate in meeting the needs of students. Job descriptions identify matters such as liaison, monitoring, welfare, guidance and the maintenance of the sixth-form ethos.

67 The sixth form is cost effective. Teaching is consistently good or better. Students enter the sixth form with overall attainment that is above average and leave with well above average results. The leadership of the sixth form is very good. The attitudes of sixth-form students are well developed and are very good. As a result, the sixth form gives very good value for money.

## **Resources**

68 Sixth-form students make good use of the learning resource centre. Overall book stocks have improved and now reflect the national figures for sixth-form requirements. Learning in modern foreign languages and design and technology is well supported by a very good range of resources. Students' learning is enhanced in English literature, biology, ICT, and geography by the quality of learning materials available to them. Although resources are adequate for the other specialist courses, some departments have difficulties in accessing specialised ICT resources such as data-logging in science. A few

departments, for example physical education, lack some appropriate learning resources. However there is a rolling programme of improvement. The resource centre manager works closely with departments to create greater awareness of available resources for students. There is a sixth-form common room that is spacious and inviting, off which leads the well-equipped resource area with books, magazines, other resource material and computers with Internet access and a supporting library of CDs. There is also a room for silent study. The quality of the learning resource centre and the expertise and support its staff provides have a direct bearing on the results achieved by students and the breadth and depth of their curricular study.

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

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

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

*GCE A level and AVCE courses*

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	44	91	87	30	43	5.09	5.80
Chemistry	26	100	91	62	43	7.54	5.90
Biology	59	97	88	51	34	6.51	5.25
Design and technology	9	100	91	44	30	6.89	5.38
Business studies	14	92	93	35	33	5.00	5.50
Computer studies	12	92	86	33	23	4.83	4.62
Physical education	12	100	93	42	25	6.17	5.09
Art and design	15	100	96	07	46	4.53	6.57
Geography	43	100	92	38	38	6.00	5.74
History	20	85	88	25	36	4.50	5.45
Religious studies	7	71	93	00	38	4.00	5.84
English literature	18	100	95	61	37	7.22	5.91
French	12	66	89	08	38	3.33	5.59

**MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES**

71 The main focus was on mathematics, biology and chemistry but physics was also sampled. Results in physics over the last four years have varied but were above average in 2001. In the one lesson observed the teaching was good. Students made good progress in their knowledge and understanding of current electricity. They were also improving their investigative and experimental skills and were able to measure the output voltage produced by a potential divider with considerable accuracy.

**Mathematics**

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

**Strengths**

- Teaching is good and encourages students' interest.
- Teachers provide additional help outside the timetable in response to students' needs.
- The department is well managed.

### Areas for improvement

- Students are given insufficient practice in interpreting and working through complex questions.
- Teachers do not ensure that suggestions they make for improvement when marking work are acted upon by students.

72 Standards of work seen during the inspection are average. They do not fully reflect the quality of teaching, which is good. This is because a considerable number of students in Year 13 did not do as well as expected during Year 12. The mathematics department has responded well to the difficulties it has encountered and students' achievement in relation to standards at the start of the sixth form is now good. The students' response and commitment to achieving their target grades are good.

73 The curriculum in mathematics is well balanced. The unified approach in the first year, covering elements of pure mathematics, mechanics and statistics, provides well for students taking the subject for one year. It is a sound foundation for those taking the subject further when there is an element of choice to suit students' particular interests. Students' attainment in GCSE mathematics on entering the sixth form is above average but a significant minority start from a grade C and these students find the course very challenging. Sixth-form work builds rapidly on previous learning and the majority of students have good recall of GCSE studies. Achievement overall is good and therefore some value is added during the period students spend studying mathematics in the sixth form.

74 In 2001, A-level results were average overall. The pass rate at grades A-E was above the national average and a third of the students gained A-B grades. The picture has been similar over recent years, sometimes with even higher proportions of the higher grades. The number of students taking A-level examinations rose steadily to 44 in 2001. Most students completed the full course. The few who changed to AS studies gained average results. The A and AS passes represent satisfactory achievement based on results gained at GCSE. There was little difference between the performance of male and female students. The highest attaining students achieved well. Most of the others achieved satisfactorily. Some diverted attention in Year 13 to improving grades attained in earlier modules of work. This distracted from work on the final modules and led to a small element of underachievement.

75 A considerable number of students usually take up mathematics in the sixth form. Many of these continue to include it in higher education studies, including Oxford and Cambridge. Of the 50 who started in Year 12 in 2000, half have continued through to A-level this year. This is partly due to the fact that, for some, it was a fourth subject to be taken for one year only. Others were discouraged by disappointing results in the AS modular tests. Results were below the national average, which in itself was lower than in other subjects. The situation at Baines was compounded by a staffing problem that led to some students not covering the course thoroughly enough. This has now been resolved.

76 Teaching and learning are good overall. Almost all that seen during the inspection was good and none was unsatisfactory. All lessons feature a good element of teaching in which teachers engage students in ongoing dialogue, participation and discussion. Teachers provide good opportunities for students to interweave oral and written work to ensure that they have the necessary support at the early stages of learning a new topic. This was used to good effect in a Year 12 lesson on binomial expansions. By increasing the complexity of questions, the teacher moved students on at a fast pace. By the end of the lesson they had confidently mastered the technique and were working independently, demonstrating their ability to manipulate relatively complicated algebra. ICT is well used as a focus for discussion and to illustrate concepts that students might otherwise find difficult to visualise. This was well demonstrated in a Year 12 lesson on projectiles. Students swiftly worked out the factors affecting the trajectory of a golf ball and verified them by anticipating the resultant change on the image on the screen. Later in the lesson, students successfully worked out how velocity, time and distance covered could be quantified using equations of motion. These learning techniques work well and underpin students' understanding. They are followed up by opportunities for independent work, in class and at home, and students' work is marked regularly. At best, the marking informs students about their progress and how to move on. There is no



consistent system for checking whether students learn from their mistakes or complete questions they have not tackled. Consequently, not all students are getting enough practice with challenging questions of the type that might appear on examination papers. The department is aware of this and is taking steps to ensure that these are integral to classwork throughout the course.

77 Students respond positively to the new courses. Those interviewed said they enjoyed the work and found its challenge rewarding. They particularly value the advice and support given by individual teachers. The additional classes, operated in the teachers' own time, raise confidence and boost morale. Students appreciate the time given over to their own specific needs. They are perceptive about the aspects of their work needing improvement. For example, they identify that it is the translation of a question to its mathematical configuration that causes the most difficulty. They also recognise that manipulating the transfer of knowledge and concepts from one branch of mathematics to another is a skill essential to success in the subject. Students are developing good note-taking skills. Guided by the teachers, but left with an element of independence, most students are methodical in recording their work and so have suitable reference points for revision. In a Year 13 lesson on vector geometry, for instance, students were encouraged to take their own notes during the lesson. These were later supplemented by succinct printed notes from the teacher highlighting the important features of the topic and the connection between cartesian, parametric and vector equations.

78 The management of mathematics is good. Staff in the mathematics department work closely as a team, sharing their expertise and ideas. Their own scholarship is reflected in the desire to enthuse students with a love of mathematics without losing sight of the rigour it entails. Assessment procedures are being refined so that any underachievement in students' progress is quickly identified and acted on. Most, but not all, students respond well to this. The department realistically analyses the reasons for discrepancies between examination results and predictions. Appropriate action is then taken. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory.

## **Biology**

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

### **Strengths**

- Teaching is very good and facilitates very effective learning.
- Small group sizes enable students to work together and share ideas.

### **Areas for improvement**

- ICT is under-used in lessons.
- Students' independent learning skills are not encouraged sufficiently..

79 Standards of work seen during the inspection are above average and are achieved because of very good teaching. In relation to their standards at the start of the sixth form the achievement of students is very good. Their very positive attitudes mean that the quality of learning is very good and students make good progress as they move through the sixth form.

80 The very good teaching and effective learning are reflected in the GCSE A-level results which in the year 2001 were well above average. 97 per cent of students who entered the examination achieved a pass and 51 per cent achieved grades A or B. These results are an improvement on the two previous years. In 2001 AS examinations, 84 per cent of students achieved a pass and 37 per cent achieved the higher grades. There is no significant difference in the achievement of male and female students.

81 Students in Year 13 make good progress in lessons and are achieving very well in relation to their GCSE results. They are able to answer complex questions on the industrial applications of microbiology, for example, in the production of food and washing powders. Their practical expertise and investigative skills became evident during a practical lesson when they were immobilising the enzyme amylase for use in a

subsequent experiment. They can plan and design fair tests, make observations and take appropriate measurements from which to draw conclusions and make sensible evaluations.

82 Higher attainers in Year 13 write competently about the importance of adenosine triphosphate in releasing energy in living organisms. Lower attainers tackle this topic but demonstrate less depth of understanding.

83 Year 12 students show good knowledge of basic biological concepts such as the structures and functions of different parts of cells, for example, mitochondria and chloroplasts. They are all able to discuss mechanisms of inheritance and the problems associated with some inherited diseases such as cystic fibrosis. Their experimental techniques are good and they are now building on the firm foundations of very good teaching and learning at GCSE level

84 Teaching in biology is very good overall, enabling students to learn very well, although it is inclined to be rather prescriptive at times. For example, notes are sometimes dictated to students, rather than them making their own. Teachers show very good subject knowledge so that they are able to give clear explanations of facts. The enthusiasm which the teachers have for their subject is transmitted to the students. Lessons are well planned, have a brisk pace, therefore maintaining the interest of the students. Aims are clearly stated at the beginning of lessons so that students have a clear idea of what they are to learn. Reviews at the end of each lesson help to consolidate learning. Students are encouraged to share ideas and help each other which is facilitated by their small group sizes. Teachers' expectations are high and they question students frequently during lessons to establish and reinforce knowledge and understanding. There are pleasant working relationships between teachers and students during lessons so that students feel able to ask questions if they need to. More use could be made of ICT in lessons, although the department hopes to develop this. Students are still not given enough opportunities to develop independent learning skills. The teaching is very good in preparing students for examinations, it is less effective as a participatory learning activity to which students contribute. Written work in their folders consists of notes, structured questions, essays, past examination questions and experimental write-ups. Marking is thorough and appropriately annotated, giving clear guidance to students on areas for improvement, with plenty of praise and encouragement. Assessment takes place through regular testing during, and at the end of work modules, and targets are regularly reviewed so that students are always aware of their progress. Homework is set and marked on a regular basis and is used to reinforce work covered in lessons.

85 Students learn very well in relation to their previous attainment and make very good progress in lessons because of the very good teaching and because they are mature and highly motivated. Many of them intend to continue with biologically related studies when they leave school. They respond well in lessons and rise to challenges as shown during question and answer sessions and are keen to contribute to class discussions. They work cooperatively together in both theory and practical lessons and help each other and share ideas in a mature and sensible way.

86 Leadership and management of the department are good and the high standards seen during the previous inspection have been maintained and overall improvement since then has been good. There is a good team ethos within the department and members of staff support each other, meeting regularly to discuss departmental issues and review progress. The head of department has a clear focus on direction and is committed to the continued achievement of very good examination results. All staff are biology specialists enabling them to teach lessons with confidence. Resources and accommodation are good and the department receives good technical support from two technicians.

## Chemistry

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

### Strengths

- Teaching is consistently good and teachers know their subject very well.
- Students achieve well and obtain results that are well above average.
- The chemistry curriculum is well planned.
- There are very good relationships between students and teachers.

### Areas for improvement

- There is inconsistency in the marking of students' work.
- Monitoring of teaching and learning is inadequate.
- Provision for the use ICT in chemistry lessons is under-developed.

87 Standards of work seen during the inspection were well above average in Year 13 and above average in Year 12. These standards are achieved because teaching is consistently good. Students' achievement in relation to standards at the start of Year 12 is good. Students' very good attitudes also cause the quality of students' learning in chemistry to be good. Students make good progress as they move through the sixth form.

88 Students have a good knowledge and understanding of inorganic, physical and organic chemistry which is steadily improving. For example, they displayed detailed knowledge and understanding of halogens and halides, extraction of metals and reduction-oxidation reactions in a revision lesson prior to a mock examination. It was evident from their answers to the teacher's questions that they had spent a considerable amount of time reviewing this work on their own and this contributed significantly to the above-average standards of work in the lesson. Enquiry-linked scientific skills are above average. For example, students' titration skills are improving and they are able to determine the formula mass of a weak acid with improving accuracy. Standards are weakest in physical chemistry where the mathematical aspects of this part of the course slow their progress overall.

89 The standards of work of the Year 13 students observed during the inspection are well above average. Achievement again is good due to good teaching and very positive students' attitudes. Standards improve steadily across Years 12 and 13. Standards in inorganic, physical and organic chemistry are well above average. For example in one lesson observed, students displayed a very good knowledge and understanding of transition metal chemistry. They were able to give the structures of several transition metal complexes and more importantly explain the colour changes produced when these complexes change their shape. Practical and investigative skills are very good, a factor which contributes significantly to the students' well-above-average standards in chemistry. Weaker areas again include mathematical aspects of the subject. For example, although they could identify the order of a chemical reaction with ease they found the evaluation of the rate equation from empirical data much more difficult.

90 Examination results confirm the standards of work seen in the inspection. Results in A-level in 2001 and 2000 and 1998 were well above average. Results in 1999 were average overall. Entries have doubled since 1998. There is no significant gender difference in performance in these examinations.

91 Teaching and learning are good overall. Teaching was good in half the lessons observed and very good in the rest. A major strength of the teaching is the very good relationships that have been built up between teachers and students. As a result students' confidence increases, resulting in better learning. These good relationships support students' learning. For example, in one lesson on aluminium extraction a student was unsure of which electrode needed to be replaced. Careful questioning by the teacher elicited from the student that oxygen gas was being produced at that electrode. The student was then able to make the link between oxygen being produced and the electrode burning away. Very good teaching thus ensured

very good progress in this topic. Teachers have very good subject expertise and are able to explain key concepts such as electronegativity and reaction mechanisms clearly. As a result students make better progress in their learning. The main weakness in teaching is the inconsistency in marking of students' day-to-day work. Although unit tests and course work are very well marked, some of the students' work aimed at consolidating their knowledge and understanding of physical chemistry was unmarked. As a result these students were unaware of their strengths and weaknesses in these topics. Students receive little exposure to ICT in their chemistry lessons that would further enhance their learning. This is a result of difficulty accessing ICT facilities and lack of use of hard ware such as data loggers.

92 Students are mature and well disposed to learning. There is a good learning environment in the department and as a result students make good progress in their lessons. They have positive views of the subject and are appreciative of the extra help given to them by their chemistry teachers outside normal chemistry lessons, which improves the standard of their work.

93 The organisation of the chemistry curriculum is good. Computer-produced notes and worksheets enhance learning. The teaching of the course work element of the subject is very well organised and contributes to the above-average standards in the department.

94 Management of the subject is good. The teachers are enthusiastic about their subject and this encourages students to do well. However there is little monitoring of teaching and learning which would serve to share good practice, ensure consistency in marking and further raise standards. Since the previous inspection the department has made good progress and is now maintaining consistently standards that are well above average.

## **ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING**

95 The school offers one course in this curricular area: design and technology product design. It was inspected as a focus area.

### **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

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

#### **Strengths**

- Examination results are well above average and a high proportion gain A and B grades.
- Standards of work are also well above average; students have an excellent understanding of design practice; excellent use is made of Information and communications technology (ICT).
- Students achieve very well and make rapid progress; they produce very good imaginative design work.
- Teaching is very good: lessons are planned carefully.
- Assessment procedures effectively help students develop their understanding and expertise in product design.
- This subject area is very well led and managed.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- The initial stages of design ideas are too structured.

96 Standards of work seen in the sixth form are well above average. This is because the teaching and planning of the curriculum are very good. Assessment procedures are a model of good practice. Students' excellent attitudes and sustained motivation also make a significant impact on their learning in design and technology. The recent change to a new GCE specification also plays an important part in their success. As a result, the students' learning and achievement are very good.

97 The standards of students' work in the current Year 12 and 13 reflect recent AS and A-level examination results and the very good standards of planning and teaching. Students in Year 13 generate

and communicate design ideas effectively. For example, the 'milk carton' case study demonstrates good quality historical research alongside good evaluations and critical analysis of the product. Higher-attaining students manipulate tools, equipment and materials safely. They work skilfully with a high degree of accuracy. Students apply their knowledge successfully in the communication of design ideas through sketching and annotation. Students' sketch books provide them with opportunities to record ideas for successful use at a later point. Other students also exemplify this level of sophisticated planning as they make effective use of digital cameras to support the development of design concepts. For students of all levels of attainment, an understanding of the design principles is clearly present in all aspects of their work.

98 Although students in Year 12 are only in the early stages of their course, they are achieving very well. Some students entered from Year 11 with qualifications in design and technology but no experience of graphics or resistant materials. However levels attained in unit assessments exceed what is expected of them for AS standards.

99 Students work productively. They successfully rise to the intellectual challenges presented to them in their design thinking. Higher-attaining students in Year 13 demonstrate a very professional approach to the presentation of their work. Watermarking techniques, the very skilful use of marker pen techniques for sketching and a vibrant use of colour wash, illustrate the high quality of work being produced. These students are skilful in developing design briefs and specifications and are confident in their ability to make judgements about design issues. Portfolios for major projects are diverse. Flair and an exciting boldness in design execution are present in the work of students. For instance, designs for fashion extend through to exciting ideas for concept seating and meticulous development of ideas for transportation. This fresh and spontaneous approach to designing is the hallmark of the quality of their work. The well above-average standards achieved in product design are a direct reflection of the very good teaching and student motivation. Achievement over time is good.

100 Students have ample opportunities to use and develop key skills. Students are articulate. They consider carefully their strengths and weaknesses and the quality of their present work. They exhibit a good sense of humour and have a very mature attitude when they discuss the progress they have made from GCSE to A2 GCE. Students are very competent in communicating design ideas both in writing and through effective use of ICT. Portfolios provide good evidence of the use of computer aided design (CAD) to support their work effectively. Students in both Years 12 and 13 have very good skills that enable them to work independently.

101 Teaching is very good. As a result students make very good progress in lessons and their learning is very good. The high level of knowledge of the teachers is a strength as is the very good cooperative planning. Teachers have high expectations of all students and they have very good and productive relationships; this makes for effective progress. There are high expectations of students in the use of accurate and specific technical language to describe skills and processes as well as for their understanding of product design. This, students do very well. Teachers spend time discussing work individually and are impressive in their detailed logging of student progress that includes consideration of further areas in need of development. Students appreciate this method of assessment. They use it consistently and effectively in lessons to guide their work.

102 In GCE A-level design and technology, examination results were well above average in 2001. Over the last three years results have been consistently rising as have student numbers. In 2001, examination results for Year 12 students in GCE AS level at grades A-E were above the national average. Retention of students is good.

103 The very good management by the head department makes a significant impact on the standards being achieved in the sixth form. The strong working partnership between the teachers of this course also makes a considerable contribution to the quality of student work. The department has made very good improvement since the previous inspection.

## BUSINESS

104 The focus subject in this area was business studies.

### Business studies

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

#### Strengths

- Students' attitudes are very good and contribute well to their learning.
- Teaching is good and is effective in raising attainment.
- Assessment data is very well used both to inform students and for planning the curriculum which they follow.

#### Areas for Improvement.

- Schemes of work, whilst satisfactory, are not sufficiently developed to take account of the ways that students learn most effectively.

105 Standards of work seen during the inspection were above average. These standards are achieved because teaching is consistently good. Students' achievement in relation to standards at the start of Year 12 is good. Students' very good attitudes also cause the quality of their learning in business studies to be good. Students make good progress as they move through the sixth form.

106 The school offers a developing range of one and two year programmes in business studies and these courses are increasing in popularity among students. Recruitment on both A2 and AS courses is growing and retention is excellent.

107 In the work seen, standards are above average. At AS level, unconfirmed assessment data indicates that student attainment is developing above the national average in the modules taken so far. On the A2 course, a similar picture is emerging and this represents good achievement when compared with the GCSE scores achieved by students at the start of their courses. Students' written work is comprehensive. The strength of work for middle and higher attainers lies in their steady accumulation of knowledge aided by good study skills and well organised files. A further strength is good conceptual understanding of core topics, for example the dilemmas facing human resource management in undertaking workforce planning. Students are confident in peer-led discussions and can give extended oral answers on challenging issues, for example why pay cannot be considered a motivator but is nevertheless a significant 'hygiene' factor in organisations. Lower-attaining students find greater difficulty in organising information and selecting critical data in both course and project work, particularly that which is based on primary business sources, including extracts from journals, web-site documentation and similar materials.

108 Teaching and learning are good with some very good features. Teaching is animated and well informed. Good time challenges are set and aid concentration and the pace of learning. Questioning is focused and inclusive, being well-balanced between the genders and each range of ability. Teaching invariably makes use of students' knowledge and experience. There is a good emphasis on students taking the lead in lessons and accepting responsibility for their learning. Lessons are generally successful in promoting learning because the framework set is sufficiently flexible to enable students to explore topics, such as motivation, in ways that interest and inform them. Group work is very well organised, with well-judged pairings to ensure very good exchange of ideas. Higher-attaining students work unselfconsciously with those experiencing greater learning difficulties. This was particularly successful in a group activity on workforce planning observed with a Year 13 class. The method dealt appropriately with potentially underachieving students.

109 Attitudes and behaviour are very good. Students take their studies seriously and are prepared to work hard and build on their learning as they move through individual course modules. Those of all abilities are prepared to review their work and redraft and add detail as necessary, for example in work observed on accounting and marketing. In discussions, for example on theories of motivation, students invariably show respect for the views of others and are prepared to share their learning in collaborative exercises dealing with case study material.

110 Leadership and management are good. There is a clear vision for the subject with a good development plan, clearly prioritised to assist in broadening access to the subject and raising standards. Schemes of work require greater precision and detail, particularly in tackling the ways in which students' learning can be maximised. They are however being refined on the basis of professional feedback and information sought directly from students themselves.

111 Assessment arrangements and their implementation are very good. Students' performance is closely tracked and regularly reported. Diagnosis of learning needs is precise and is reflected in targets both within modules and in the end of year reports. Students, including those interviewed, are very clear as to what they need to do to improve. This supports both the pace and focus of learning inside and outside the classroom.

112 The modules for each programme area match the career aspirations of students well. A number are contemplating pursuing higher education courses in accountancy and business applications allied to languages, and the modules support these intentions. Curricular enhancement is satisfactory and there are good opportunities for learning provided by the Young Enterprise scheme and the operation of a school bank. These should be planned for on a more extensive basis so that students can develop a more rounded 'whole business' perspective to their study.

113 Results in GCE A-level were at the national average in 2001 when judged in terms of the proportions of students attaining A and B grades and also when set against the proportions gaining a pass grade A to E. There were no significant differences between the performance of male and female students but, overall, they did not achieve quite as well in business studies as in their other subjects. When account is taken of the students' GCSE grades at the start of the course in 1999, this represents satisfactory achievement. The department is aware of this and has put in place revised staffing arrangements and a strategy for addressing underachievement by a minority of students. There are insufficient previous A-level results to enable trends to be established. The first AS course commenced in 2000 and the same applies. Current students are on track to improve further on the 2001 AS and A-level results.

114 Business Studies was not part of the sixth form curriculum at the time of the last inspection but is developing well.

### **Information and communication technology**

115 The focus subject in this section was ICT.

Overall, the quality of provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **good**

#### **Strengths**

- Results in examinations and standards in lessons are above average.
- Students achieve well.
- Teaching shows a good command of the subject.
- Enthusiastic and hard working students relate well to each other and to teachers.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- There is too little variety of types of learning in theory lessons.

- While marking and project advice are good, guidance on how to make overall improvement and meet realistic examination targets is insufficient.

116 Standards of work seen during the inspection in the sixth form are above average. These standards are achieved because the teaching is consistently good and it covers thoroughly everything the examination course requires. The students' achievements on entry to the sixth form are rather mixed in ICT with some having not studied it previously as an examination subject. Students' achievement in relation to overall prior attainment, therefore, is good. The commitment of students to their work, their very high levels of attendance and their very positive attitudes to their work also cause the quality of learning in ICT to be good. Students make good progress as they move through the sixth form.

117 All teaching is good and particularly skilful techniques are used to explain difficult concepts. Teaching exhibits a wide range and great depth of subject knowledge, a very good command of the requirements of the syllabus and practical experience used to enliven the lessons. For example, in dealing with the need to store data securely a teacher used his experience of the dangers of fire and explosion on Canvey Island to provoke the students to consider the need for instantaneous back up of data at a remote computer terminal. Difficult concepts such as the process of normalisation and the benefits of a relational database are well taught. The analysis of the structure of a flat file database showed the students its disadvantages and they quickly saw how to improve it by creating a relational database through a process of normalisation. The whole approach of the teaching is to encourage students to think through problems, arrive at a solution and thus really grasp the concepts involved. This means that students understand concepts well, can explain them and then apply them within their projects. Teaching skills such as questioning are particularly well developed.

118 Lessons are carefully planned and the whole course well designed to make sure all aspects of the course's specification are thoroughly covered. All lessons have their purpose clearly explained and the work builds on the previous experience of students. Although students learn well, there is a lack of variety of approach in some lessons and a wider variety of activities, with more computer-based, practical examples of the theoretical concepts being learned, would break up the lesson better, increase motivation and cement concepts even more securely. Students visit the police department during their course to see the way in which they use ICT but opportunities are limited to learn how organisations use ICT due to the reluctance of many to compromise their security. An increase in such visits would enhance the students' learning.

119 Projects, in which students develop ICT systems to meet specific needs, are a major element of courses at both AS and A2 level. In Year 12 students are gaining an understanding that not only should they develop an ICT package which will work but that it must also meet the needs of clients by being easy to use. Students carry out good preliminary investigations and talk to those for whom they are designing their system. They carefully analyse the problems involved and are clear on what is required. Each student chooses and researches his or her own project. Projects include creating an Open Day interactive guide to school uniform for parents and pupils, a spreadsheet to manage fund-raising for a scout trip to Thailand and a guide to revision for pupils approaching their standard assessment tests in Year 9. Students help each other well and the teacher constantly gives the guidance and advice needed while ensuring that pupils solve their problems themselves and are given the independence to do this. Higher attainers are better at matching the design of their project to the needs of the intended user, particularly in ensuring the layout of computer screens is easy to use and attractive. Lower attainers have more difficulty in going beyond making their designed system work and completing the stages required by the examination board.

120 In Year 13 projects are more extensive. All involve excellent ground work in interviewing clients, delineating clearly the problem and constantly consulting with the client to check that the developed solution meets their needs. Many of the projects are quite complex, for example creating an accident and damage database for a bus company to enable it to analyse accidents and incidents in a variety of ways. Students carry out extensive testing of their programs to ensure they are robust and develop user and trouble-shooting guides, as well as indicating training requirements for the users. They work conscientiously and



well with a real sense of ownership of the systems they are developing. They are able to talk in depth about their projects and how their designed systems relate to the intended user's requirements.

121 The quality of the projects in both year groups shows the quality of the teaching which has enabled them to be completed so successfully and to such a high standard. However students put more energy and effort into the projects than their weighting in the examination scheme warrants. Although this aids their learning of ICT and increases their confidence, some further guidance to limit the scope of projects and thus makes them more manageable, would allow more time and effort to be spent on the rest of the course.

122 Students receive clear advice and assessment of their work during the course and on their projects. They receive regular homework to reinforce the theory aspects they have been learning and this is always marked well. Although students are clear on where they have made errors and the progress of their work, broader advice on their progress is insufficient. There is a central system for target-setting but this is not effective and relevant targets are not set. So, although students know how well they are doing in the day-to-day study of ICT, they are insufficiently aware of what changes they need to make overall to their work patterns to do better and achieve the higher grades of which they may be capable.

123 Students show enthusiasm and interest for the subject. They work very hard and there is evidence of the large amount of extra work they do at home on their own computers. Access to school computers is freely available for those who need or wish to do more of their work at school. Students can and do e-mail work between school and home. Many students send assignments and homework for marking to the teacher in a variety of electronic forms. Good facilities for ICT enhance the learning. Students who have special needs are well integrated into the courses and make good progress. Attendance is excellent and very few students do not complete the two year sixth-form course.

124 The results in A-level GCE Computing Studies in summer 2001 were above the national average as were those for students who took the GCE AS examination in ICT. There is no significant difference between the performance of male and female students. A-level results have been above average over the past three years. At A-level, Computing Studies has now been replaced by ICT.

125 Sixth-form ICT is well led and managed. Courses are well organised and all resources are to hand. There is an excellent student handbook. Monitoring of examination results is continuous. The department is re-assessing the AS course, which is now in its second year, and is taking action to reassess the learning activities provided. The previous attainment of students entering this course varies considerably with many below average. The good achievement for most shows how the good teaching enables deficiencies on entry to be made good. The number of students taking ICT courses in the sixth form has increased greatly. The provision of additional courses which are less academically orientated, would enable the few who do not cope well with the course to succeed. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

## **HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL**

126 The focus was on a single subject in this area: physical education.

### **Physical education**

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

**Strengths**

- Examination results and the standards seen are well above average.
- Students achieve well.
- The overall quality of teaching is good and some is very good or excellent.
- Students have very positive attitudes to learning.

**Areas for improvement**

- Not enough male students perform at the highest A-level grades.
- The use of ICT in lessons is underdeveloped, owing to a shortage of accessible equipment.

127 Standards of work seen during the inspection are well above average. Students' achievement in relation to their standards at the start of the sixth form is good. This is the result of consistently good teaching and the very positive attitudes that students have towards their learning. Students make good progress in all aspects of physical education as they move through the sixth form.

128 Students are well known to their teachers, with whom they have very good relationships. The atmosphere in lessons is friendly and relaxed and there is a consistent sense of enjoyment in learning. However, this does not detract from either the pace of learning or the high levels of challenge that the teaching provides. These qualities were all evident in an excellent lesson which examined the use of sport in emergent countries. All students were actively involved in a recapitulation of previous learning, exploring for example, the reasons why Kenya has produced such outstanding middle distance runners. Confident and knowledgeable responses demonstrating a good understanding of the way in which success in this event promotes social cohesion and integration in Kenyan society, were made in response to searching questions put by the teacher and their fellow students. They were thus well prepared for the ensuing discussion and exploration of the place of football in Brazilian society. Students allowed themselves to be questioned very closely by the teacher, who capitalised on the quality of classroom relationships by coming back again and again until his high expectations for accuracy and clarity in explaining the importance of colonial influences were met. However, what made this an excellent lesson, was the way that the teacher was prepared to go beyond the demands of the subject specification and challenge students. This rigour led them both to reflect on the conditions in which many Brazilian young people live, and to explore the moral implications of the investment of commercial and government resources in this sport. The lesson therefore, not only provided very well for students' knowledge and understanding of sociological aspects of sport, but also contributed well to their personal development and moral awareness.

129 The high level of students' involvement is a strong feature of the learning in all lessons. Lessons are also well planned to ensure that students are able to build well on their previous learning, and they contain an interesting variety of challenging activities, which keep students on their toes and ensure that a good pace is maintained. Lesson planning also sensitively takes into account the way that individual students' current personal circumstances may affect their contribution to the lesson. Students are routinely required to report back to others on their learning, which also enables teachers to monitor progress. So, for example, in an A2 level lesson in sports psychology, the students were able to explain the aggression-frustration hypothesis using examples from their own experience and drawing on the theories of psychologists such as Freud and Dolland, which showed that they had learned well. On the other hand, in an AS-level lesson, the concluding discussion revealed that some students had not fully understood all types of venous return mechanisms, which were being studied. The teacher was then able to deal with the misunderstandings so that, by the end of the lesson, the students had made good progress in learning about this aspect of exercise physiology. Marking is good. Detailed comments enable students to see how they can improve their work. Students are initially set demanding yet realistic, targets based on their teachers assessment of their potential in this subject. This takes into account their practical capabilities as well as the targets set by the school on the basis of students' performance in all their GCSE subjects. Their teachers closely monitor students' progress so that the right level of challenge is maintained. Progress is good throughout the sixth form with increasing demands being made in the way that students use their knowledge and understanding. For example, students following the A2 level course are able to draw on the detailed knowledge and

understanding of skills' acquisition, exercise physiology and sports psychology, gained in their AS-level studies, to analyse very specific strengths and weaknesses in performance and suggest means of improvement, which they can relate closely to the theory.

130 The overall good quality of teaching, together with the students' positive attitudes is responsible for the well above average standards being achieved at this stage in both AS and A2 level courses. This was evident both in the lessons observed and in and in the analysis of students' work and is broadly representative of the high standards achieved in examinations in recent years. Since 1998, results in the A-level examination have been high, very high or well above average. In 2001 they were well above average in comparison with other schools and students' achievements were broadly similar to those obtained in their other subjects, which, incidentally, illustrates the high calibre of those who are attracted to study physical education in the sixth form. The first group of students to sit the new AS-level examination tended to do much better in physical education than in their other subjects. Over half obtained the higher A and B grades and no student gained less than a D grade. Students enjoy the subject and most also continue outside school in a wide variety of team and individual sports, which also contribute to their achievements in lessons. Many feel that their academic study has helped improve their performance, for example, by being aware of the psychological factors which influence competition. Most intend to continue with their participation in their chosen sports after leaving the sixth form and some intend to pursue the subject into higher education. Retention rates are high.

131 Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. Examination results have improved. The strong culture of ongoing self-evaluation, which characterises the department, has also resulted in improvements in the key area of teaching and learning. The quality of teaching in the sixth form is also being carefully maintained through the well-planned, gradual induction of the less experienced teachers in the department into A2 and AS-level teaching. Developing use is being made of a departmental website which students are expected to access for research and e-mail homework assignments. However there is a lack of other ICT equipment, which could be used, for example, in testing and measuring. Assessment information is thoroughly analysed and used well in planning. For example, although male students' results in the latest A-level examination were broadly similar to those obtained in their other subjects, the department recognises that they were not well represented at the higher grades and this could be improved. There is a clear idea of strengths and weaknesses and the ambitious vision for further improvement, including the sixth form, is translated well into development planning.

## VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

132 Within this area, only art and design was inspected as a focus subject.

### Art and design

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

#### Strengths

- Students learn to use colour thoroughly.
- The subject makes a good contribution to students' cultural development.
- Photography is used effectively to analyse and explore the environment.

#### Areas for improvement

- Standards, and results in AS and A-level examinations are not good enough.
- The pace in some lessons is slow.
- There is a lack of bold and broad approaches to painting.

133 Standards of work seen during the inspection are below average. The quality of teaching and students' achievement in relation to their attainment at the start of the sixth form are satisfactory. In art and design students join the course with below average levels of attainment. These are not correspondingly improved as they move through the sixth-form courses and their progress, therefore, is no better than satisfactory. Students' attitudes are good, and their work is well finished and carefully presented as a result. The quality of learning overall is satisfactory.

134 Examination results in both the AS and A-level examinations were well below average in 2001. This represents a sharp fall in results compared to 2000 A-level results, which were above average. This is because there were problems in staffing, with some long-term absence in the department. As a result, students did not do as well as expected. However, these problems are being tackled, achievement is now satisfactory, and standards of work seen in the school show some improvement, though they are still below average.

135 Teachers have good subject knowledge, and students learn to work with colour thoroughly as a result. For example, they use delicate pastel shades and tints to good effect when drawing from studies of local architecture. Teachers also communicate a sense of genuine interest in all artwork. They arrange varied visits, for example, to the Lady Lever Gallery in Port Sunlight, and the Tate Gallery in Liverpool. Teachers also encourage students to talk about their work in front of the rest of the class. In one lesson, students showed increasing confidence when explaining their work, and this reinforced a sense of giving value to art activity. As a result of these factors, the subject makes a good contribution to students' cultural development, and they show a willingness to explore art, within their own neighbourhood, in the classroom, and on family holidays. This is sometimes used to further inform their own work; for example, the architecture of Venice was used as the inspiration for a painting in low relief, which showed confidence in handling colour and composition.

136 Students are also encouraged to investigate their locality, and undertake visual research. They use photography effectively, to analyse their surroundings in terms of shape, colour and texture. Studies of local seaside piers show a confidence in composing photographs, producing strongly contrasting images, which use a good range of light and dark tones. They also use photographs to exaggerate and investigate perspective effects, which show local buildings in a new light.

137 Students make sound gains in their drawing skills, and in Year 12, they draw with confidence in pencil from natural forms such as leaves and twigs. They show a competence in representing the shapes and textures seen in these forms, and their pencil work shows increasing skill in using line and tone.

138 In some lessons, teachers encourage students to plan their work so that they develop individual directions. For example, in a Year 13 lesson, based on the theme of 'conflict', the teacher encouraged students to work in groups, and then take individual ideas further. The teacher moved between the small groups, and used good questioning skills, which made students think further. This raised interest levels, students began to show good levels of application, and express their own ideas. Good learning was the result. Students appreciated this approach, and enjoyed the opportunity to put some of their own ideas into their work.

139 At times, however, there is a lack of variety of methods used in some lessons. As a result, students' interest levels begin to fall, their concentration begins to wander, and the pace of the lesson becomes slow. This means that students work without really thinking about what they are doing, and their use of line becomes heavy and laboured. This produces work which lacks sparkle and excitement. This is seen in some of their work in graphic design, particularly in their lettering. In addition, they do not use enough ICT to support and extend their work, because access to computers is difficult in lessons. There is also a lack of bolder and broader approaches to painting. This is because the teaching tends to stress careful consideration of elements such as colour and drawing. While this approach produces, for example, strong colour work, it is not sufficiently balanced by enough experimentation with materials and processes. This produces paintings that sometimes lack excitement and a sense of discovery. In addition, too much of the work is on too small a scale, and this restricts the possibilities for students to fully develop broader

brushwork skills. This is particularly noticeable in the work of middle and low attaining students, whose work lacks the delicacy and precision seen in that produced by high attainers.

140 Improvement since the previous inspection has been unsatisfactory. Standards have fallen, and results in examinations fell in 2001. However, the leadership and management of the subject has a sound grasp of the strengths and areas for improvement within the department. As a result, the work in the school shows some improvement over the standards achieved in the examinations in 2001. The action taken, however, has yet to be fully effective, or seen in examination results.

## HUMANITIES

141 Within this group of subjects the school provides courses in geography, history and religious education. Each was inspected in depth.

## GEOGRAPHY

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

### Strengths

- Students achieve significantly higher grades than in their other subjects.
- Results and standards are consistently above average.
- Planning and teamwork ensure that teaching and learning are good and as a result students achieve well.

### Areas for improvement

- The quality and range of teaching and learning styles, including the use of more ICT to support students' learning, are under-developed in some lessons.

142 Standards of work seen during the inspection are above average. These standards are achieved because the teaching is good. Students' achievements in relation to standards at the start of the sixth form are good overall and half achieve very well, producing coursework of high quality. The very good attitudes of students also cause the quality of their learning in geography to be good. A number of other very good features including detailed planning, learning resources and the use of assessment to check students' attainment ensure that students make good progress as they move through the sixth form. Geography is a popular subject and retention rates are high.

143 The observation of students in lessons and an analysis of samples of their work confirm that standards, like recent results, are above average. Overall, students are on course to obtain at least above average results in the external examinations at the end of the year.

144 The course has a very clear focus on the inter-relationship between the physical environment and human geography. Consequently, learning has a strong influence on students' personal development particularly in terms of moral, social, cultural, economic and political considerations. In work on the management of rivers in Year 12, higher-attaining students produce detailed essays explaining the benefits and disadvantages of the construction of dams on the environment and people. Unlike the higher attainers, lower attainers do not use technical language to account for the shape and profile of a meander. In a very good well-prepared introductory lesson on coastal systems, all students made rapid progress learning to identify inputs, stores and outputs. Following a good exposition they worked very effectively in pairs to classify a set of cards and consolidated their learning taking notes in the form of spider diagrams. The major part of the lesson was spent on increasing their knowledge and understanding of the work through analysing photographs, thus developing their geographical skills. In a good lesson on the hierarchy of settlement in the local area the teacher's expert subject knowledge and skilful questioning challenged the students to justify their answers. They quickly realised that defining and classifying different settlements was not as simple as their understanding at GCSE level.

145 In the AS examinations last year the results were slightly above average in terms of points scores and 40 per cent of students attained the higher A and B grades. The results indicated only good achievement overall, however, because five of the students failed the examination. Many produced coursework of high quality using ICT to present their reports and handle data to produce graphs. The department has a wide range of topics approved by the examination board and each student is assigned to a teacher who provides advice, support and guidance. This is a very good procedure and ensures that students improve on their previous best. Marking is accurate and informs students how to improve their work.

146 In Year 13 students develop more independence and use ICT to research and present extended essays on a variety of topics. Higher-attaining students excel in work comparing the level of health care and the impact of natural hazards in countries at different stages of economic development. Lower attainers have difficulty in explaining how governments could respond to minimise the effect of disasters and they do not consider the global implications of these problems. In work on extremes of weather all students made very good progress because the teacher set appropriate classwork tasks for some students, whilst conducting an effective seminar for a group who had been absent. In a very good plenary session, the former group shared their learning so that the lesson concluded with everyone having reached the same point. Where teaching was satisfactory there was an imbalance between the teacher's explanation and the students' learning. For example, in a lesson introducing the decision-making module most of the time was used to explain how to tackle the exercise. The pace was slow and the students were given limited opportunities to work on the very good example. As a result, their concentration and interest lapsed and learning was not as good as it should have been. The lesson lacked some variety of approach to keep students motivated.

147 The A-level results have improved since the previous inspection and they have been consistently above average in recent years. For the last three years students have achieved significantly higher grades in geography than in their other subjects. During the same period the attainment of girls has been higher than that of the boys. Statistical analyses indicate that the students achieve slightly higher results than expected in relation to their GCSE scores.

148 Geography is led and managed very effectively and as a result improvement since the previous inspection has been very good. The department analyses results in detail and uses the findings to improve the planning of teaching and learning. The teachers are well qualified; keep up-to-date with developments and share good practice. They form a dynamic team and are committed to raising the achievement of students. Procedures for assessment are very good; students are set targets and their progress is checked regularly. Teaching and learning are continuously evaluated and the development plan is an effective guide for further improvement.

## History

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

### Strengths

- Standards are above average.
- Students achieve well and have positive attitudes to learning.
- The overall quality of teaching is good.

### Areas for improvement

- Targets set for students as they progress through the courses are not sufficiently demanding.
- A lack of resources limits students' wider reading.

149 Standards of work seen during the inspection are above average. This is more firmly the case in AS-level lessons than those in A-level where they are just above average. These standards are achieved because the overall quality of the teaching is good. Students' positive attitudes also help to ensure that the quality of learning is good. Students make good progress as they move through the sixth form.

150 These standards represent an improvement in comparison with the latest A-level examination results from 2001, which were below average. This was largely due to the performance of male students. None of the eight candidates obtained the higher A and B grades and they did better in their other subjects than in history. Weaker performance of male students since 1998 has been the main factor in a declining

overall trend. Results in the AS-level examination in 2001 were below average and only two of the 20 candidates obtained the higher grades. Students' performance was better in their other subjects than in history.

151 There are several reasons for the improvement, which results in the above-average standards seen in the inspection. Most of the candidates who failed to obtain a pass grade or obtained comparatively lower grades in the new AS-level examination did not choose to continue to study history at A2 level. There is now a more stable teaching force in history than was the case two years ago. Younger teachers in the department have now gained more experience in teaching in the sixth form. The department has recently introduced a wider range of teaching and learning styles into its new schemes of work, and many of these involve students more in their own learning, are more demanding, and so increase motivation. The improvements are evident in the range and quality of learning activities seen in lessons and in the representative sample of students' work, which was analysed during the inspection. There is also evidence of an increasing range of opportunities for students to be involved in activities such as debates and individual and paired research resulting in the production of reports for distribution to other students. Older students recognise that they have benefited from these improvements. All the lessons observed during the inspection contained these elements to some degree although there is still some inconsistency in the extent to which they are successfully used. In addition, the evidence from lessons and an analysis of students' work indicates that there are currently no significant differences between the work of female and male students, though the relatively small numbers of male students means that it is difficult to make precise comparisons.

152 The good classroom relationships also contribute to the quality of learning, which has resulted in the above average standards seen during the inspection. Students enjoy the subject and retention rates for those who begin courses, are high. The atmosphere in lessons is relaxed, but this does not detract from what is a good pace of learning. Teachers have a sound command of their subject. For some, the period of British and European history studied is not their major area of specialism but they are well prepared and have an enthusiasm for the subject which communicates itself to the students. Lessons generally are characterised by the responsibility that is placed on the students to learn for themselves. This was the case in a very good lesson in Year 12, which began with a student's confident oral presentation of the findings of his research into aspects of the Russian nobility, which he had also printed for distribution to the rest of the class. Students then worked industriously in pairs, evaluating the relative impact of groups, such as the largely conservative Orthodox Church, who were opposed to the reforms of Peter the Great, in preparation for an essay. The work provided a very good level of challenge because the teacher had carefully organised the composition of the groups so that the comparative difficulty of the area selected for research was well matched to their capabilities. Discussion between the students was animated and they retained a very good focus on their task. Not all lessons are so discriminating in the levels of challenge but in most, the pace, students' involvement in analysing and annotating documentary sources and in discussion, together with the quality of questioning by the teacher, usually make for good learning.

153 Overall, teaching and learning are good. The teaching was good in two of the four lessons which were observed, and very good in one other. Marking is good. Increasing use of a standard feedback sheet for essays is useful in providing targets for improvements in writing and regarded as such by the students themselves. Detailed analysis of students' essays gives, for the most part, a clear indication of how they can improve though some, particularly the highest attainers, are not yet being stretched sufficiently. Their work provides few examples of the apt use of quotations from texts or the comparison of the views of different historians and the teacher does not always pick up these weaknesses. Essays analysing different interpretations of reasons for the outbreak of the English Civil War, and Charles I's failure to compromise were generally well structured, but did not provide much evidence of wider reading beyond the texts and photocopied materials provided by the teacher. Students recognise this weakness themselves but point to the difficulty of obtaining some of the texts recommended for their courses. There is also little evidence of the use of ICT to find source material though some students do use ICT for word processing essays. Students' efforts are generally well monitored and they themselves agree that any "slacking" is quickly picked up by the teachers. However whilst monitoring in relation an initial minimum target grade is effective, the targets themselves are not always sufficiently demanding and are not revised to reflect an individual student's progress during the courses.



154 Improvement since the previous inspection has been unsatisfactory because of the decline since then in examination results. However, the measures recently agreed and now in practice in the department are beginning to take effect and this is reflected in the standards seen during the inspection.

## Religious studies

Overall the quality of provision is **good**

### Strengths

- Students' achieve well.
- Standards in Year 13 are above average; students have good analytical skills and a sound knowledge and understanding of Judaism.
- Teaching is good; teachers use their very good subject knowledge in ways that helps students learn effectively.
- Students' have very good, positive attitudes.

### Areas for improvement

- Students are not sufficiently encouraged to take responsibility for their own research and information gathering.

155 Standards of work seen during the inspection are above average overall. Good teaching ensures that students' achievement in relation to attainment at the start of the sixth form is good. Students' very good attitudes cause the quality of their learning in religious studies to be good. Students make good progress as they move through the sixth form.

156 The number of students entered for recent A-level examinations has been small. Over the past five years an average of five students per year has been entered. As a result, comparisons with national averages have to be treated with caution as the results of one or two students of very high or very low ability can be of disproportionate significance. In 2001 results were well below the national average with no pupil gaining an A or B grade. In 2000, however, the number of A grades achieved was three times the national average and results overall were above the national average. Where students have the aptitude and motivation to achieve the highest grades, the teaching they receive ensures that these grades are attained. Several students have left the school in the recent past with grades in religious studies high enough to be accepted on theology courses at Oxford and Cambridge universities. The A2 level target grades students are given are not based on prior attainment in religious studies and need to be more subject focused to be creditable with students.

157 Standards of work seen during the inspection are average overall but range from well above average to below average. Standards in Year 12 overall are below average. Half of the students on the course did not take a GCSE in religious studies and are having to work hard to acquire the background knowledge that the others have. The size of this large group of 22 students restricts opportunities for teachers to give students individual support. The standards of a minority of students in this group are average. Written work shows good understanding and their essays are structured to support coherent conclusions, but are not as incisive as those of higher attainers.

158 Standards in Year 13 are above average. Analytical skills are well developed and students are able to compare and contrast complex philosophical arguments drawing on a number of sources. For example, in an essay discussing religious attitudes to life after death and the philosophical problems this raises, one student was able to compare Sartre's belief that death denies life any meaning, to Hindu and Buddhist beliefs, marshalling the evidence, evaluating its worth and then expressing her own informed opinion. Another student was able to contrast the Jewish notion of longing for land, with its inherent psychological, spiritual and religious dimensions, with the state of Israel and the reality of conflict and politics. Very good insight into the notion that the longing was more important than having the land or living on the land was apparent.

159 Apart from their above average analytical skills, students show a sound knowledge of Judaism, their second strand of study. In the philosophy strand of the course students are actively encouraged, through discussion and debate, to explore, usually in pairs, philosophical propositions. For example, in one lesson students were paired into four groups, each group taking one of Hume's four arguments against the notion of miracles and, through evaluative criticism, defining a case for or against Hume's arguments.

160 The development of these skills in sixth-form students is one of the strengths of the teaching which overall is good. Almost two fifths of the teaching seen was very good. Both strands are taught with a thoroughness that ensures that students cover the course requirements, learning new skills and acquiring an impressive body of knowledge and understanding of religion. This is largely due to the very good subject knowledge of the teachers that brings the subject to life in a way that students find interesting and memorable. Teaching would be even better and students' learning would be more secure, if students were encouraged more to find things out for themselves. Their research skills are underdeveloped and more needs to be done when planning lessons to provide opportunities for students to go to source materials themselves rather than relying on the teacher's notes and handouts. For example, little use is made of the Internet for research and students rarely make use of ICT to support their learning.

161 Students' attitudes are very good and the application they bring to their work, combined with the good teaching they receive, contributes in large measure to their good achievement. Both in discussions with students themselves and from lesson observations, it is clear that they value and respect their teachers. The fostering of good relationships is a strength of the teaching. Teachers are concerned that students achieve well and work very hard on their behalf. Work is marked with care, and the teachers' written comments give students helpful guidance to show them how they can make further improvements to their work. For example, in marking one student's essay on Talmud the teacher pointed out the omission of a consideration of Palestinian and Babylonian civil and religious law, the inclusion of which would have raised the essay to a higher grade level. Homework is regularly set and few students fail to complete it on time.

162 The subject makes a valuable contribution to students' personal and spiritual development. Students are encouraged to explore values and beliefs, not only religious beliefs but also agnostic and humanist beliefs, enabling them to reflect on the meaning and purpose of life. From their study of Judaism they learn of suffering, of good and evil and begin to develop their own set of personal values. In one lesson on miracles, students began to reflect on whether miracles could have unpleasant side effects, for example on the Egyptians during the parting of the Red Sea, developing personal insight and independent thinking. To enrich their experience of religious cultures visits have taken place to India and Poland organised by the head of department whose management and leadership of the subject are good. In Poland, students visited Auschwitz as part of their study of Judaism, and learned at first hand something of Jewish history. These very good attitudes combined with good teaching helps students make the good progress which was evident in the work which was analysed during the inspection – for example, moving from an understanding of the historical antecedents of Judaism to analysing and evaluating principles and procedures of Jewish Law. Students appreciate the contrasting teaching styles of the two teachers involved in the sixth-form course who work well together and their different teaching styles compliment each other.

163 Although many students in Year 12 find the subject challenging, a large number are planning at this stage to continue with the subject into Year 13. Were this to happen, it would be a significant boost for the department that recognises that take-up needs to improve to ensure the future viability of the subject at A2 level. The school has responded to the main criticism from the previous report that said that the time allocated to religious studies in the sixth form was inadequate, by increasing the time for religious studies to its present satisfactory level. Improvement since the previous inspection is good.

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

164 In this area, English literature and French were the subjects of focus but work in German was also sampled. Two German lessons were sampled and teaching was very good in both. Results in English language in 2001 were average.

### ENGLISH

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

#### Strengths

- Recent results in the A-level course in literature have been well above the national average

- The achievement of students is very good; they are well informed as a result of their good habits of study and scholarship.
- Teaching is very good; teachers communicate their wide knowledge of the subject with enthusiasm and flair.
- Teachers carefully assess students' work to determine strengths and weaknesses, and provide very good support for their further learning.
- Leadership and management of the department are very good.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- Insufficient use is made of relevant assessment information to ensure some students realise their full potential, especially boys and some higher attainers.

165 Standards of work seen during the inspection are well above average. Very good teaching results in students' achievement being very good. Students have very positive attitudes and their learning, too, is very good. They make very good progress as they move through the sixth-form literature course.

166 Students have well developed critical skills and their good background knowledge enables them to interpret text with appropriate understanding of and reference to its social and historical context. Students in the A2 literature course, considering the character of Angelo in "Measure for Measure", confidently drew on their understanding of the social conventions of the time to evaluate the complexity of the moral dilemma in which he is placed. They then went on to make thoughtful comparisons with present-day predicaments. One student, discussing the language of the soliloquy, compared it to the language of some sonnets she had studied. Most students speak fluently and have a richly developed vocabulary which enables them to express themselves succinctly. They readily described the atmosphere of Keats's 'On The Eve Of St. Agnes' as spiritual and suggested an atmosphere of sensuality and eroticism when discussing passages of 'Lady Chatterley's Lover'. Students following the AS literature course, studying 'Educating Rita' were highly perceptive in interpreting the use of a variety of colloquialisms as a challenge to pretension and social prejudice. Others confidently drew on their understanding of metaphysical poetry when discussing the form, structure and language of Donne's 'The Flea'.

167 The achievement of students on both AS and A2 courses is very good. All students have gained higher grades at GCSE and are aware of their own responsibility for maintaining and improving good standards of attainment, and work is thoroughly prepared. In lessons they are exhilarated by the level of debate and have a great enthusiasm for learning. Guidelines supplied by very effective marking further encourages them to maintain their efforts.

168 The teaching of literature is very good. Teachers communicate an infectious enthusiasm for their subject, sustaining students' interest and commitment, and by careful preparation and systematic presentation provide excellent examples of study and scholarship. Students' strengths and weaknesses are well known and expectations are high. Lessons are conducted at an energetic pace in an atmosphere of shared ideas, providing very good opportunities for students to offer comments, express and discuss opinions, and contribute findings from their research. Their learning, as a result, is very good. They are expected to undertake different forms of enquiry and to lead discussions on particular aspects of sections of text they have researched. Their perception is enhanced by challenging questioning both from the teacher and from other students. They become quick-thinking and learn to justify their observations from their research and from their knowledge of the text. Students undertake a wide variety of activities, including amongst others, individual presentations, group assignments, discussions and assessment of each other's work. A meticulous assessment system supports the systematic progress of individual students.

169 Students' work is carefully marked. Extended pieces are annotated throughout by constructive comment and followed by a critique which provides helpful guidelines for the further refinement of personal style. Students benefit from individual discussions with their teachers, extra lessons are arranged when

necessary, and revision classes are organised during the half-term break and the Easter holiday. Relationships within the department are very good and students appreciate the willingness and availability of teaching staff to discuss any difficulties encountered. Progress is reviewed regularly. Enrichment is provided by regular trips to local theatres, visiting speakers and lecture series, and students are encouraged to discover for themselves the environment from which particular writers came. Some had visited Haworth while reading 'Wuthering Heights' and some had become well informed about the industrial area of Derbyshire, enhancing their understanding of D H Lawrence's writing about women.

170 Results gained in A-level examinations in English literature in 2001 were well above average; 61 per cent of students gained A or B grades in comparison with the national average of 30 per cent. Over the past three years the pattern has largely been consistent. Girls' results were better than those of boys, but many more girls than boys took the course.

171 Teachers are experienced and well qualified. Most lessons are taught within a suite of rooms, all of which are enhanced by high quality display from a variety of sources. The provision of equipment such as video players is good, text-books are in good condition, and there is an extensive supply of course-related materials. Stock is regularly reviewed to ensure its relevance, and replaced when necessary. Students have good access both to standard reference books and to Internet web-sites which they learn to use with discrimination.

172 The leadership and management of English literature are very good. The current vacancy for the head of department post is ably and energetically covered by the assistant head of department. Staff work well together, sharing good practice in order to maintain high quality teaching. The acting head of department regularly observes lessons, and less experienced members of the department are well supported. Assessment of coursework is undertaken collaboratively, and informal contact with an external moderator ensures that assessment is accurate. The department is currently compiling a bank of exemplar examination material and mark schemes which will be made available for students' use, and intends to extend into the sixth form the system of monitoring and evaluation currently operating in Years 7-11. Teachers attend all in-service training offered by the relevant examination board. Courses and results are rigorously reviewed and analysed, and strategies adapted accordingly.

173 Since the previous inspection improvement has been good. High standards have been maintained, and the number of students subscribing to the course has increased significantly. Students have become more independent as scholars, although their capacity in this area could be still greater. The quality of teaching is consistently high. In order to improve further the department should make greater use of students' prior attainment in English to set realistic targets, and should examine ways of raising the attainment of boys.

## **FRENCH**

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

### **Strengths**

- Current standards are above average and rising.
- Students achieve well because teaching is good.
- Assessment is good.

### **Areas for improvement**

- A-level results are not high enough and the number achieving the highest grades is too low.
- Opportunities for contact with France and native speakers are infrequent.
- The use of ICT is too rare.

174. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above average. These standards are achieved because the teaching is good. Students' achievement in relation to their attainment when they began in the sixth form is good. Students' very good attitudes also contribute to the good quality of their learning in French. Students make good progress as they move through the sixth form.

175. In Year 13, standards of work of the five students who chose to continue with French to A2 level are above average and are still rising, in response to good teaching. Students develop their speaking very well because they have regular opportunities to prepare and give oral presentations. Most students can speak confidently and fluently and can draw on their good knowledge of grammar and vocabulary to convey information and express views on a wide range of topics. This was ably demonstrated in a very good lesson on genetic engineering in which a student gave a sustained and coherent oral presentation on the subject. Her ability to talk about and express views on recent scientific developments worldwide also showed her good independent use of the Internet to research the topic. The other students in the class listened attentively and were able to pick out and comment on the main advantages and disadvantages of the issue. In the follow-up role-play activity, the students entered into a lively and mature debate on the ethics of interfering with the genetic code. Each student took the role of a prospective parent facing a dilemma from a different standpoint. Throughout this time, the teacher allowed the students to take the initiative and to work things out for themselves, only intervening to ask more probing questions or to give help with specific language points. Students were totally focused on the lesson, the quality of their learning was high and achievement was very good. They show good understanding of printed texts and are becoming increasingly proficient at writing summaries of the main points. The most able students write accurately and can use complex constructions confidently whereas other students sometimes make grammar and basic errors. When translating extracts into English, students generally convey the meaning but their style is occasionally clumsy.

176. Standards in year 12 are also above average. Students are successfully building on their achievements at GCSE and, since September, they have all progressed in dealing with more complex language. The most able students have made considerable gains in essay writing and can, for example, put forward persuasive and reasoned arguments for and against the use of mobile phones. Less capable students show some tendency to copy directly from the texts and their use of structures is not yet sufficiently varied. Nonetheless, they work diligently and are keen to improve. Students show a fair understanding of texts and can identify the main points with some success. However, their translation skills are still at an early stage of development. In speaking, the range of ability in the large group of seventeen students is quite wide. They can generally engage in well-structured and well prepared role-play situations, for example to discuss the pros and cons of the Internet as a media form. However, they are more reticent when faced with more open-ended questions on a video clip, for example. As in Year 13, regular opportunities to prepare and present their ideas and findings on moral, social and cultural issues to the rest of the class both increase their oral competence and contribute significantly to their personal development.

177. Students' very good attitudes contribute significantly to their good achievement. They show much interest in the subject, they are well motivated and they work hard. They work very well in pairs and small groups to solve problems and practise speaking and they learn much from each other. They appreciate the help and support teachers willingly provide. They said they found the bridging course at the start of AS particularly beneficial and also value highly the very full written feedback and target setting they receive on their work. This helps them to improve the quality of their written work more effectively and more quickly. They make good use of study time to complete homework, to work on a joint assignment with a fellow student or to use the Internet to research an aspect. However, they do not yet take sufficient advantage of the good opportunities available in the sixth form resources area to develop their listening and reading comprehension skills still further. Their use of ICT in lessons is rather limited. They do not have regular opportunities to meet and talk with native speakers, as students do in German, and the school has no established links with France.

178. A-level results in French were well below average in 2001 and 2000. The results reflect the very serious long-term staffing difficulties that sorely affected the continuity of students' learning over the whole two-year period to A-level. This led to considerable student disaffection and to most students achieving

grades significantly lower than those predicted when they began the A-level course. Since the previous inspection, very few students have achieved the higher grades A or B. By contrast, AS results in 2001 were above national average, largely because staffing difficulties were resolved early in the course. All fifteen students entered for the examination achieved a pass and one third achieved grades A or B, although a number of students did not achieve as well as expected.

179. Since the appointment of the acting head of department, the quality and style of teaching and learning has improved and teaching is now consistently good overall. Some teaching is very good. The strengths of teaching are the teachers' subject expertise, thorough planning, very good use of time and resources and effective monitoring and assessment of the students' work and progress. Teachers are learning quickly from experience and through the excellent analysis of external results they are taking effective action, which is leading to higher standards. Teachers now share ideas and good practice and they work hard to ensure that students are thoroughly prepared for all aspects of the external examinations.

180. Management of the subject is good and much has been achieved over the past year. Standards are rising quickly now that teaching is consistently good. Students are responding enthusiastically and are achieving well as a result. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good.