

INSPECTION REPORT

THE HENRY BOX SCHOOL

Witney

LEA area: Oxfordshire

Unique reference number: 123237

Headteacher: Mr D R Walker

Reporting inspector: Ms Margaret Julia Goodchild
15918

Dates of inspection: 31 January – 6 February 2002

Inspection number: 191679

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: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 to 18

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Church Green
Witney

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs Elaine Pippard

Date of previous inspection: January 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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15918	M J Goodchild	Registered inspector	Equal opportunities	Results and students' achievements Teaching and learning The effectiveness of leadership and management in the sixth form
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19499	B Baughan	Team inspector	English	Curricular and other opportunities for students
12110	R Bailess	Team inspector	French	
18242	J Godwood	Team inspector	Mathematics	
11864	M Lafford	Team inspector	German	
23886	D McCarthy	Team inspector	Chemistry	
			Special educational needs	
18950	C Rodney	Team inspector		
10053	J Simms	Team inspector	Art and design	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The Henry Box School is a mixed community school for pupils in Years 7 to 13, which gained Specialist Language College status in September 2001. The school serves the Oxfordshire town of Witney as well as taking pupils from a few surrounding villages. With 1295 pupils on roll, it is bigger than most secondary schools and has increased in size since the last inspection. The school is over-subscribed, and there are slightly more boys than girls. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The percentage of pupils who are at an early stage in learning English is low, and almost all pupils are of white UK heritage. The percentage of pupils on the school's register of special educational needs is similar to the national average. The number with statements of special educational need is below average. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is in line with the national average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very effective school. Pupils achieve very well and the school's results in examinations are high compared with schools nationally. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. The school cares very well for its pupils and promotes very positive attitudes. Pupils make very good progress in their personal development, and their very good behaviour contributes to their academic success. The headteacher provides excellent leadership and the school is very well managed. It provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Results in tests at the end of Year 9 and at GCSE in Year 11 are high compared with other schools, and pupils achieve very well.
- Teaching is of very good quality: teachers show tremendous commitment and teamwork is strong.
- The school's sixth form is very effective and students achieve very well in many subjects at AS and A level.
- The very good personal progress that pupils make, their enthusiasm for learning and their very good behaviour contribute a great deal to their academic progress.
- The school's curriculum serves the needs of its pupils very well.
- The school cares very well for its pupils and has a most coherent pastoral system.
- The headteacher provides excellent leadership, very well supported by senior managers, many middle managers and the governing body.

What could be improved

- Assessment procedures could be further developed.
- Pupils' progress in information and communication technology is restricted by limited resources.
- There are some inadequacies in accommodation which impact on the quality of education.
- The school does not meet the statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship throughout the school or to teach religious education to all students in the sixth form; it needs to move faster in implementing the revised Code of Practice for Special Educational Needs.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good improvement since it was last inspected, in January 1997. It has continued to improve on its academic performance – most recent results in Year 9 tests show significant improvement; high results at GCSE have been sustained and built upon, and standards have risen in the sixth form. There have been some changes to assessment procedures but this remains an area for development in Years 7 to 11. There have been satisfactory improvements in academic monitoring, target setting and reporting procedures

although there is scope to extend this further. The curriculum is very good and caters particularly well for higher and lower-attaining pupils. Parents are very well informed about curriculum content and the prospectus explains how teaching groups are organised. Much has been done to strengthen management. Development planning has improved and now involves all staff and governors. Teamwork is strong and all staff are involved in improving the school's performance. The legal requirements to hold a daily act of collective worship for all pupils throughout the school and to teach religious education to all students in the sixth form are not met. There has been very good improvement in health and safety. The school has gained Investors in People status and been designated recently as a Specialist Language College.

STANDARDS

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

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

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

Standards have risen since the last inspection. In 2001, results in national tests in Year 9 were well above the national average in English, mathematics and science, and the school's performance was in the highest 5 per cent nationally against similar schools. At GCSE, overall results were well above the national average and well above similar schools. Pupils' progress from Year 9 to Year 11 was better than that in schools nationally. The school outperformed its overall targets in 2000 and 2001. Results at A level have improved from being below average three years ago to being above average against all schools nationally in recent years. AS results in 2001 were high and the well above average GCSE results in 2001 auger well for future AS performance. Standards of work seen during the inspection were well above average and pupils make very good progress, with particularly good achievement by higher and lower-attaining pupils.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are confident and effective learners who make the most of what the school has to offer.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. The school is an orderly community and pupils' very good behaviour in lessons contributes significantly to their achievement.

Personal development and relationships	Very good. Relationships between pupils and with teachers are very harmonious. They make very good progress in their personal development.
Attendance	Well above average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching is a clear strength of the school in Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11, with an even higher proportion of very good teaching in the sixth form. Teaching is very good in English, mathematics and science. The classes for younger pupils, which enable them to catch up with literacy and numeracy skills, provide intensive and highly effective support. Teachers have high expectations and very good knowledge of the subjects they teach. They manage pupils' behaviour extremely well, so that there is a very positive and focused climate for learning. Where teaching is at least good, the needs of pupils of different abilities are met well. In the minority of lessons, where teaching is no better than satisfactory, teachers do not plan sufficiently and so they are less effective in meeting the needs of the full range of ability within their class. Pupils of all ages are very effective learners: they concentrate well, show interest and take initiative.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. The curriculum serves the needs of pupils at both ends of the ability spectrum. There are strong community links, and gaining the status of a Specialist Language College has enriched learning opportunities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good, with very good features. Targets in pupils' individual education plans are sharply defined, and parents and pupils are involved in target setting. Where teaching is very good or where learning support is provided in lessons, pupils with special educational needs make very good progress. The school needs to move faster in implementing the revised Code of Practice for Special Educational Needs.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The school has only a small minority of pupils for whom English is an additional language. Provision for these pupils ensures that they achieve well.

Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Spiritual development is satisfactory. Provision for moral and social development contributes very effectively to pupils' personal development. Opportunities for cultural development are good overall, but there is too little attention to making pupils aware of a rich diversity of cultures.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very well. There are very clearly defined and well thought-out procedures for supporting pupils and for ensuring that they are well cared for. Assessment procedures require further development.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides excellent leadership and is very well supported in the management of the school by other members of the senior management team. Teamwork is strong and many subject departments are very well managed; the others are well managed.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors make a very positive contribution to the leadership of the school. They fulfil most responsibilities well, except that they do not ensure the school meets statutory requirements for collective worship or the teaching of religious education in the sixth form.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The headteacher and senior managers are active in evaluating the school's performance and there is strong commitment to improving further. The introduction of more monitoring, especially by middle managers, would be a positive development.
The strategic use of resources	The resources at the school's disposal are used very well and every effort is made to apply the principles of best value in all spending and management decisions. Creative decision-making enables staff resources to be used most efficiently.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school and they are pleased that such an effective school is available to them. • Their children are making good progress and the school expects them to work hard. • The school is well led and teaching is good. • The school is helping their children to become mature and responsible and behaviour is good. • Most parents would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem, and they praise the speed of response. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A significant proportion of parents are unhappy with the amount of homework that is set. • Not all parents feel that the school works closely with them or keeps them informed about how their children are getting on.

Inspectors' judgements support parents' positive views. Some parents feel there is too much homework, others that there is not enough. The amount of homework is about right but there is considerable flexibility in the setting of homework; this puts the onus on heads of

department to monitor the amount of homework that is set and the timing of it, leading to some variation in practice from subject to subject. The school works hard to involve parents and keeps them well informed about the progress their children are making.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form of this large comprehensive school has 196 students. It has grown since the last inspection and is set to expand further. There are currently slightly more girls than boys; the vast majority of students are of white UK heritage. The school is part of a consortium - with Abingdon and Witney College and Wood Green School - that provides jointly for students at post-16. The Henry Box School offers a broad range of A-level subjects, which are complemented by vocational courses and additional A-level subjects at other establishments in the consortium. Over 40 per cent of Year 11 pupils from Henry Box School embark on two-year courses leading to AS level and A-level. This means that the majority of students in the sixth form have previously attended the school, but Henry Box also attracts into its sixth form a significant number of students from outside its traditional catchment area. To gain entry to the sixth form, students must have gained an A or B grade - and in some subjects at least a C - at GCSE in the subjects chosen.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form is very effective. In many subjects, standards are high compared with the national average and students achieve very well. A-level results have improved since the last inspection and have been above average in recent years. The school's AS results in 2001 were high compared with other schools. The retention rate on sixth form courses is very good and the majority of students go on to higher education. Teaching and learning are very good in most of the subjects that were inspected in depth. The sixth form is very well managed and it is very cost effective.

Strengths

- In a number of subjects, achievement is very good and standards are high.
- Teaching is very good and students display very good learning skills.
- The sixth form is led very effectively and many departments are very well managed in the sixth form; as a result, there is a very positive ethos for learning and achievement.
- A very good range of curriculum experiences and opportunities is provided.
- Overall systems of assessment, target setting and monitoring students' attainment are excellent and this motivates students to work hard and try to fulfil their potential.
- Students make very good progress in their personal development: they are very well cared for, relationships are excellent and students' mature attitudes contribute much to their academic success.

What could be improved

- The school does not meet the statutory requirement to teach religious education to all students in the sixth form or to provide a daily act of collective worship.

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
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Mathematics	Very good. Standards are well above average and students achieve very well. Teaching is very good and very effective teamwork has created a mathematical culture.
Chemistry	Excellent. Excellent leadership and very good teaching and learning ensure that standards are consistently high. Students achieve some of their best examination results in chemistry.
Biology	Very good. Teaching and learning are very good. Standards have risen and are now high. The proportion of students attaining the higher grades in Years 12 and 13 is well above the national average.
Art	Good. Results in 2000 and 2001 were in line with the national average, but had previously been high. Work in Year 12 shows a broad range of standards but, by Year 13, more students are working above rather than below average. Teaching and learning are consistently good.
Geography	Good. A-level results were in line with the national average in 2001, but above average in the preceding two years. Current standards are above average. Teaching and learning are very good but there is a need to improve assessment in the AS course.
History	Very good. A-level results in 2001 were well above average. Standards continue to be high and teaching and learning are very good.
English	Very good. Although A-level results have varied from year to year and dipped in 2001, they were high in 1999 and 2000. Current standards are above average as a result of very good teaching and learning.
French	Very good. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. This results in high standards in Year 13 with above average attainment in Year 12. Students' oral skills are particularly well developed. Overall, the trend is towards increased take up of the subject and higher standards.
German	Very good. Very good teaching enables students to achieve very well. This is borne out by the examination results at AS level and the very good standard of oral competence observed in lessons.

Provision was sampled in business studies, design and technology, information and communication technology, key skills, media studies, music, psychology, physical education and religious studies. Provision in these subjects is good, based on the evidence from a small number of lessons and some analysis of students' work.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Pastoral staff and subject teachers provide highly effective support and guidance for students.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	The sixth form is very well led and managed. There is a strong commitment to continual development and to promoting students' academic and personal achievement. Careful attention is paid to providing students with equal opportunities across the wide range of courses on offer within the sixth form consortium.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They are taught well and challenged to do their best; teachers are accessible to help them if they have difficulties with their work. • The school helped them to settle into the sixth form and sixth-form work. • The choice of courses allows them to follow a programme suited to their talents and career aspirations, and information about courses is clear and helpful. • They enjoy being in the sixth form and would recommend it to others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some students would like more advice about what they should do after they leave school. • Not all students feel they are kept well informed about their progress in relation to the qualifications they hope to get. • Not all students feel they could rely on strong and sensitive support if they had personal problems. • A minority of students would like more activities and enrichment courses.

Inspectors' judgements support students' positive views. Careers guidance is very good, although there is not equal take-up of careers advice by all students. The school has an excellent system for ensuring that students are very clear about how well they are progressing against their targets. There is a very good range of enrichment opportunities and a great deal of support available should any student wish to discuss problems of any sort.

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 tests at the end of Year 9 and at GCSE in Year 11 are high compared with other schools, and pupils achieve very well

1. Standards in public examinations have risen since the last inspection and the school outperformed its targets in 2000 and 2001. High results reflect very good quality teaching, pupils' enthusiasm and effectiveness as learners, and the fact that the headteacher and staff have established a climate in which it is seen as the natural thing for pupils to work hard and succeed.
2. In national tests at the end of Year 9, the school's results have been well above those achieved nationally over the last five years (with a temporary dip to above average in 2000). They improved again significantly in 2001 when they were well above the national average in English, mathematics and science, with substantial improvements in the number of pupils gaining higher levels in all three subjects. This put the school into the top five per cent nationally compared with similar schools, with particularly strong results in English and science. From 1998 to 2001, the trend in the school's results across all core subjects was above the national trend.
3. Results at GCSE are consistently well above those found nationally for five or more A* to C grades and based on the average points score, and well above those of similar schools. This particularly reflects the school's success in enabling pupils to achieve A* and A grades. In 2001, the school gained its record number of A* grades and six 'National Top 5' GCSE awards (four were for French, one was for German and one for science) for outstanding performance. Fourteen pupils achieved eight or more A* or A grades, showing that the school is very effective in providing for higher-attaining pupils.
4. At GCSE in 2001, Henry Box sustained its high performance in comparison with other Oxfordshire schools. The school's results were the best across the 35 schools in the local education authority in modern languages, history and religious studies, with very strong performance in science, geography and mathematics. In both 2000 and 2001, pupils achieved their highest results at GCSE in French, geography and German. They did less well, relatively, in English language and literature, art, business studies, and design and technology.
5. While girls outperformed boys in the average point score at GCSE, the gender gap was less than that found in most schools and boys outperformed girls this year in the number achieving five or more A* to G grades. From 1998 to 2000, the performance of both boys and girls has been well above the national average in Year 9 tests and at GCSE. When pupils' prior attainment is taken into account, their performance at GCSE was well above average in 2000 and above average in 2001. The vast majority of pupils at the end of Year 11 go on to the sixth form or to further education.
6. Results at A level have improved from being below average three years ago to above average for schools nationally in recent years. In 2000, the average points score was above average. In 2001, results fell somewhat but the average points score was in line with maintained schools and above all schools nationally. The school expected lower results from this cohort and nearly all students exceeded their target grades. Results are consistently well above average in a number of subjects at A level. Biology, chemistry, physics, mathematics, and history achieved the best results in 2001 compared with other schools and, over the last four years, the school has done

particularly well in biology, chemistry, mathematics and physics. AS results in 2001 were high compared with other schools in Oxfordshire.

7. Standards of work seen during the inspection were at least above average and often well above average in many subjects, including English, mathematics and science. Since pupils' attainment on entry to the school is average, the high results in public examinations and the well above average standards constitute very good progress from Year 7 to Year 11, with very good progress in many subjects in the sixth form. The achievement by higher and lower-attaining pupils is particularly good as a result of a curriculum that attends equally to the needs of those at both ends of the ability spectrum. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress and have very good opportunities to gain qualifications through the ASDAN Youth Award Scheme and Certificates of Achievement, as well as at GCSE. Some pupils with quite marked learning difficulties are successful in gaining higher grades at GCSE.

Teaching is of very good quality: teachers show tremendous commitment and teamwork is strong

8. Teaching was at least satisfactory in all lessons during the inspection; in over eight in ten lessons, teaching was at least good; in four out of ten lessons, it was very good and a few lessons were excellent. Strengths in teaching are relatively consistent in Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11, whilst teaching in the sixth form is even better than that lower down the school. In the sixth form, all teaching was at least good and almost half was very good and sometimes excellent. Teaching is very good in English, mathematics and science.
9. Where teaching is very good or excellent, teachers' planning is detailed; resources are carefully selected to ensure that pupils have excellent examples and find learning stimulating. In an excellent German lesson, the teacher was very enthusiastic and maintained a ferocious pace throughout. Her excellent subject knowledge enabled her to challenge a very able group of Year 11 pupils and to produce teaching that was at times inspirational. In an excellent history lesson, also in Year 11, the teacher created a very focused atmosphere where it was obvious to pupils that every minute counted. Planning was of high quality and the purpose of the lesson within a series was exact. Excellent revision notes supported pupils towards achieving the highest possible grades. The teacher had excellent subject knowledge and used this to question pupils at a rapid pace following a written test; his expectations were high and he insisted on precisely correct answers. An excellent, harrowing video excerpt was chosen to show how the political developments during World War II impacted on civilians and this undoubtedly had a personal as well as academic impact on the pupils.
10. In most lessons, teachers match work effectively to the needs of all ability groups. Teachers almost invariably relate very well with their pupils and establish a positive climate for learning. They manage pupils' behaviour very well so that they are focused on learning. Methods are appropriate and time is used well. Where learning support assistants are present, they are used effectively and make a good contribution to pupils' learning. Planning is good and learning objectives are usually clear; although not all teachers identify the objectives as well as they might in lessons that are otherwise good. Teachers encourage pupils to become effective learners who are able to work well collaboratively as well as studying independently, and provide opportunities for decision-making and problem solving.
11. Teachers show a high level of dedication and have a strong 'feel' for the school. It is clear that most enjoy working at Henry Box and that they are committed to helping

pupils achieve high standards. There is a strong emphasis on academic achievement but alongside concern for individual pupils. Teachers work hard, and new staff readily copy the established pattern of doing so; this enables the school to build on its existing strengths in teaching whilst also welcoming young teachers who bring with them new ideas. In the strongest departments, teachers go way beyond the call of duty to support pupils. For example, teachers in the mathematics department show great commitment to after-school activities. They offer catch-up sessions one afternoon, an A-level clinic on another and a GCSE clinic on a third. Many teachers from the department take part in these, so pupils get help from several different people and this has a very direct impact on their progress.

The school's sixth form is very effective and pupils achieve very well in many subjects at AS and A level

12. The school has a flourishing and expanding sixth form. In many subjects, results at AS and A level are well above average and students achieve very well. Of the nine sixth form subjects inspected in depth, provision is excellent in chemistry and very good in mathematics, biology, history, English, French and German. It is good in art and geography. In a number of other subjects where one or more lessons were sampled, provision was found to be good.
13. Students' very good achievement reflects very good teaching and students effectiveness as independent learners. A high proportion of the teaching is at least very good and all the teaching during the inspection was at least good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, form very good and often excellent relationships with their students, ask probing questions and promote an enthusiasm for learning. Students respond very well in return, applying themselves to their work, showing a preparedness to think deeply and present their written work with care. They make very good use of time when they are not in lessons by engaging in meaningful independent work.
14. The sixth form is very well led and managed and the school cares very well for its students. It has an excellent system of setting targets based on GCSE results and uses this system most effectively in tracking students' progress and motivating them to do their best.

The very good personal progress that pupils make, their enthusiasm for learning and their very good behaviour contribute a great deal to their academic progress

15. Pupils make very good progress in their personal development and their very positive attitudes to learning have a significant impact on what they achieve. Staff encourage pupils to believe in themselves and there is a strong commitment from the headteacher downwards to enabling all pupils to fulfil their potential. Senior managers hold a vision of a school where pupils are treated with respect and where each pupil feels included and valued. Very good relationships between pupils and between pupils and teachers make for a harmonious community and a very positive atmosphere; high quality relationships underpin the very good teaching and learning. Staff are very effective role models for pupils who, in turn, are polite, well mannered and considerate. They respect and appreciate their teachers, and there is a clear desire from pupils to work in collaboration with the staff. They know that the school has their best interests at heart and recognise their part in the process of their education. Many teachers make a point of building an individual rapport with pupils to encourage them; a close knowledge of individual pupils is fostered by pupils staying with the same tutor from year to year and by the residential in Year 7.

16. Pupils are enthusiastic learners who develop very good learning skills. They are mature and discuss their work confidently. They work independently in a focused way and are able to work well together. Pupils are very supportive of each other's achievements and contribute to the climate in which academic achievement and personal effort are seen as positive.
17. They behave consistently well, and often very well, in lessons and around the school's dispersed campus. They have a clear sense of right and wrong in how they treat one another and their teachers. They respect others' feelings and listen carefully to other points of view. The school gives pupils the chance to comment on any incident and they have a sense of fairness operating within the school, which encourages them to reflect on what they have done. Low-ability pupils and those who might easily become disaffected in another school receive much positive affirmation.
18. Attendance is very good; it is well above the national average. Parents say the reason for this is that their children are very eager to attend and they clearly take a pride in their school.

The school's curriculum serves the needs of its pupils very well

19. The school provides pupils with a very good range of learning opportunities and there have been considerable developments to the curriculum since the last inspection.
20. In Years 7 to 9, pupils study a broad range of subjects: in addition to National Curriculum subjects, they study drama and many are given the opportunity to take a second modern foreign language from Year 8. They also have the option of beginning Latin, which is taken by some as an additional subject through to GCSE in Year 11. In Years 10 and 11, pupils typically study for ten GCSEs from a good range of subject options, which includes business studies. A number of pupils take a life skills course, which leads to certification under the ASDAN Youth Awards Scheme and there are Certificate of Achievement courses in English, science, geography, history, and physical education for pupils who are likely to meet with limited success at GCSE.
21. The school curriculum caters well for its higher and lower-attaining pupils. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good, with some very good features. Targets in pupils' individual education plans are sharply defined, and parents and pupils are involved in target setting. Where teaching is very good or where learning support is provided in lessons, pupils with special educational needs make very good progress. Catch-up classes for younger pupils provide intensely focused support in literacy and numeracy. Teachers and pupils show a high level of dedication and commitment to these sessions; as a result, they are having an excellent impact on the development of pupils' skills. The school is piloting a social inclusion project, following a successful bid for external funding: this has funded learning support assistant, teacher and youth worker time as well as providing money to develop alternative educational packages for identified pupils through a number of other organisations. As part of this project, key workers are attached to pupils to act as mentors. Group-work sessions in a six-week block are provided to develop personal and social skills; some older pupils have access to extended work experience and other regular experiences outside school; younger pupils have opportunities to learn particular skills.
22. High-attaining pupils are encouraged to develop their potential through an enrichment programme. Each department has enrichment days and group activities. Subject departments nominate gifted pupils and those who are progressing rapidly to take part in enrichment activities. For example, some Year 9 girls took part in a 'Girls in Science'

conference run by the Industrial Society and some pupils in Year 8 experienced a science and history cross-curricular computer-generated activity based on the life of Galileo Galilei.

23. The school offers a wide-ranging extra-curricular programme, which is linked carefully to the National Curriculum to provide further enrichment and to deepen pupils' experience of subjects. There are study days, for example to a wildlife park, and trips to galleries and museums. Pupils of all ages, including the youngest pupils, have opportunities to go on residential trips. There are foreign exchanges, concerts, dramatic productions, sports teams, after-school clubs, and the school is part of the Independent / State Schools Sports Project (Cricket). An 'activity week' lasts for four days each year and offers a very good range of potentially new experiences. Pupils extend their skills and develop personally during this week, taking part in activities as diverse as forensic science, caving, Greek in a day, orienteering, stargazing, juggling, self-defence, and ventriloquism. A group of pupils of all ages who have statements of special educational need regularly receive special physical education provision to support their individual education plans. There is a homework club most days and there are subject clinics, which support pupils of all abilities outside lesson time.
24. There are strong links with other schools and Henry Box has a close partnership with the other secondary school in the town. It also works in liaison with the further education college, which is part of the sixth form consortium, and with Oxford University and Oxford Brookes University. Close links with local schools provide a means of sharing good practice and the school is active in local curriculum groups in most subjects. This has resulted in much collaborative work: for instance, the drama group set up a GCSE day through Chipping Norton Theatre on pantomime; the history group organised a trip to Russia made viable by having pupils from other schools; the art group has been involved in community projects through the Education Business Partnership. Links with higher education establishments help the school to recruit some high calibre teachers. The school receives many applications from talented young teachers who have trained at Oxford University and at Oxford Brookes because of collaborative work between the school and the education departments at these institutions.
25. The relationship with other local schools has been supported further by the school's success in its application for Specialist Language College status and this has led to additional curricular opportunities within the school. In Year 8, the number of pupils who study a second modern language to GCSE has doubled by introducing Spanish. For the parents of Year 7 pupils, the school is providing a course of lessons in French and German to help them support their children in their studies. A vocational element of modern languages has been introduced for all students in Year 12. Modern language projects have begun in partner primary schools: after-school clubs are being run in six local primary schools to give pupils a taste of up to five modern languages and there are further exciting plans ahead. The school has hosted a group of 20 trainee teachers for a day and plans to repeat this in the near future. Trainee teachers will also be making frequent visits to support the expanded enrichment programme across the school. There have been material benefits to the school through gaining Specialist College status: the planned new accommodation for modern languages and the present building of new science facilities have both stemmed from this development. Additionally, some money is being made available to create a new information and communication technology room and to buy some more computer equipment.
26. The school received a number of visitors from abroad before gaining Language College status but links with other countries are now expanding. The school is becoming

involved in the Comenius Project, which receives European funding, and this will provide direct links with schools in a number of European countries to support communication between pupils in the different schools and some free trips abroad. The Comenius Centre, previously housed in an Oxford college, is to be moved to the school bringing with it a much wider range of resources for language teaching.

27. The school is involved in initiatives within the local education authority, some of which promote expertise within the school's own staff. The head of sixth form has been the key skills organiser across the local education authority, which has given the school a particularly good insight into this recent initiative, and it is to pilot a new project, 'transforming learning', for the local education authority. Members of the science, history, information and communication technology and modern languages departments have been involved in offering training to other schools.
28. The school contributes to national as well as local initiatives. The special educational needs co-ordinator, who has done a lot of work on providing enrichment for gifted and talented pupils, made a presentation to the Parliamentary Committee on Special Educational Needs. The head of mathematics is a member of a national mathematics panel which collaborates with the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority.

The school cares very well for its pupils and has a most coherent pastoral system

29. There are very clearly defined and well thought-out procedures for supporting pupils, but it is the consistency with which systems are implemented that makes for a high level of pastoral care.
30. The induction programme in Year 7 is based on close liaison with teachers in feeder primary schools throughout Year 6 and this is very effective in enabling pupils to settle in quickly. Wherever possible, pupils keep the same form tutor for five years. This means that most tutors know pupils very well. The form tutor is part of a year team led by the head of year. Since the last inspection, a head of lower school (who co-ordinates Years 7 to 9) and a head of upper school (who co-ordinates Years 10 and 11) have been appointed. These co-ordinators ensure consistency across the school and do a great deal of valuable work that underpins pupils' development, ensuring that there is a seamless approach to academic and personal support. Very good leadership by heads of year and close liaison with one another also contributes significantly to the pastoral system.
31. The school's positive approach to managing pupils' behaviour is effective in promoting academic and personal progress: a climate of high expectations enables teachers to teach and pupils to learn. There is an extensive system of merits and achievement certificates to recognise work and 'actions of particular worth'. Pupils respect the school's systems because they were consulted in drawing up the reward system and in setting up the school's home school agreement. Whilst the emphasis is on rewarding positive behaviour, there is a clear set of sanctions and definite boundaries to discourage poor effort or misbehaviour. Pupils and parents are made aware of the classroom code and each subject area has a policy on detention. Staff are very accessible to pupils – there tend to be staff dispersed around the school, as a result of the spread out campus – and this makes monitoring behaviour much easier. Occasionally, pupils are withdrawn from lessons to work in isolation under the supervision of a senior member of staff, and there is a highly effective system whereby senior managers take it in turn to be on call to support teachers in the management of pupils' behaviour. No incident goes unpursued and there is a very tight system whereby any difficulties are normally resolved within 24 hours. This is a significant

improvement since the last inspection, and it also means that senior staff quickly identify any areas of weakness and are able to take necessary action to support teachers. Fixed-term exclusions are used very strategically where a pupil shows unacceptable disrespect towards people and facilities or where dishonest behaviour occurs. The effectiveness of the school's use of fixed-term exclusions is shown by the fact that there have been no permanent exclusions since the appointment of the current headteacher.

32. The school pays very good attention to pupils' welfare. Parents suggest that any bullying is quickly dealt with and that action taken by the school is usually successful in preventing further bullying. Two nurses and a counsellor, who have responsibility for the medical and social well-being of the pupils, complement the school's pastoral work through the tutor system. They frequently meet with individual pupils or groups and are available for discussion with parents. There is very good liaison with outside agencies and the school works closely with the Connexions team.
33. The monitoring of pupils' personal progress is very effective and the school helps pupils to manage their own work by providing commercially produced pupil planners. There are coherent systems for monitoring attendance and punctuality. Parents praise the speed with which the school contacts them if their child has not arrived at school. They also praise the way the school involves them very quickly whenever any difficulties occur.
34. A number of health and safety points were raised in the last inspection but there has been distinct improvement in this area. The school now has very good self-managed systems for ensuring that the premises are safe, and its health and safety procedures are clear and effective.

The headteacher provides excellent leadership, very well supported by senior managers, many middle managers and the governing body

35. The headteacher provides excellent leadership and very clear educational direction to the work of the school. He is highly respected by staff, governors and parents alike. Parents praise the fact that the school has improved continually under his leadership and now has a very good reputation in the local community. Staff say that 'people work for the headteacher, they don't want to let him down'. Restructuring the senior management team has enabled him to delegate responsibility very effectively and his senior colleagues speak of how he empowers them to succeed: they feel trusted and given autonomy within clear roles and structures. His management of staff is highly creative: he makes best use of their abilities, and the system, whereby experienced and valued staff who might otherwise have taken early retirement or moved out of teaching have been encouraged to stay by entering into a flexible system of part-time work, has enabled the school to hold onto some of its best teachers. In this way, an excellent head of chemistry works four days a week and leads a department that achieves consistently high results. Such creative solutions have contributed to the stability in staffing as well as improving the quality of many teachers' input and commitment to the school. Staff morale is high and teachers are made to feel that they have shared ownership in school development. Similarly, there is strong consultation with parents and pupils, and the aims of the school are made transparent to everyone involved in the life of the school.
36. Restructuring of the senior management team – which now consists of the headteacher, one deputy and four assistant heads – has been a major improvement since the last inspection and has contributed significantly to school improvement. This

is also a highly cost-effective management structure, since senior managers, including the headteacher, teach for a significant amount of their time. Very strong teamwork by the senior management team leads to highly coherent systems throughout the school, which underpin academic and pastoral work and establish a strongly positive climate. Communication throughout the school is outstanding and ensures that the school runs very effectively on a day-to-day basis. Fusion of academic and pastoral management has been achieved through the appointment of key stage co-ordinators and this has done much to strengthen the coherence of many of the school's systems. Responsibilities are very clearly delegated and there is a very effective line management structure with departments, so that staff know exactly who is responsible for what. Members of the senior management team complement one another very well and work in areas in which they are strong, so that their skills are used to the utmost.

37. Subject departments are well managed – several very well – and there is a strong commitment to high standards and continual improvement. Heads of department share in the senior management team's vision for the school and there is very good support for any department that needs additional help to realise this vision. Heads of department are directly accountable to the headteacher for the results achieved in their subjects, and there is thorough analysis of reasons for performance. This means that any relative weaknesses are quickly identified and can be acted upon: mediocrity is not tolerated. A thorough approach to staff development and to the deployment of staff ensures that the school gains optimum benefit from its teaching and non-teaching staff. Gaining Investors in People status is testimony to the involvement of the whole staff in school development.
38. The school continually evaluates its effectiveness and draws careful comparisons with other schools in the local education authority. It seeks to be as good as it possibly can and there are many effective monitoring systems. However, there is scope for more formal monitoring, by senior managers but especially by heads of department, to ensure consistent practice in relation to homework, assessment practices in Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11, and lesson planning. Greater consistency in these areas would ensure an even bigger percentage of good and very good teaching. These are also the areas for development that could potentially increase the progress of average-attaining pupils and lift the school's results even higher.
39. The governing body works closely with the school and the establishment of a strong committee structure since the last inspection has improved the contribution of governors. Links between governors and subject departments enable members of the governing body to monitor the detailed work of the school and they regularly review its progress against the school development plan. There is close liaison between the chair of governors and the headteacher, and governors join with the senior management team in some of its discussions. Parent governors are very involved in the life of the school and there is every opportunity for any parent to be involved in decision-making processes through the parents' forum, though the response of most parents is limited. Governors bring valuable expertise to the school, including two governors who are information and communication technology specialists.
40. The school manages its budget and controls its spending very effectively. Detailed monthly printouts on budget income and expenditure are closely scrutinised by the Finance Committee of the governing body. All checks and balances are in place to ensure very good internal control. Specific grants are used very well to support school development priorities. New technologies are used very well to support school administration with good use made of the limited computer equipment available to support teaching and learning. Other learning resources are used very well to support

teaching and learning. The school achieves very good value in its spending decisions; for example, it has appointed a highly effective additional senior manager at no extra cost through the re-organisation of the senior management team.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Assessment procedures could be further developed

41. Assessment procedures within many subjects are good: teachers have developed good practice in giving pupils information on the standards expected in the subject and in involving pupils in assessing their own work. However, there is considerable inconsistency of practice between subjects and this inconsistency was criticised in the last inspection. Since then, the school has made fairly limited progress in developing a consistent approach to assessment and some progress in making better use of information about pupils' prior attainment to set pupils' targets. Teachers' assessments in English and science were markedly different from the results pupils gained in 2001 tests at the end of Year 9, suggesting that assessment is not always as accurate as it might be.
42. The school reviewed its assessment practices following the last inspection and has recently drafted and agreed an assessment policy for implementation in September 2002. This appropriately sets out the underlying principles and purposes of assessment and goes some way towards standardising the grades teachers use for effort and achievement, but there remains too much inconsistency in the way that different departments record and communicate pupils' attainment. In some subjects, pupils are informed of the National Curriculum level or GCSE grade at which they are working, but this is not general practice. In order that pupils and parents have a clear understanding of how pupils are doing in relation to national standards, there is a need to reduce the number of systems in use and develop a whole school system.
43. The school has developed a database of each pupil's previous test results, including National Curriculum tests and standardised cognitive ability tests. This information is provided to teachers to guide them in setting pupils appropriate targets for their performance in the future. Heads of department are also provided with much information on the examination results achieved in their subject and national comparisons, including the progress made by pupils nationally. In order to make better use of this data, teachers and heads of department need further training on setting targets and on analysing the progress that different groups of pupils have made in order to make further improvements to teaching and the curriculum.
44. Each pupil has a review of progress three times each year, and information from this is sent home to parents. In these reviews, pupils are given grades in each subject for effort, homework and progress. Pupils and parents understand the grades because they are accompanied by written criteria defining their meaning. In their Spring term review, pupils are set targets in each subject. These targets vary in their helpfulness and there is as yet no quality assurance or training for teachers in how to set useful targets. This year, each Year 8 pupil has also had an individual target-setting meeting with his or her tutor and parents, in which overall learning and social targets have been agreed. This is a trial project that is to be reviewed before being used more widely. These developments are helpful and appreciated by parents. However, there is a need to make sure that the various targets that pupils are set fit together coherently and give pupils clear guidance on how to improve their work and make progress towards their overall targets at the end of Year 9 and end of Year 11.

45. The senior management team is very thorough in its analysis of examination results and in learning lessons from this in order to make improvements. Results for the school and for each subject are compared with national figures and with Oxfordshire schools, with many of whom there is considerable constructive competition and dialogue. From this analysis, senior managers gain a very good knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses in the school's performance and there are several instances of this knowledge being used to support subjects in making improvements. The school is, however, only just beginning to use national data on the progress that pupils make between key stages to calculate the school's 'value-added'¹ for different groups of pupils.

Pupils' progress in information and communication technology is restricted by limited resources

46. Pupils' skill levels in information and communication technology are improving year by year, so that Year 7 pupils now know more, relatively, than pupils in Years 9 and Year 10 did at the same age. However, the school does not have enough up-to-date computers to support the teaching of information and communication technology in sufficient depth. The ratio of pupils to computers (at 17 to one) is well above the national average. There are firm plans to buy a substantial number of additional computers for two new information and communication technology suites so that they are available by the beginning of the academic year. This will bring the ratio of pupils to computers to nine to one. One of these suites is the language laboratory and priority will be given to languages, the funding having come from the school gaining Language College Status. The new computers will permit an extension to the information and communication technology curriculum to more years and will make some contribution to the availability of computers within subject departments. There is currently insufficient room to accommodate the extra computers that the school needs.
47. The school just manages to cover the National Curriculum with limited consolidation or application in subjects. Pupils in Year 7 currently have one lesson a fortnight and Year 9 have 12 lessons within personal and social education. Design and technology covers the control part of the curriculum and science is just about ready to cover data logging. Year 10 pupils have a lesson a week to take the GCSE short course. The plan for 2002/3 is for Years 7 and 9 to have a lesson a week and Years 10 and 11 to follow the short course. Rooms are booked 70 per cent of the time for specialist classes, leaving little opportunity for other subjects. Other teachers book the rooms, though this is left largely to individual interest.
48. The head of the information and communication technology department has made very good progress in catching up from a low starting point since his appointment just over a year ago. He has managed to just cover the National Curriculum and establish courses in Year 10 and the sixth form. The rooms and equipment are well organised and well maintained. The plans for the future are sound, though they all depend on providing enough equipment. Some teachers have completed their training in information and communication technology, most others have started, and a few have yet to begin the training. It is planned to strengthen teaching in information and communication technology by appointing a third specialist teacher for September.

There are some inadequacies in accommodation which impact on the quality of education

¹ Value added is a measure of the progress pupils make from one point in their education to another compared with the progress pupils of the same age make nationally.

49. The increase in pupil numbers in recent years and the acquisition of Language College status have prompted new buildings in design and technology, physical education, modern languages and science (building for the last two are currently underway). The local education authority is actively working with the school to plan the next phases of its premises development, recognising the continued growth in Witney and anticipated increase in demand for secondary school places. Key priorities identified are expanded sixth form provision, expanded social and dining facilities, improved accommodation for music and drama, and additional information and communication technology rooms.
50. Limited information and communication technology facilities are already commented upon, above. The following additional inadequacies in accommodation were particularly notable during the inspection:
- The sixth form has expanded significantly in recent years without a simultaneous expansion in accommodation. The sixth form block is extremely cramped and students have limited space for private study. The school overcomes this as best it can. This is an unsatisfactory situation and will become untenable as student numbers increase further, although it is not, at this point, having a measurable impact on standards.
 - While the school waits for its new science accommodation to be built, poor facilities in science are impacting on teaching and learning. The unsatisfactory accommodation makes it impossible for teachers spontaneously to use some teaching methods that would be of benefit to pupils' learning. Teachers are dealing with the situation as well as they possibly can, and working hard and successfully to counteract any adverse effect on standards.
 - The dining room is inadequate for a school of this size. The school tries to overcome this by allowing younger pupils to take early lunch, but the dining room is still impossibly overcrowded and there is occasionally insufficient seating in some settings for the numbers involved.
 - The location of the library, and its limited size for a school with this number of pupils on roll, means that it does not support teaching and learning enough. It is due to the creativity and resourcefulness of teachers and pupils that the limited library provision does not impact in an obvious way on achievement. Younger pupils make satisfactory use of the library at lunchtimes and there are some timetabled lessons there, but borrowing rates are surprisingly low and not all subject departments work in close liaison with library staff. The library is remote from the main school buildings and it does not fulfil as active a role in the work of the school as it should. Storage space is limited and there is insufficient space to establish multi-media resources. Overall, the school needs a larger library that is situated more centrally and provides a wide range of learning resources as well as books.
 - The school has rightly identified its urgent need for a second drama studio. The school hall, which serves as a second drama studio, doubles as a venue for examinations and this restricts the drama curriculum during all examination periods. Limited availability and space make it impossible to move through the drama syllabus at several points during the year and so the limited accommodation impacts on standards.

The school does not meet the statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship throughout the school or to teach religious education to all

students in the sixth form; it needs to move faster in implementing the revised Code of Practice for Special Educational Needs

51. At the time of the last inspection, the school did not meet the statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship. This remains the situation in this inspection. The school's assemblies are of good quality but pupils do not have the opportunity they should for daily reflection and they could be making better progress in their spiritual development. In the sixth form, religious education is taught only to those students who opt to study the subject as an examination course and there is some reference to religious education within general studies but this is insufficient to meet requirements.
52. There are positive features in the school's provision for pupils with special educational needs and provision is thoughtfully managed. The school is not, however, moving forward quickly enough in implementing the revised Code of Practice for Special Educational Needs. It should have begun to implement this in January 2002 and it must be fully implemented by September 2002, but necessary revisions to the special educational needs policy and the school's procedures are not underway. The new special educational needs co-ordinator is working hard to ensure that the policy is reviewed and new procedures implemented.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

53. In order to build on the school's many strengths, the headteacher, governors and staff should:

(1) Improve assessment arrangements*, by:

- ensuring that all departments implement a policy for assessment, recording and marking which is common to the school as a whole and makes use of an agreed system of grades;
- increasing coherence between the various targets that are set, ensuring that all targets are known to pupils and parents, and that they are specific, measurable and related to end of Year 9 and GCSE performance;
- training heads of department in the use of national data and 'value added' analysis;
- monitoring marking, assessment and target setting throughout the school.
(Paragraphs 41-45)

(2) Improve provision for information and communication technology* through a timed and resourced plan to:

- bring the number of computers up to the national average;
- cover the full National Curriculum in greater depth in Years 7 to 9;
- develop a plan for using information and communication technology more fully in other subjects;
- ensure all teachers are trained to use information and communication technology in their lessons.
(Paragraphs 46-48)

(3) Continue to press for additional accommodation, especially to overcome inadequacies in accommodation for the sixth form, the dining room, drama and the library*.
(Paragraphs 49-50)

(4) Ensure that:

- the statutory requirements are met to hold a daily act of collective worship for all pupils and to teach religious education to all students in the sixth form;
- the school implements the revised Code of Practice for Special Educational Needs by September 2002.
(Paragraphs 51-52)

** These areas are featured currently as priorities in the school's development plan.*

Sixth form

54. The headteacher, staff and governors should ensure that:

- (1) The school meets the statutory requirement to teach religious education to all students in the sixth form and to provide a daily act of collective worship.
(Paragraph 95)

In addition to the key issues above, the following less important weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the action plan:

- Students would benefit from better access to information and communication technology
(Paragraph 100).
- Accommodation in the sixth form block is cramped and inadequate to meet the demands of growing student numbers (Paragraph 99).
- Provision to raise students' awareness of multicultural issues is limited
(Paragraph 79).

Other matters for the consideration of the staff and governors are raised at the beginning of reports on individual subjects.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	53
	Sixth form	47
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		51

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 – 11							
Number	4	17	24	8	0	0	0
Percentage	8	32	45	15	0	0	0
Sixth form							
Number	4	18	25	0	0	0	0
Percentage	9	38	53	0	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting the percentages for enter Years 7 – 11 and the sixth form here as each lesson represents two percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7– Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1099	196
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	56	1

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	22	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	246	3

English as an additional language	No. of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	4

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

Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving
--

23

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.1
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.6
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001	112	98	210

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	68	89	92
	Girls	81	74	80
	Total	149	163	172
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	71 (63)	78 (71)	82 (69)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	50 (30)	58 (45)	50 (38)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	65	84	59
	Girls	74	69	52
	Total	139	153	111
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	66 (63)	73 (72)	53 (62)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	34 (34)	50 (49)	27 (34)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	99	97	196

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	56	93	99
	Girls	64	86	95
	Total	120	179	194
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	61 (60)	91 (97)	99 (100)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

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

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

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	41	38	79

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	16.1	16.1	16.1 (18.2)	(4.0)	-	(4.0)
National	16.9	17.9	17.4 (17.6)	-	-	(2.7)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No. of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	
Black – African heritage	3
Black – other	1
Indian	4
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	2
White	1256
Any other minority ethnic group	29

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	39	
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 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	70.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.4

Education support staff: Y7– Y11

Total number of education support staff	25
Total aggregate hours worked per week	727.5

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	80.4
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	21.2
Key Stage 4	18.2

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	3097214
Total expenditure	3101821
Expenditure per pupil	2551
Balance brought forward from previous year	103496
Balance carried forward to next year	98889

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	19.46
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	17.98

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1.68
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1295
Number of questionnaires returned	241

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	36	56	4	4	0
My child is making good progress in school.	37	58	2	0	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	20	72	6	1	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	20	54	24	2	0
The teaching is good.	23	70	3	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	25	56	13	6	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	55	34	9	0	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	52	42	2	1	2
The school works closely with parents.	26	49	19	4	2
The school is well led and managed.	41	50	5	0	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	34	57	6	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	35	47	12	1	4

PART D: THE SIXTH FORM

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

55. In the sixth form, examination results have improved since the last inspection and the school has exceeded its targets. GCE A-level results in recent years have been above the national average, showing marked improvement on previous years where they were below average. The school's performance reflects the very good quality teaching and students' very effective learning. The rise in standards is also a direct result of the school's continual work to improve its sixth form provision and to target individual pupils so that they achieve as well as they can.
56. In 2000, the average points score was above average compared with schools nationally and that of girls was well above. In 2001, results fell somewhat but the average points score was still in line with maintained schools and above all schools nationally. Lower results were expected from this cohort and nearly all students exceeded their target grades. Five students gained A grades in each of their subjects at A level, showing that the school continues to do well by higher-attainers in the sixth form. There is no marked variation in the performance of boys and girls; in some years, boys do slightly better, in other years girls do.
57. Over the last four years, the school has done particularly well in biology, chemistry, mathematics and physics: results in these subjects are high compared with results nationally, and results in chemistry are particularly outstanding. History is strong, as is religious studies (although fewer students took this in the last two years). Results in art and design dipped to average in the last two years, though they were higher at times prior to that. Results in English literature have varied against those nationally from year to year and they fell in 2001. However, when the attainment of individual students from one subject to another is borne in mind, it can be seen that students who took English literature in 1999 and 2000 achieved some of their best results in the subject. In some years recently, design and technology and physical education have done less well than other subjects. Performance in other individual subjects is either similar to that across all the subjects students took or close to the national differences from one subject to another. This shows that the quality of provision is fairly even, but with some departments consistently gaining high results through very effective subject leadership and particularly good teaching.
58. At AS level, the school's points score was high compared with that in other Oxfordshire schools and the school achieved a better than average number of A and B grades. Detailed predictions for performance by the current Year 13 at A2 in 2002 are very positive, showing that students' work is building effectively on their achievements at AS level. Results in 2000 and 2001 for students in the sixth form who took GCSE examinations to gain additional qualifications or as re-takes were high compared with the national average for the grades achieved and the average points score.
59. Students' attainment in lessons and from an analysis of their work is well above average in mathematics, biology, chemistry, physics, French, German and history, and students achieve very well in these subjects. Standards are above average in art and geography, where students achieve well. They are also above average in English, with very good achievement considering some students begin the course having achieved only a grade C at GCSE. Students reach good standards in key skills, with some work of well above

average quality in communication. They transfer the skills learned in this course effectively to their other studies.

60. Overall, the majority of students achieve very well from the end of Year 11 to the end of Year 13. Progress is at least good in all the subjects inspected in depth and in those that were sampled. The retention rate on courses from Year 12 to Year 13 is very high, and very few students drop from four to three courses in Year 12. Almost three quarters of students go on to higher education when they leave Henry Box.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

61. Students in the sixth form have a very mature and positive attitude to their work and to the school. They take responsibility very seriously, use initiative well and work co-operatively and collaboratively. All are fully involved in lessons: they discuss their work confidently and can work independently in a focused way. As a sixth form group generally, bonding is very strong and there is a well-developed and corporate sense of belonging. Students interviewed during the inspection expressed very positive views about the school and talked with tremendous enthusiasm about what it has to offer. They undertake their duties as mature students with pride and vigour and membership of the sixth form council is a serious initiative. Relationships with staff are always at least very good and often excellent and students feel well cared for, informed and supported. In part, this is illustrated by the larger than usual proportion of girls doing mathematics, and boys doing biology in the sixth form.
62. Behaviour is very good throughout. As powerful role models, sixth formers considerably influence the behaviour of other students. There is a strong respect for sixth form teachers; students and teachers clearly enjoy one another's company.
63. Students respond very well to what the school has to offer. There is a good working atmosphere in the sixth form and students support each other's learning. They help each other in lessons and around the school and assignments are given in on time. The use of information and communication technology varies across the subjects in the sixth form. However, it is because students are successful and effective independent learners that the impact of a shortfall of experience in information and communication technology in some subjects is minimised.
64. The head boy and girl and deputy head boy and girl take the lead in school activities and at the sixth form council. Assemblies are engaging and well supported by staff and students, frequently with students taking the initiative. Other kinds of public speaking are frequent, often in front of parents and other adults, and are carried out with confidence. Community service features strongly in sixth form activities and actively encourages responsible citizenship and growing maturity. When sixth formers help younger pupils in class, as part of their community service, they make a very good contribution to pupils' learning.
65. Attendance is very good and has been consistently above the national average since the last inspection. Students know it is in their interests to attend and enjoy coming to school. The school expects high levels of attendance and insists that students ring their tutor if they are absent for any reason. Lessons start promptly, although occasionally students are late or have to leave early when they have to travel between schools for lessons.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

66. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. All the sixth form teaching during the inspection was at least good and almost half was very good and at times excellent. This amounts to an unusually high proportion of very good teaching. Very good teaching was evident in most subjects, with some excellent teaching in English, French and mathematics. Teaching was most consistently very good in mathematics and the sciences: it is clear that the quality of teaching is a major contributory factor to the consistently high standards in these subjects.
67. High quality relationships are a central feature of most lessons and are crucial to students' achievement. Teachers are very effective in establishing a purposeful but close relationship with their students, and students in turn respond very well. Students are confident in their teachers and rightly so, since they receive a high level of guidance and plenty of opportunity to undertake imaginative assignments which test and extend their skills, knowledge and understanding. Teachers' use of on-going assessment is a particular strength and some high quality marking clearly diagnoses how students could go on to improve their work.
68. Teaching is lively and lessons proceed at a brisk pace, so that students work productively and achieve much in a short space of time. Expectations for learning and achievement are high and teachers' very good subject knowledge enables them to use challenging questioning to further students' understanding. Their enthusiasm is infectious and students are quickly motivated. Teachers' subject expertise leads to rigour and some imaginative teaching methods that enable students to become active learners.
69. Students are highly effective learners who are eager to do well. Almost all have very good study habits and some are excellent learners who work together and learn from each other. They are very confident in discussions and readily take initiative in their learning. The key skills course is a factor in this: it fosters very good communication skills and this part of the course is especially well taught. Skills of independent learning are strong and motivation is high. Students readily ask questions, confident that teachers have sufficient subject expertise to be able to provide a meaningful answer. Students' knowledge of their own learning is excellent and many are highly articulate about their progress. They use their 'free' time productively and their written work shows a high level of care. Note taking is systematic and investigations are thoroughly explained. Work is accurate and shows analytical thinking. Even lower-attaining students organise their notes and assignments in a systematic and well-structured way.

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

70. The school provides a very good range of learning opportunities in the sixth form which support students' very good academic achievement and personal progress, thereby preparing them for further study or employment. Its curriculum arrangements are a very good response to local circumstances.
71. The sixth form is run in partnership with Wood Green School and the Abingdon and Witney College. This arrangement provides opportunities for a broad range of 31 AS and A/A2-level subjects, a selection of vocational courses, as well as a number of subjects at advanced level which have a vocational application, such as accounts, law, film, and business studies. In addition, students may take the Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE). Students have a very good choice of subject combinations and the timetable is structured so that they can travel between the three centres as necessary during the school day. They are required to have good GCSE

qualifications, usually with passes at grade B and above as entry to the courses, although there are possibilities for negotiation in individual cases.

72. The AS and A/A2-level curriculum is enhanced and supported by the key skills programme, and by general studies. For students not taking a modern language at A level, there is a basic language course in business French, German or business Spanish. Key skills in information and communication technology and in communication are taught in ten-week modules. For information and communication technology, students collect a portfolio of work for formal assessment. Communication is also an integral part of A-level courses, with particularly good opportunities for group discussion and formal illustrated presentations built into English and history. General studies is not taken as an examination subject but all students follow a course designed to include aspects of knowledge and experience which are not part of the examination courses.
73. There is a full programme of enrichment studies and activities. Some of these are provided through the general studies course, but in most courses there are opportunities for residential experience, or visits to relevant centres, or both. Students of English have a two-day residential course at the beginning of Year 12, during which they begin to learn not only the requirements of the new course, but also how to work together in preparation for the strong emphasis on group work in the course. Design and technology and business studies students spend single days in industrial and business placements. History and geography courses include field trips. For modern languages and for art, there is time spent abroad. Outside the specific subject areas, the school has taken part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award and the World Challenge scheme. In summer 2001, students from Years 11, 12 and 13 raised funds in order to spend a month in Bolivia. For this, the emphasis was on developing personal skills of organisation, teamwork and leadership. The trip included mountain and jungle trekking as well as working in an orphanage.
74. The school's very good links with the local community and with its educational partners and associates make a positive contribution to the curricular opportunities offered. In music, there is a new link with Yamaha, and local sculptors have worked with the art department. Students develop their independence and their own sense of community by doing voluntary work in the local hospital, in centres and homes for the elderly and in local primary schools.
75. The sixth form course as a whole is well balanced between taught time and individual study. Students in Year 12 have a basic core of between 16 and 20 hours per week on the courses and are expected to do a minimum of four hours preparatory work for each subject studied. Students in Year 13 have slightly less time in lessons but have more time in independent study. The school has limited accommodation for study outside lessons, but students have access to library and computer facilities.
76. Provision for students' spiritual development is satisfactory. There is no daily act of collective worship and although students have very good opportunities to reflect deeply in English literature and art, there are too few planned opportunities for personal reflection in the curriculum as a whole beyond AS and A-level subjects. However, the religious studies curriculum makes a very good contribution for spiritual development for those taking the subject through, for example, opportunities to reflect on the meaning of God when considering the problem of evil in the world. During the September 11th New York City disaster, the school hall was available for students to reflect in silence and the majority of students showed excellent initiative in proceeding to the hall at break time to show solidarity for the victims by engaging in quiet prayer or reflection. Sixth formers

led whole school assemblies on the theme and produced CD-ROMS and Powerpoint presentations for the whole school community.

77. Provision for moral development is very good. All teachers provide excellent role models for students and they respond by showing consideration and respect for others' views and values. Moral development is very well promoted through the opportunity to take wider responsibility within the school by, for example, assuming the roles of head boy, head girl, deputy head boy and deputy head girl, and also through the sixth form council which considers the welfare of students. A strong lead is taken by staff in sixth form assemblies in raising expectations for positive attitudes to meeting deadlines with course and examination work. Students have a very well developed sense of morality in considering the needs of vulnerable members of society above their own, through very good opportunities for community service. A significant number of students meet regularly as part of an Amnesty International group and organise events for the whole school. Moral awareness is very well promoted within religious studies as students consider and debate such issues as torture and brutality. This is also well promoted in geography, where students think about issues of conservation, and in history where the suffering of victims of the Holocaust is discussed in depth.
78. Provision for social development is very good. Very good opportunities are available for students to collaborate in lessons and take personal responsibility for their own learning. Students develop very effective study skills as a result and learn very effectively. The school also ensures that social development is very well promoted through the provision of community service where all students are involved and the sixth form council where student representatives discuss issues such as sponsorship for the leavers' ball, the variety show, or plan for the election of council officers. Interaction between students and teachers results in strong mutual respect and ensures that students develop very mature and responsible attitudes.
79. Provision for cultural development is good. In subjects such as art and music, students learn to appreciate the work of famous artists and classical composers. In English, visits to the theatre promote an understanding of their own culture and within the wider curriculum, overseas visits to European cities such as Amsterdam and Paris promote a greater understanding of the cultural diversity of Europe. However, there are few opportunities for multi-cultural education, other than through the religious studies curriculum where students compare the teachings of Christianity with other world belief systems and for those students who travel further afield through the World Challenge.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

Assessment

80. Assessment procedures in the sixth form are very good and are a significant factor in students' very good achievement.
81. Within subjects, teachers assess students' progress regularly and thoroughly and give them constructive feedback in how to improve their work. Assessment procedures are excellent in chemistry, where assessment information is used exceptionally well to guide curricular planning and diagnose individual learning needs. Assessment is very good in English and history, and marking is excellent in both subjects. Assessment procedures and the use of assessment information are very good in biology and mathematics. Assessment is good in art and German. It is satisfactory in French and geography, with some good diagnosis of students' individual learning needs.

82. Each student is guided by a tutor, who oversees his or her progress across all subjects. This is done effectively using an excellent system of setting targets for A-level performance and monitoring progress towards them. Over the last three years, the school has built up a database of previous students' results and the progress they have made from GCSE to A level. Using this database, each student on entering the sixth form is set minimum target grades, which are the average grades achieved by previous students with similar GCSE results. Twice each year, students are given anticipated grades in each subject, which are co-ordinated by the tutor, and compared with their target grades. Parents are also informed of the target grades and progress towards them. The system is highly motivating in that students are set challenging targets that they know are achievable. It is also informative in that students, parents and teachers are aware of the progress being made. It helps to create a culture of achievement in the school because students are aware that their progress is being compared with that of previous Henry Box students. Should any student show signs of underachieving, the tutor quickly intervenes to identify the causes and take remedial action.
83. The head of sixth form and senior management team are very thorough in analysing A-level examination results to monitor the performance of each subject and of the school as a whole. The target-setting system is used to compare the progress that students made from GCSE to A level from subject to subject in the school. This is useful and informative for heads of department, though it does not take into account the fact that nationally some subjects are found to be more difficult than others. The performance of each subject is also compared with national data and with other Oxfordshire schools, and there is regular dialogue with other schools in order to share good practice. The school does not, however, use national data on progress from GCSE to A level in each subject to calculate the 'added value' that the school is contributing.

Advice, support and guidance

84. Pastoral staff and subject teachers provide highly effective support and guidance. Students have very good relationships with their tutors and most feel confident that they can approach them with any concerns. Tutors are very committed and generously give of their time both during and after the school day to offer individual support on a one-to-one basis. Nearly all students who responded to the questionnaires are satisfied with the range of courses on offer and the information they received.
85. The school organises an induction day for students at the beginning of Year 12 which they find very useful and effective in helping them to settle in. New students coming from other schools would benefit from the planned extra induction day to familiarise themselves with the school layout and procedures, and put them on an equal footing with those already familiar with the school. All students, regardless of whether they are new to the school, form a strong cohesive group very quickly because of the supportive, friendly atmosphere.
86. Careers education and advice are very good, both for Year 11 pupils making decisions about their options from the age of 16 and students in Years 12 and 13. Students have individual interviews with the careers service and can request further interviews if necessary. Not all students take full advantage of this, and the level of take-up is less in some tutor groups than others. More consistency in tutors' enthusiasm for the interviews could help to rectify the discrepancy. A minority of students expressed the view that they would like more opportunities to discuss their future career options. The careers library is well stocked with literature and students have access to a range of information through computer programs. The mock interviews for university entrance,

and the communication module of the key skills course help to boost confidence; they are much appreciated by the students.

87. The advice and support for entry to higher education is exceptionally good. Tutors know their students extremely well and, led by the highly committed head of sixth form, are able to offer excellent guidance on students' applications for jobs or university. Ex-students are asked to send detailed information about their universities and courses in their first term and readily comply, so boosting the wealth of information available to current students. Students applying to Oxford and Cambridge have practice interviews and Henry Box invites its own ex-students, now at the two universities, to talk about their experiences.
88. There are effective systems for informing tutors about absence and for making them aware when lateness is unavoidable, such as when students travel between schools for lessons.
89. Health and safety is very good and follows the local authority guidelines. The management is proactive in its risk assessment and staff are alert to any signs of deterioration of the buildings and their environment which may constitute a risk. Procedures are clear and effective and every department has its own policy document.

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

Partnership with parents

90. Partnership with parents of sixth form students is very good. Those parents who attended the inspection meeting were very positive about most aspects of the school. They described the progress their children made from Year 11 as 'brilliant' and 'excellent'. Students are very interested in their chosen courses and this leads to positive attitudes. Parents praised the effectiveness of the support and guidance provided in the sixth form, and the opportunities for students to do community work. They feel students 'blossom' when they enter Year 12, but they did express a concern about the quality of careers advice. The system that was in place up to the end of the last Year 11 was very much focused on those pupils not staying on into the sixth form. However, this has since been changed and all pupils in Year 11 are now receiving the same level of guidance. Guidance in the sixth form is good and parents particularly praised the very good support students receive before completing their UCAS (University Central Admissions Service) forms. They are impressed by the good study facilities and effective use of computers but feel there is insufficient room in the common room and library. The head of sixth form is considering further development of another room in the sixth form block to extend the common room facilities. Students themselves, when questioned about the library, were very positive.
91. Parents receive very clear details of life in the sixth form through the course information and general information booklets. Reports are very detailed: they include constructive criticism and reflect not only what students can do but also how they can maximise their potential. The effective tutor system means that parents are clear about whom they should approach if they have concerns.

Students' views

92. Students' views about the sixth form are very positive. They have a passion for the school and take enormous pride in being a part of it. All settled in well because of the

high quality induction programme. Students coming from other schools, however, would prefer more general information about school procedures. The school is hoping to address this through a special induction day for students from outside which it intends to introduce in the summer term before entry. Students value the strong group dynamic and sense of community and the good reputation the school has locally. All those interviewed would readily recommend it to others. They find the work stimulating and appreciate the system of grade cards that gives them a clear understanding of how they are doing, and where they need to improve. Staff know the students well and students find them very approachable. They are confident that the staff are alert to any problems they may experience both at subject level and generally. In the words of one student, 'They noticed I was having difficulty keeping up even before I knew myself'. Students particularly praised the extra help they received when preparing for Oxbridge interviews. Only one specific complaint was raised: this was about the blocking of information they could access through the school computers on the Internet. This is common to the whole school and consequently means they are unable to find information relevant to some of their courses. The school is aware of this and is involved in on-going discussions with the Internet provider.

93. The very strong partnership fostered by the school with both students and parents significantly benefits students' overall progress and achievement.

HOW WELL IS THE SIXTH FORM LED AND MANAGED?

Leadership and management

94. The sixth form is very well led and managed. The head of sixth form is a dynamic leader who works very effectively to ensure that expectations are high and to raise standards. There is a strong commitment to giving all students the opportunity to achieve as well as they can and to providing for individual needs. Regular tutorials give students the opportunity to talk about and manage the pressures of A-level work, and the school's system of target setting and monitoring academic progress means that there is a high level of management awareness of students' progress. The head of sixth form is most accessible to the students, so that he has a very good understanding of how they are coping academically and personally; it is evident that they trust him a great deal and he knows them well as individuals. Governors are appropriately involved in the development of the sixth form and work closely with the headteacher and head of sixth form.
95. The one area where governors have not fulfilled their role fully is in relation to statutory requirements. Students who do not opt to take religious education at A or AS level do not receive a regular religious education lesson. There is some inclusion of religious education in general studies but this is insufficient. The school has not provided religious education for all students as it already has a very full timetable, but the resulting breach in legal requirements needs to be addressed by the governing body. Similarly, governors need to ensure that students experience a daily act of collective worship.
96. The school has been able to take a particularly considered approach in its provision for key skills by virtue of the fact that the head of sixth form has been a national facilitator for this initiative. In its liaison with other institutions in the sixth form consortium, the school is vigilant in working to ensure students receive the best possible deal. Regular meetings are held between the school and others in the consortium, which enable consortium arrangements to work to the advantage of all the students concerned.

97. The sixth form is very well served by experienced and well-qualified staff who are effectively deployed. The high level of subject expertise of those who teach in the sixth form contributes significantly to the unusually high proportion of teaching that is at least very good. Leadership in most departments is very good and in the science department, most notably in chemistry, it is excellent. Heads of department and their colleagues work very hard to raise and maintain high standards and motivate and stimulate their students.
98. Very careful financial planning and close collaboration with the other secondary school and the further education college in the town enable the school to provide a wide range of learning opportunities very cost effectively.

Accommodation and resources

99. The sixth form has expanded significantly in recent years without a simultaneous expansion in accommodation. The sixth form block is extremely cramped and students have limited space for private study. The school overcomes this as best it can by allowing students to work in any classroom that is vacant for a given period, or in the library. Some students go home to work when they have periods that are not timetabled because there is not enough space in the school. This is an unsatisfactory situation and will become untenable as student numbers increase further, although it is not, at this point, having a measurable impact on standards.
100. Otherwise, the sixth form is well resourced and students have sufficient materials and equipment to support their studies except for some poor facilities in science while the school waits for its new science accommodation to be built. Resourcing for information and communication technology is limited but that which is available is used well. The library, which is situated next to the sixth form block, serves the needs of the sixth form satisfactorily.

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

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

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

GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	18	100	-	67	-	48.3	-
Further mathematics	4	100	-	75	-	52.5	-
Chemistry	25	100	-	68	-	49.6	-
Biology	35	97	-	48	-	42.6	-
Physics	23	78	-	26	-	30.9	-
Design & technology	23	100	-	30	-	40.4	-
Business studies	11	100	-	67	-	47.3	-
Art & design	20	90	-	45	-	36.5	-
Music	1	100	-	100	-	60.0	-
Geography	36	94	-	36	-	39.7	-
History	29	100	-	66	-	51.0	-
Religious studies	13	100	-	31	-	40.8	-
English	55	98	-	38	-	41.1	-
French	5	100	-	80	-	48.0	-
German	8	100	-	50	-	46.3	-
Latin	1	100	-	100	-	50.0	-
Physical education	9	100	-	44	-	40.0	-

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	18	94	87	72	43	7.4	5.8
Chemistry	21	100	90	48	43	6.8	5.9
Biology	30	93	88	50	34	6.33	5.25
Physics	8	100	88	78	40	7.5	5.67
Design & technology	7	86	91	-	-	3.71	5.38
Business studies	10	90	92	20	32	5.6	5.5
Computer studies	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
Economics	1	100	89	-	-	6.0	5.5
Art & design	13	92	96	46	46	6.3	6.6
Music	1	100	93	-	-	4.0	5.7
Geography	26	92	92	38	38	5.7	5.7
History	12	92	88	50	35	6.5	5.4
Religious studies	4	100	92	25	38	5.5	5.8
English literature	35	83	95	14	37	4.2	5.9
English language	1	100	-	-	-	2.0	5.3
French	2	100	89	100	38	9.0	5.6
German	7	100	91	-	40	4.9	5.8
Physical education	7	100	92	-	-	5.0	5.0

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

102. Subjects inspected in depth in the sixth form were mathematics, biology and chemistry. Physics is also taught at AS and A2, and it was possible to observe some teaching of physics in the sixth form as part of the overall inspection. In common with the other two science subjects, examination results in physics are high. The teaching is very good and the level of attainment is well above average.

Mathematics

Overall, the quality of provision is very good.

Strengths

- Standards are well above average and students achieve very well.
- Teaching is very good and teachers support students well.
- Students develop very good attitudes and study skills.
- Assessment procedures are thorough and support students' progress.
- The subject is very well led and there is a high level of teamwork.

Areas for improvement

- Not all the teaching is equally successful in enabling students to develop their own thinking skills.

103. The school offers AS and A-level courses in mathematics and further mathematics, as well as a GCSE retake course. In mathematics, there are currently 28 students in Year 12, and 11 in Year 13. Further mathematics is taught in a separate class; there are currently five students in Year 12 and three in Year 13. The further mathematics course is taught jointly by staff from Henry Box and Wood Green School and includes students from both schools.

104. Examination results at A level have been well above average each year since 1999 and have improved each year since 1998. Boys do a little better than girls most years. In further mathematics, results vary each year due to the smaller cohort; they were well above average in 2000 and above average in 2001. The school's results at AS in 2001 were high.

105. The standards reached in the current Year 13 are also well above average in both the mathematics and further mathematics courses, and students achieve very well in relation to their prior attainment at GCSE. Their high level of achievement is due to the quality of teaching, their very good attitudes and study habits, and systematic assessment procedures.

106. Students gain a good knowledge and understanding of mathematical theory and are able to apply this to problems and to learning new concepts. In a statistics lesson, for example, where students were using computers to see how real situations can be modelled by binomial distribution, they were able to recall the theory they had learned and apply this in testing and improving the model. High-attaining students make particularly good progress. They gain confidence in their ability to make links between different areas of mathematics and to extend their knowledge through their own thinking. A group of further mathematics students, skilfully guided by their teacher, worked as a team to identify key features of the Maclaurin Series and worked out several polynomial expansions of functions for themselves. Lower-attainers also generally achieve very well, though a few find the transition from GCSE to A level difficult. Their understanding of mathematical concepts is naturally less assured, but they are well supported and in the 2001 AS results, all students gained at least a grade E. A number of students end their mathematical studies after their AS examinations.

107. Teaching is very good and some is excellent. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and use this to set high standards of mathematical rigour. Teachers typically plan carefully, give clear explanations and provide students with helpful notes. They use questioning well to check on students' understanding and to encourage them

to clarify their thinking. Students work accurately and develop a high level of mathematical literacy. Teachers establish very good relationships with students, who appreciate the high level of support they receive. An example of this support is the weekly clinic that teachers run after school, where students can seek additional help. Students' progress is regularly and thoroughly assessed. There are assignments and tests at the end of each section of work, which help students to consolidate their learning and make improvements where they need to do so. Good feedback and follow-up work help students to progress. Some teachers use information and communication technology very effectively to extend understanding through practical experience, and students make good use of graphical calculators.

108. There are some excellent features in the teaching. These centre around the techniques used by some teachers that enable students to think for themselves and strengthen their understanding. In one Year 13 lesson on calculus, for example, the teacher had prepared some imaginative resources to highlight the patterns in the theory and, through well-organised group discussion, students were able to focus directly on the essential ideas and hence learn very rapidly. Very good use of challenging questions typifies the excellent lessons. All the teaching seen was at least good, though not all lessons were equally successful in getting students to think for themselves.
109. Students have full confidence in their teachers. They appreciate the clarity of teachers' explanations and the help they give. They know how well they are getting on and what they need to improve. They work hard and feel they are making good progress. Early in the course, students' work is monitored carefully and each has a review with their teacher. As a result, they organise their work well and develop very good study habits. Many students are exceptionally rigorous in their work. They work well together and there is frequently a good level of mathematical discussion in lessons, which is very beneficial to learning. This develops their ability to think and therefore to work independently, which is especially marked in the case of the higher-attaining students.
110. The subject is very well led. The head of department has a determination to maintain high standards, is well organised and a good manager of people. As a result, the department has succeeded in creating a culture in which mathematics and learning are enjoyed and highly valued by students and staff. The department is unusually successful in attracting girls to study mathematics as well as boys. Teachers are enthusiastic and well qualified and work together very well as a team. They share ideas and support students in each other's classes. The department carefully analyses examination results and assessment information and makes very good use of these to look continually for improvements in its practice. Teaching is monitored as part of the school's policy on performance management and its arrangements for supporting newly qualified teachers, but monitoring is otherwise informal.
111. The department has made good improvement since the last inspection. Examination results were at that time above average, but have improved still further. The high standards of teaching and management noted in the last report have been maintained, as well as the quality of mathematical discussion. The subject remains somewhat short of teaching time, though this is ameliorated by the clinic that teachers run after school. The time allocation is not affecting examination results but does result in one section of the course being taught in a manner that limits students' opportunity to explore the ideas for themselves.

Biology

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

Strengths

- Standards in external examinations are well above the national average.
- Leadership is excellent and strongly contributes to students' successful learning.
- Teaching and the planning of lessons are very good overall; teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of biology and are enthusiastic.
- Assessment and the recording of students' attainment and progress are very good.
- Moral and social aspects of biology are very well developed.

Areas for improvement

- Continue to monitor and improve the standards of boys in biology.
- Make greater use of information and communication technology in biology, which is poor.
- Further develop extra-curricular activities in biology, such as fieldwork.

112. Biology is taught to AS level in Year 12 and to A2 level in Year 13. In these early days of the new arrangements for advanced level work, across the two years of AS and A2 courses, about two in three students remain to the end. For example, of the 38 students who started the AS course in September 2000, 25 have continued into the present A2 course in Year 13. This reduction has taken place for a variety of reasons; some left very early in the course and others, having been successful in the AS examinations, simply chose not to maintain biology in their range of A2 studies. The arrangement and composition of the teaching groups are chosen by the department on the particular merits of the students. In the present Year 12, there are three groups, of which two are set by ability and the third is a mixed ability group over the full ability range. There are two groups in Year 13, and both groups contain students from the whole ability range.

113. Students' examination success in biology is well above the national average. Progress is also very good. The proportion of candidates gaining the higher grades was just below the national average in 1998 and has improved every year since; in 2001, it was well above the national average. Generally, girls do better than boys although the difference is not always significant and varies considerably from year to year.

114. The standard of work seen during the inspection is well above average, and students' level of achievement is very good. In both year groups, students showed that their earlier experience of biology was good and that concepts are well established. Students in Year 12 have good understanding of the role of messenger RNA in gene manipulation. They understand the advantages of structurally altered proteins in the alleviation of faulty gene transfer. In other lessons on health and disease, students are able to use their own experience of cause and effect and are very positive about aspects of social biology. They cope very well with the considerable demands of both AS and A2 courses, including the taking and making of notes. Communication skills are well developed and there is spontaneity and experience of cogent discussion and debate.

115. The quality of teaching is very good overall and reflects the considerable experience of the staff. Teachers' expectations are high, and students try hard to meet them. Biology in the sixth form is taught by the head of department and three other specialist teachers, all of whom show very good subject knowledge and understanding. They have very good relationships with the students and use time and resources effectively. The range of teaching methods is wide and, as a direct consequence, students respond well. For example, in a lesson with Year 13 students on natural selection, responses were

focused and mature and levels of confidence were very high. In all the lessons seen, preparation was good and resulted in learning where students were aware of the aims of the lesson and were fully engaged with the new material. Students are attentive and work productively in lessons. In Year 13, there is a general air of increasing maturity, responsibility and self-assessment, and students are quick to benefit and make good progress. Pace and challenge are good and students in Year 12 demonstrate clear understanding of epidemiology and their skills of interpretation of world health data. The regular assessment of work and supporting commentary is exemplary and students feel well informed and that their learning needs are well supported.

116. Students' learning is very good. In the lessons observed, the quality of students' work was very high. They take a keen interest in scientific investigations. Assessed practical work and projects show well developed skills and include those of practical investigation, the competent handling of apparatus and equipment, confidence in written work and being able to follow detailed instructions. Students generally show good understanding and their files and the recording of practical work are properly organised, and written work is well presented and up-to-date. The standard of work in lessons is well above national standards and students make very good progress. The careful guidance and advice from teachers is effective and students in Year 12, although only part of the way into the course, take considerable pride in and responsibility for their own learning.
117. Leadership and management of the subject are excellent and there is clear direction to the department's development. The head of biology, who is also overall head of science, handles people with sensitivity and is exemplary in fulfilling her role and in her organisation. She supports staff and students with considerable skill and there is a direct effect on the successful learning of students. The mechanisms for regular assessment, recording and reporting are secure and very effective. This new head of department has been appointed since the last inspection and changes have been made which support learning well. As a result, the number of students choosing to study biology has increased and standards have improved. Department documentation is very well organised; schemes of work and teaching strategies have been thoroughly revised and are well supported by new texts. The development and frequent sharing of good practice has assisted teachers in working more closely together, and has improved the quality of teaching. The tracking and recording of students' progress is very good. However, with a shortage of specific resources, there is poor use of information and communication technology in biology lessons in the sixth form. It is generally limited to students' own devices of word-processing or interrogation of the Internet for information to support project work and private study. With the arrival of new equipment, the use of sensors, data logging and the handling of information by students will improve. There are limited extra-curricular activities, particularly in the areas of fieldwork in biology and related environmental issues.
118. With very good teaching and technician support, the organisation and management of biology at AS and A level is very effective and supportive. Attainment and progress are very good.

Chemistry

Overall, the quality of provision in chemistry is excellent.

Strengths

- Examination results are high and students achieve very well.

- The quality of teaching is consistently very good. Very high expectations, high quality relationships, very good management of students' learning and excellent subject knowledge ensure that all students make very good progress.
- Excellent use of assessment, including the rigorous setting, marking and checking of students' homework and practical work, ensures very good learning and very good examination results.
- Leadership and management of the subject are outstanding. There is a very strong ethos for learning and high achievement, which ensures consistently very good teaching and learning so that all students achieve their full potential.

Areas for improvement

- There is insufficient access to computers, particularly for data logging.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory and it is not possible to house essential computer equipment within the department for students to use and extend their learning.

119. In 2001, all students gained an A to E grade at A level and half achieved A or B grades. The average points score was well above the national average. Over the previous three years, examination results have been consistently well above average and, in 2000, the school's results were in the top five per cent in the country. At AS in 2001, results were high with almost two thirds of students gaining A or B grades.

120. Students in Year 12 make very good progress and produce a range of very good practical work in a short space of time, for example the extraction of a chemical from lemon peel using steam distillation and a separating funnel. The standard of work of current Year 13 students is very high and students achieve very well in relation to predictions based on GCSE and AS results, because of consistently very good teaching throughout the department. All students work independently or in pairs when carrying out practical investigations and show a great deal of effort and attention to laboratory safety in producing high quality work. For example, when investigating the effects of variables on the rate and ease of solution of laundry bags, they take great care and reduce the risks of hazards related to concentrations of acids.

121. The quality of teaching is consistently very good with some outstanding features. It is the major contributor to the high quality of learning throughout the department. The key characteristics of this very good teaching are the very high levels of specialist knowledge and practical skills, which are seen when teachers teach by practical demonstration linking theoretical concepts to investigations. This has a strong impact on students, enabling them to make instant comparisons between theoretical ideas and practice. This, combined with clearly expressed very high expectations, helps students to know what is required of them at all times. Teachers also maintain a very positive atmosphere in lessons, they have very good relationships with students, they are committed to meeting their individual needs within the subject and teach enthusiastically. This results in a high retention rate and students' enjoyment of the subject, which they feed back to their teachers. Teachers share their specialist expertise very well. They do this through demonstration and individual targeted support in lessons. For example, when students were preparing a chart for the redox chemistry of vanadium, the teacher provided a practical demonstration and then used excellent individual questioning to elicit a greater understanding of interpreting and writing equations for all possible reducing agents. Students benefit from this by having any misconceptions clarified at once. The department is open during lunchtimes and after school so that many students use the extra time to catch up and extend their work.

122. All teachers use searching questioning techniques to evaluate students' retention of knowledge from one session to the next, for example in recapping types of bonding,

linking this to Hess's Cycle and applying this to an investigation on enthalpy change. There is a very good policy and very rigorous procedures for assessing students' work, which includes end-of-module tests, on-going assessments of practical work and the rigorous marking and feedback of homework. Students are well prepared for examinations and benefit from extra revision lessons, so they have a very clear understanding of their own rates of progress, know exactly how far they have improved and what they specifically need to do in order to achieve their expected or desired grades. Each student has opportunities to access a well-stocked library and to use the Chemistry Set CD-ROM, which is specifically produced for the Nuffield course. This extends students' knowledge, skills and understanding within the syllabus.

123. Students work very well together. They show interest, enthusiasm and enjoyment of the subject. They show great respect and respond very well to the teachers' encouragement. All have developed confidence in their own research capabilities and most go beyond the superficial layers of the issues they choose to study. Despite the constant pressure of coursework deadlines, students derive much satisfaction and enjoyment from their studies. Students use computers and the Internet at home as there are too limited opportunities to make much use of information and communication technology in school. They download images in their word-processed documents to enhance their practical report and project writing.
124. Leadership and management of the subject are excellent. The subject leader has a detailed knowledge of all students and their stages of development. There is a very strong ethos for learning and high achievement. This ensures consistently very good teaching and learning, enabling all students to achieve their full potential. The head of department ensures that all teachers are fully involved in planning and he maintains a thorough oversight of teaching and learning to ensure that topics are covered effectively. All staff have a detailed knowledge of the needs of each student and there is a very good working atmosphere of professional camaraderie. As a result, students recognise and respect their teachers and are willing to test out and share their emerging hypotheses and conclusions in the knowledge that they will be listened to, supported and encouraged.
125. Working conditions in the department are cramped. The laboratories are old and there is currently no facility to store computer equipment so that students can log data from investigations and carry out further investigative research. This prevents students benefiting fully from one another's work and ideas. Resources for practical work are of good quality and make a positive contribution to the standards of work produced.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

126. No subjects were inspected in depth but design and technology was sampled and a small amount of students' work was analysed. A-level results were well below average in 2001 but well above average in 2000. At AS in 2001, all students were successful in gaining an A to E grade and nearly a third gained A or B grades. Teaching and learning were good in the lesson observed and standards mostly average. Students tend to produce better quality work in designing than in making, and some higher-attaining students are working on sophisticated design concepts using information and communication technology.

BUSINESS

127. No subjects were inspected in depth but business studies was sampled. A-level results were in line with the national average in 2001, below average in 2000, but well above

average in the previous two years. Results at AS level in 2001 were good and standards were above average in the small amount of teaching and work sampled during the inspection.

128. A very small number of students have studied economics (at the further education college or Wood Green School) in recent years. In 2001, they all achieved A to E grades but with no passes at A or B grades. Results in previous years were well below average with a small take-up for the subject.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

129. No subjects were inspected in depth but sports studies was sampled. In 2001, all students were successful at A to E in sports studies but none achieved an A or B grade. There have been too few entrants in previous years to make comparisons with the national average. At AS in 2001, results improved with 40 per cent of candidates gaining an A or B grade and all achieving at A to E. Provision was good in the lesson sampled.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

130. Art was inspected in depth; music and media studies (at the further education college) were sampled. There have been only a very small number of candidates in music over recent years and results have fluctuated. The one candidate in 2001 was successful at grades A to E. At AS, the only candidate gained an A grade. Attainment was above average in the Year 13 music lesson sampled and in line with expectations in Year 12. In the one media studies lesson, students made good progress and their attainment was in line with expectations.

Art

Overall, the quality of provision in art is good.

Strengths

- Current standards are higher than in last year's examinations.
- Good quality of teaching leads to good achievement in a rich variety of media.
- There are good opportunities for lower-attaining students to experience art to broaden their curriculum.
- Students have very good enrichment opportunities such as visits to galleries abroad.
- Some very high quality of work is produced by higher-attaining students.

Areas for improvement

- The common Year 12 'foundation course' leads to less individuality in students' early work than is usual.
- It is essential that students develop and maintain high quality work in core drawing and painting.

131. A-level results in 2001 showed the national average spread of attainment. They were similar the year before, but had previously been very high. AS-level results in 2001 also included the complete range of grades. Most students come into the sixth form with GCSE in art, where results mirror this average range.

132. Work in both current years shows a similar range of standards but, by Year 13, more students are above average. Most sketchbooks include good annotations, which show students reflecting well on their learning and research. Students analyse critically and apply their research findings well in their practical work. Year 12 students' personal investigations show them working at an appropriate level of understanding and often above that level on some quite sophisticated ideas, for example relating to religious imagery. The range of media in which all students work is wide. This is attributable in part to good skills development lower down the school but also reflects the department's good range of provision of materials and resources. Students benefit from a 'foundation' experience early in Year 12, where new media such as photography are introduced. These add effectively to students' range of competences. Many are confident to work in large scale in both two and three-dimensional media, facilitated by the space available in their dedicated sixth form studio. This rich range of media, together with the specialist experience of a carefully built staff team, enables students to develop and refine skills in media, which exploit their individual strengths. Students whose mark making is weaker can often attain higher standards in sculpture, for example. A large-scale, spiral willow and wire sculpture elegantly developed an idea from a doodle on the theme of 'tied and bound'. Ceramics has also recently developed strongly. Printmaking is the next developing area for the department, with prints from both years' work showing high levels of attainment. This range of experiences enables students of all abilities to find an area where they can achieve well. However, teachers recognise that the time involved in expanding students' expertise across this breadth can be a disadvantage. Some students' core graphical skills, for example their mark making in drawing and painting, are relatively weaker, and the department appreciates the need to maintain the standard of these underpinning skills. The common 'foundation' in Year 12 also means that much work is similar, so students do not develop early enough the degree of individuality expected at this level. The curriculum has therefore been adapted in the light of experience last year. The department's

tracking of value added shows most students' achievement to be in line with projections or better.

133. Students' attitudes to their work are very positive. They discuss its development confidently and articulately with teachers and when presenting it to one another. Some students in Year 12 were somewhat reluctant to contribute ideas to a lesson, but those in Year 13 did so with ease and self-assurance. Students use the very good opportunities provided to visit galleries at home and abroad highly effectively in their work. Artists' work seen recently in Amsterdam, for example, informs current work well. Year 12 students seen presenting work in progress to their peers used interesting examples of artists they had chosen for personal study and in lessons were making very good technical analyses of these pictures. They analyse well artists' use of line, shape, colour and so on to achieve given effects. Their sketchbooks show good personal development and progress through their courses. They speak enthusiastically about the teaching in the department, which challenges them to new ways of thinking about art. Most are very committed, producing significant amounts of work for their portfolios. Many use additional opportunities such as life drawing classes to very good effect in their direct observational work.
134. Teaching and learning in the department are consistently good. Well-focused introductions to lessons set high expectations and give clear objectives. Teachers use resources such as reproductions of artists' work well to explain the processes students should be using to analyse chosen artists' work. Constant reference is made to students' own experience, for example their visit to Amsterdam and how this can be used creatively in their studies. These cultural opportunities significantly enrich students' personal development. As a result, the range of artists' work that students use is wide and they often choose unusual artists for their focus. Teachers' very effective one-to-one facilitation in lessons is the main method of challenging and widening students' perspectives. They often ask 'why?' to develop students' higher order thinking about their work and critique. The inclusion of local artists' and crafts-peoples' work into students' repertoire is good. Assessment of students' work is also secure, with personal assessment sheets tracking progress across examination assessment objectives. Discussions appropriately target next steps to be achieved. Department management remains good with teachers forming an effective, flexible team to provide the good quality of experience described.

HUMANITIES

135. History and geography were inspected in depth; psychology (which is taught at the further education college) and religious studies were sampled. In 2001, the four candidates who were entered for religious studies all gained A to E grades and a quarter of them gained A or B grades. Results were above average in preceding years. Attainment and progress were good in the lesson sampled. Standards in psychology were in line with expectations in the lesson sampled and progress was good.

History

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

Strengths

- A-level results in 2001 were well above the national average.
- Students achieve very well in relation to their prior attainment.
- Teaching and learning are very good; teachers' marking is excellent and enables students to improve their work.
- The subject is very well managed.

Areas for improvement

- In some lessons, more opportunities could be provided for students to engage in class discussion.

136. Students' performance in GCE A-level examinations over the past four years has been consistently high with results above or well above average in three of those years and in line with the national average in the remaining year. In 2001, results were well above average with six of the 12 students entered obtaining the highest A or B grades. In that year, these results were within the range of the top quarter of schools across the country.
137. Observation of lessons and a scrutiny of samples of students' work confirm that standards are well above national averages and achievement is very good. In the Year 12 GCE AS-level course, students have made a good beginning. Essay writing is already being well structured to ensure that evidence is used to support individual judgements. The performance of the current Year 13 students in their AS modules last year was very good with all students obtaining a grade A to C. Written work is of a high standard and demonstrates a good command of the higher order skills of analysis and evaluation, as seen in an essay assessing the main influences which shaped the Elizabethan settlement of religion. Students show a very good knowledge and understanding of the periods and topics being studied. All are able to evaluate historical evidence. They are independent learners, using the Internet to research historical topics and reading widely around the subject. This is evident from the numerous quotes from historical sources in their writing and the bibliographies referred to at the ends of their essays.
138. Teaching is very good overall, and students learn very well as a result. Very good subject knowledge and expertise, as well as detailed planning and preparation, ensure that students are appropriately challenged. Teachers have high expectations of their students and this was a particular strength in the teaching in a Year 12 lesson where students presented their research, using information and communication technology, on the various aspects of J F Kennedy's assassination. However, teachers occasionally over-dominate the lesson, talking for too long and failing to involve students sufficiently in meaningful discussion. Teachers' marking is excellent: detailed comments make very clear what students need to do to improve their work.
139. Students display very positive attitudes to the subject and learn very well. They are well motivated and attentive, and readily work independently, taking responsibility for their own learning. Take-up rates for the study of history in the sixth form have improved considerably since the department changed the syllabus to include the teaching of 20th century events. Students respond well to the supportive teaching. There is clear progression in thinking and learning.

140. History is a strong department, very well managed by its head of department, assisted by a hardworking team of teachers. Examination results are carefully monitored in relation to students' prior attainment and to identify possible areas for improvement; there is a strong commitment to improve. Departmental records are clear and up-to-date, and development planning is systematic. Students are well supported through regular assessment and the provision of extra tuition and specially run revision classes before examination modules. In spite of the lack of computers, effective use is made of new technology and all students have lists of useful websites to enable them to use information and communication technology for independent research.

Geography

Overall, the quality of provision in geography is good.

Strengths

- Standards at A level are above average.
- Students achieve well in relation to their prior attainment.
- Teaching and learning are very good; teachers have a good knowledge of their subject and lessons are planned carefully to challenge students.

Areas for improvement

- Students are not sufficiently supported in their individual learning – there is insufficient assessment in the early months of Year 12.

141. Results at A level in 2001 were in line with the national average. However, in the previous three years, A-level results were above the national average and students have consistently achieved well in relation to their prior attainment. Boys outperformed girls in 1998 and 1999 but in the past two years there has been no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls.

142. Observation of lessons and a scrutiny of samples of students' work confirm that standards are now above average. Year 12 students have made a good beginning on the AS course. They have full and detailed notes which show appropriate mapping and geographical skills. In Year 13, students have a comprehensive in-depth knowledge of the topics they have studied. They show understanding by appropriately displaying their knowledge in extended essays using diagrams or sketch maps to illustrate where necessary. Examples include a case study of Southampton City Centre management and an analysis of changes in the cliff face at Barton-on-Sea. Students show skill in interpreting a range of sources and geographical information and use the Internet extensively to research geographical topics. They can collect evidence from primary or secondary data and use an appropriate range of skills and techniques to analyse it. Fieldwork assignments are of a high standard. Several Year 13 students obtained 100 per cent in their fieldwork module at AS level; their ability to write a considered conclusion and evaluation of the project was particularly noteworthy and reflected a well-developed ability to make mature judgements.

143. Teaching is very good overall, and students learn very well in lessons as a result. Very good subject knowledge and expertise is used to motivate and inform students. Appropriate stimulating resources are used to aid learning; this was evident in a Year 13 lesson on living with hazardous environments, when video clips from recent news broadcasts were used to illustrate and inform. Skilful questioning is used to make students think for themselves and build on prior knowledge to promote effective learning. Teachers use every opportunity to reinforce geographical skills and are

particularly effective in teaching fieldwork techniques. Students have the opportunity to go on a residential experience in South Wales where an intensive course consolidates and extends their knowledge. Particular attention is also paid to developing examination techniques by ensuring that students have sufficient practice in answering sample examination questions. However, insufficient attention is paid to marking and assessment, particularly for Year 12 students, many of whom are unsure of how well they are doing early on in the course. Year 13 marking is better but work could still be marked in greater detail with more comments to inform students about how they might improve.

144. Students are well motivated and attentive. They are independent learners and are confident in using books and information and communication technology for research; they make good use of computers to process and present their work. Geography is a popular subject and a large number of students have opted for A level for a number of years.
145. The good achievement and very good teaching can be attributed to the fact that the subject is managed by an experienced head of department, assisted by a hardworking team of well-qualified teachers. Resources are of good quality and a valuable residential fieldwork experience is provided by the department. Examination results are monitored and evaluated but the head of department could make greater use of value added data.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

146. English, French and German were all inspected in depth.

English

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

Strengths

- On average, examination results over the last four years have been in line with those in schools nationally although there has been considerable variation from year to year.
- Students' achievement is very good; the quality of class discussion is very good and essay writing reaches a good standard, with very good levels of individual response to literature.
- Teaching is very good; teachers know their subject well and teach it through a range of stimulating and effective approaches.
- Students learn very well and work very productively in pairs and groups.
- The subject is well organised.

Areas for improvement

- Closer monitoring of written work is needed to ensure that all students produce their best writing.
- Students need to be provided with more opportunities to write under examination conditions.

147. Large numbers of students take English for AS and A/A2 level: in the current Year 13, there are 50 students and in Year 12, there are 38. All are preparing for English literature examinations. Although most have achieved grades in the range A* to B at GCSE, a minority have only grade C in either English or English literature; these are accepted on the course because of their interest in and enjoyment of the subject. All

classes have a large majority of girls. In spite of equal numbers of male and female teachers, the course recruits few boys.

148. Standards reached in A-level examinations over the last four years have varied. Results were well above average in 2000 but below average in 2001. The school has challenged the marking of these recent scripts and the matter has not yet been resolved. Results in the AS examinations are close to the national average. However, standards seen during the inspection were high.
149. There is a good deal of discussion work in various combinations of whole class, small groups and pairs, providing all individual students with the opportunity to develop ideas and test hypotheses with confidence. The level of thinking revealed in these activities is impressive, as is the appropriateness and ease with which the students express themselves orally. They show very good understanding and perception of what they read and are constantly able to support the points they make by reference to their texts. The standard of writing is more variable. The best writers are outstandingly good. Their essays are fluent, well organised and of substantial length; the language they use is mature and appropriate and they write with good levels of technical correctness. Even those who have difficulties in writing, whose skills are weaker and who write less, convey a personal and engaging response to literature. All students are skilful in their note making and all organise their work files very well.
150. Teaching and learning are very good. All the teachers of the sixth form have sound knowledge and understanding, both of the subject itself and of the examination requirements. Planning – of the course, the units and the lessons – is shared by the sixth form team and is intelligent and productive. Students are introduced to a good range of literature, which they experience through stimulating and varied activities. The emphasis at all times is on the importance of individual understanding and development of response. In class, this takes place largely through group work and preparation by the groups for presentation of topics and aspects to the rest of the class. Great attention is paid to students' writing, the quality of the teachers' marking being outstandingly thorough, conducting a written dialogue throughout the writing and stating clearly at the end where the strengths and weaknesses lie. There is a need to ensure that all students can cope well with the more restricted conditions of written examinations so that they can do themselves justice in those circumstances. Relationships between teachers and students, and among the students, are supportive and productive. There is a shared intention to do well, individually and as groups in all the classes.
151. Good improvement has been made since the last inspection. All students now have ample opportunity to explore ideas in discussion; they do so confidently; none are unquestioning. The qualifications expected for students starting the course remain flexible and generous, and considerable efforts are made to support those who are weaker. Leadership by the new head of department is good. He values the contribution made by his colleagues and delegates accordingly. Because of the shared course planning, he is well aware of general standards of teaching and of the ground covered in each group. However, he needs to monitor students' written work more closely – and monitor teaching – in order to gain a full picture of their progress.

Modern foreign languages

152. Both German and French are offered as modern foreign languages in the sixth form. Students are normally expected to have achieved a Grade B in their GCSE examinations before embarking on an AS course. Since 2001, the school has enjoyed

Language College status and has introduced Spanish into the main school. This creates the potential for Spanish to be offered as an additional option in the sixth form. Currently, students may take French or German at AS level in Year 12 and at A/A2 level in Year 13. In addition, all sixth form students now take a modern foreign language module – either German or French (these lessons were not observed).

French

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

Strengths

- Attainment in Year 13 is well above average and all students make very good progress.
- Students' spoken French is of a high standard: many are confident and fluent in oral work.
- Most teaching is very good; a particular strength is the excellent relationships between teachers and students.

Areas for improvement

- The level of guidance and support given to some students to help them understand their teacher's French needs to be increased.

153. Over the last few years, small numbers of students have entered for A-level French. Results have usually been in line with the national average for all schools. In some years, the numbers entered for the subject are too few for accurate comparison with national pass rates. However, the trend is towards significantly larger numbers taking French, which is growing in popularity as a subject. Evidence from lessons and from students' files at the time of the inspection shows that standards are rising and that they are currently well above average, particularly in Year 13.
154. Students in their final year achieve their full potential. They make very good progress as a result of carefully planned and prepared lessons. Their spoken French is confident, with good accent and fluency. They speak spontaneously to their teacher and other adults. They understand their teachers' rapid spoken French without difficulty. In a lesson studying their set text, they developed a good range of language to describe the features of the characters in the novel. During their A-level course, most have learnt to write accurately and at good length. They have acquired a confident knowledge of more abstract language, new vocabulary and structures. They write about contemporary issues of concern to young people such as family relationships, the use of drugs, and French politics, making use of a good range of phrases and verb tenses. The most able students make very few errors of grammar. Students of average ability achieve well over the period of their course. Their writing is easily understood. They make more errors in relation to the order of words and spelling but there are not significant differences between their attainment and that of more able students.
155. Attainment in Year 12 is usually above average although it is not quite as good as in Year 13. This is because numbers taking French in this Year 12 have increased significantly and students' standards reflect a broader range of prior attainment than in Year 13. They are divided into two groups according to ability. Results from the AS module they have already taken show good achievement and progress in building on their attainment at GCSE. In a lesson on the advantages and disadvantages of hitch hiking, higher-attaining students read a text on the topic which contained unfamiliar language. They understood most of it well, completed sentences accurately and matched those with the same meaning confidently. In describing a recent school visit to Northern France, they showed little hesitancy in using a good range of language with good accents to describe what they did and where they went. In writing, they replied to

a long list of details on a fax with accurate spelling. They produced a well-argued point of view about topics of interest such as diet and sport. They nearly all make good progress in moving on from the language they learnt for their GCSE topics by acquiring a broader range of expressions. Their listening skills are well developed. From tape recordings, most pick out five or six details and eight-digit telephone numbers with accuracy. Lower-ability students' best attainment is in speaking. Their use of structures is sometimes inaccurate but they show little hesitation and good confidence. In listening, however, when they are not familiar with the content they need support and guidance to understand fully French texts read aloud by the teacher. In writing about health, sport and recreation, for example, they rely more on English translation in order to understand new vocabulary.

156. The overall quality of teaching in the sixth form is very good. There are examples of excellent lessons, which are skilfully planned with clear aims and well-produced resources. A particular strength is the quality of relationships between students and teachers. In a Year 13 class, the group sat informally around a table with their teacher. They started with a French breakfast of croissants. The relaxed and friendly atmosphere resulted in students speaking French spontaneously and with enjoyment. Their teacher's high expectations ensured that all were fully involved in their work. They were given excellent support in using dictionaries for independent research, building up new language about the novel they were reading while carefully prepared video clips illustrated excerpts from the book. These were skilfully integrated with other elements of the lesson. As a result of well-prepared resources, a prompt start and support for individuals, the pace was good and all ability levels were fully included in activities. In Year 12, however, a small number of students require more support and guidance in order to fully understand their teacher's spoken French.
157. Students in Years 12 and 13 show a good interest in the subject. They maintain concentration and motivation throughout lessons. They work well in pairs in speaking French, volunteer answers and participate well in all activities. Their written work is well presented both in class and for homework. This results from well-developed skills in note taking, drafting and improving their compositions.
158. Staff teaching French benefit from clear procedures and guidance; this helps them to develop common approaches to teaching and to work as a team. Procedures for assessing students' work are satisfactory. Students are very clear about what is required of them in examinations and some marking is careful, but there are also some inconsistencies in approaches to marking. Teachers organise a range of activities such as travel abroad, European work experience, visits and other events. These are very effective in helping students relate their work in school to present day French culture and society.

German

Overall, the quality of provision in German is very good.

Strengths

- Students' attainment is high in Years 12 and 13, particularly in oral skills.
- Students achieve very well.
- Teaching is very good; teachers have high expectations of students' performance.
- There are very high levels of motivation amongst students.

Areas for improvement

- There are insufficient opportunities for extended writing in year 12.

159. In 2001, seven students were entered for A-level German and results were below the national average. No student achieved A or B grades but all obtained a pass at A to E. The average point score per student was below the national average, but their performance in German was not significantly below what they achieved in other subjects. There were eight candidates for the AS-level examination in 2001. Half were awarded A or B grades, while all achieved at least grade C. Because there were no lower grades, the overall performance was well above that expected nationally and represents a very significant rise in attainment over previous years. In the past, the numbers of students entered for A-level German have been too low to indicate any significant trend. However, from 1998 to 2001, a total of 17 students sat the examination and only one failed to achieve a pass grade. The number of entries was too low to indicate any significant pattern of comparative attainment of boys and girls although, between 1998 and 2001, the subject was more popular with girls. This matches the national situation. There is now a more even balance of boys and girls on the current AS and A-level courses. Only very rarely do students drop out of courses before completing them.
160. Standards of work in German are very good. Students' written work shows a high degree of understanding of German used in a variety of contexts. Students in Year 13 write articulately about contemporary issues such as changing employment practices, animal rights, health issues, education and environmental matters. The highest-attaining students have a very good grasp of grammar, including cases and word order. They use a wide range of vocabulary, appropriate to the topic they are covering, and their work shows that they have given much consideration to their commentary and arguments. Students with lower attainment still write well enough to express themselves clearly but show less accuracy in the use of prepositions and inflections. Year 12 students on the AS-level course also write with above average accuracy and they read across a good range of topic areas. Their high degree of grammatical accuracy is evidence that they have been very successful in making the transition from GCSE to AS level. However, they seldom make use of the material to write at length.
161. Students' oral and listening skills are very good in both year groups. In a Year 13 A-level lesson, all students understood the text they were to discuss and they expressed their opinions accurately with good accents and intonation. They coped very well with unexpected questions designed to test understanding or to get them to use certain structures. Students are tenacious when tackling more difficult compound nouns and adjectives and all show increasing competence when using complex structures like the future perfect tense. AS students in Year 12 also demonstrate very good oral skills. When discussing the problem of homelessness in Germany, they all took part and showed a high degree of confidence and competence for first year A-level students. Those who lacked the vocabulary to make a particular point tried to find an alternative word or a descriptive phrase rather than remain silent or resort to English. All were able to extract relevant information from a recorded text about homelessness.
162. The quality of teaching in German is very good. The constant use of German as the only means of communication during lessons enhances students' listening skills and encourages participation in discussion. Students regard dialogue in German as the norm. In the lessons observed, students achieved well because teachers were skilful in giving explanations in German and getting them to use difficult structures correctly. Students learn well also because of the wide range of challenging activities planned and

because of the brisk pace of the lessons. For example, in a Year 13 lesson, students were required to find synonymous words and phrases and in the process they gained in understanding of separable and inseparable prefixes. Teachers are very aware of what students have already achieved and present them with challenging but lively texts designed to promote discussion, to further learning and provide opportunities for consolidation. In another Year 13 lesson, the teacher clearly identified areas for improvement in terms of vocabulary and structures. In one-to-one discussion with students there was careful use of intervention to stretch the most competent speakers.

163. Work done by students in Year 13 shows that teachers have high expectations of their writing ability. They are required to glean information from a variety of sources to express their views on contemporary issues. A high degree of accuracy is expected and the work presents evidence of very good achievement over time. Year 12 students have rigorously studied grammar and this has resulted in secure knowledge and understanding. Expectations of the quality of their written work are very high but the quantity is limited. They nevertheless read from a wide variety of authentic material. All students have made some use of the Internet to obtain up-to-date information. The high quality of teaching in German has contributed to strong motivation on the part of the students. For example, in a Year 13 lesson, they took part in role-play and discussions with enthusiasm and they persevered in the tasks. In all lessons, students were very keen to participate and they did so with confidence. Learning is strongly underpinned by very good relationships between staff and students.
164. The range and quality of resources available to students and teachers in German are good. Students have access to the resources room where the materials are categorised by topic. Visits to Germany are not built into the sixth form courses but all students have the opportunity to take part in an exchange visit to Bavaria. Many students benefit from this in Years 9 and 10 as well as in the sixth form.

165. The leadership and management of German are very good. The effective systems for the assessment of students' progress contribute to the quality of learning because they ensure that all staff are aware of the needs of individual students. The head of department has a clear vision of how the subject is to develop in the light of the recently acquired Language College status; in the immediate future, funding has been provided for dedicated language learning facilities.