

INSPECTION REPORT

BUSHEY MEADS SCHOOL

Bushey, Hertfordshire

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117580

Headteacher: Dr Dena Coleman

Reporting inspector: Mrs Helen Silverstone
1258

Dates of inspection: 11th – 15th March 2002

Inspection number: 191689

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	11 to 19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Coldharbour Lane Bushey Hertfordshire
Postcode:	WD23 4PA
Telephone number:	020 8950 3000
Fax number:	020 8950 6208
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Gary Paton
Date of previous inspection:	February 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
1258	Helen Silverstone	Registered inspector		Characteristics of the school. What sort of school is it? How high are standards? Teaching and learning. How well is the school led and managed? School improvement and overall effectiveness
14214	Gillian Smith	Lay inspector		Attitudes, behaviour, personal development and attendance How well does the school care for its pupils and students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
30046	Ross Parker	Team inspector	English	
18967	Brenda Loydell	Team inspector	Mathematics	
10561	Angela Fraser	Team inspector	Science Human biology	
12721	David Riddle	Team inspector	Design and technology	
22458	Gilbert McGinn	Team inspector	History Business education	
20649	John Flinn	Team inspector	Geography Travel & tourism	How good are curricular and other opportunities?
18888	Jan Boulton	Team inspector	Physical education Sociology Equal opportunities	Sixth form: Leadership and management; How good are curricular and other opportunities?
2866	Robert Battey	Team inspector	Art and design Psychology	
31660	Marianne Young	Team inspector	Music	
17349	Paula Askew	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
11239	Susan Flockton	Team inspector	Religious education	
21906	John Scottow	Team inspector	Physics in the 6 th Form	
13171	Olive Davis	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages - French English as an additional language	
10068	Angela Wilkinson-Tilbrook	Team inspector	Special educational needs SEN Unit	

The inspection contractor was:

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Bushey Meads is a mixed comprehensive school of 1040 pupils aged 11 to 18 years of age. Because of the number of schools in the area practising selection, the school has a smaller than average number of able pupils in each year group. The 6th form is entirely open access and has 211 students. The school is located in the southern part of Hertfordshire on the borders of London and draws its pupils from the surrounding area. It is heavily oversubscribed. There is a unit for pupils with physical impairment and a number of the pupils in this unit have multiple and profound learning difficulties. The percentage of pupils having Statements of Special Educational Need is above the national average. Many of the pupils from the unit are integrated into mainstream classes for most of their lessons. There are 132 pupils altogether on the special needs register, which is below the national average. There are 111 pupils who have a home language other than English, although, currently, only 12 are at the early stages of speaking English. Until 1996, the general ability of Year 7 pupils on entry was below average, but it has been improving steadily so that the attainment of pupils starting school is now just above average. Only 6.1 per cent of pupils receive free school meals, which is well below the national average. The school was awarded Technology College status in September 2001.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an effective school that achieves results above those expected for its pupils. Teaching and learning are good with some very good and excellent teaching. The school monitors and supports learning well. Pupils with physical impairment receive very good and effective teaching and support. The leadership by the headteacher and other managers is good and the finances of the school are very well managed. Within the constraints of staffing and accommodation, the school gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards overall are improving.
- Teaching is good overall and there is some very good and excellent teaching.
- Leadership and management of the school are good.
- The teaching within the unit for pupils with physical impairment is very good and support for pupils with physical impairment is very effective.
- The programme of extra-curricular activities is very varied and extensive.
- The schools' arrangements for monitoring and evaluating teachers' performance are very good.
- Financial planning and management are very good.

What could be improved

- The management of special educational needs, including the writing and dissemination to all staff of clearer learning targets for pupils with special educational needs across the school.
- Liaison between teachers and learning support assistants in mainstream classes.
- Planning of schemes of work and lessons so that teachers become more effective in their support of the individual needs of all pupils, including those who have particular abilities and talents.
- Accommodation in most areas of the school.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

There have been good developments in teaching which are leading to a higher proportion of teaching which is satisfactory or better. Standards have risen in a number of subjects, particularly in Years 7, 8 and 9. There are now more courses in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. Some improvements to the school buildings have been made although there is still much to be done. For example, work has begun to improve the teaching accommodation and funding has been sought and obtained for further developments. Resources have improved since the last inspection. For example, there is much more use of information and communication technology. The school now has a very good system of monitoring and evaluation of both teaching and other developments so that senior staff know the strengths of the school and those areas where improvements need to be planned. Pupils and students are now more punctual. Assessment procedures have improved, although there is still a

need for pupils with special educational needs to have clearer targets and for their progress towards these targets to be monitored. Tutor time now makes a more useful contribution towards pupils' learning.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved, based on average point scores, in the Key Stage 3 tests in English, mathematics and science, GCSE examinations and A-level/AS-level examinations.

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1999	2000	2001	2001	
Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests (combined)	C	D	B	C	Very high A* Well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E very low E*
GCSE examinations	C	C	D	D	
A-levels/AS-levels	D	C	n/a	n/a	

Standards are rising in the school. This is shown by the high standards reached by pupils in the national tests in English, mathematics and science taken at the end of Year 9. Inspection findings also confirm that standards are rising. The two main reasons for this are: (i) improvements in the quality of teaching, and (ii) the fact that, for the past three years, the ability of the pupils on entry to the school has been similar to the national average rather than below the national average.

The overall achievement of most pupils in recent years has been consistently good in that they have done well in relation to their ability on entering school. In 2001, when the points score of all GCSE examination results are calculated the overall result shows that standards overall are below the national average and also below the average for those of similar schools. However, results have varied above and below the national average for different subjects in recent years. GCSE results in art and design have remained well above average year on year, and are above average in English, science, information and communication technology, French, music, physical education, but below average in mathematics, geography, history, Spanish and religious education.

Girls' results are in line with national trends and their results are generally better than those of boys. In many subjects, pupils' results in the GCSE examinations are as expected. The overall trend of improving pupils' performance is satisfactory, but some pupils make good improvements.

The school set ambitious targets for pupils in their national tests in Year 9 and for GCSE. The Year 9 targets were exceeded, but those for GCSE were not met. However, a significant number of pupils were within a few marks of achieving the target grades set for them.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Satisfactory. The majority of pupils comply with what is required and are eager to learn.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Pupils' behaviour is good during lessons, although a few are noisy and disturb lessons. Around the school, a few pupils do not always respect each other or the environment.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Most of the pupils get on well with each other. Support from their peers is very good for those pupils with physical and other disabilities.
Attendance	Satisfactory. The level of attendance is in line with the national average.

Most pupils show good levels of personal responsibility. It is to the credit of these pupils that they ignore the poor behaviour of a few pupils and successfully get on with their work.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Overall, teaching is good throughout the school. Of the 129 lessons observed by inspectors in Years 7 to 11, just over 94 per cent were satisfactory or better. Most teaching was good with nearly three-quarters of all teaching being good or better. Well over a third of it was very good and some excellent. Seven lessons were unsatisfactory. Those lessons which were not satisfactory occurred in different subjects and different year groups, although, overall, the quality of teaching is better in Years 10 and 11 than in the younger year groups.

Teaching of English, mathematics and science is good in all year groups. Very good teaching is frequently a feature of English lessons and in science the teaching provides a strong challenge to pupils, making them think and extend their learning. In mathematics, apart from the top sets, some teaching lacks pace and time management of lessons is weak.

Teaching is good in all other subjects. In music it is particularly good in Years 10 and 11. In art teaching is very good, while in design and technology teaching ranges from satisfactory to good. In all subjects, teachers' knowledge is strong. The quality of relationships between teachers and pupils is good and this supports pupils' good attitudes towards learning. Planning is also a good feature of most teaching, in that lessons are well thought out, but there are some weaknesses in planning for pupils with special educational needs. Pupils with physical disabilities are well-integrated into lessons and those pupils whose English is not their first language are also well supported.

The quality of teaching literacy is good overall. Interesting starter activities ensure a brisk pace to the lesson. Number skills are taught well by mathematics teachers, and in a similar way to English, the planning of activities requiring good thinking skills is improving the speed and accuracy of pupils' mental calculations. Learning in most lessons is effective.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is varied and rich, meets statutory requirements bar providing pupils with the opportunity for collective worship. There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities. The arrangements for careers education are very good.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision for physically impaired pupils in the Unit and sixth form is very good. Provision for pupils aged 11 to 16, with more general special educational needs, across the school is unsatisfactory.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Overall, this provision is good with very good support for those at the early stages of learning English.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Overall, provision is satisfactory. Provision is very good for cultural development and good for social development. It is satisfactory for moral development, but the school does not provide a daily act of corporate worship and there are inadequate opportunities throughout the school for pupils' spiritual development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares well for its pupils. There are good procedures for academic assessment and the monitoring and support of pupils' personal development. Procedures for promoting attendance and discipline are also good, as are procedures for countering bullying.

This school values close links with parents, who are for the most part responsive, and therefore links and support for their children are very effective. There have been good curriculum developments in, for example, information and communication technology, mathematics, science, and design and technology because of the school becoming a Technology College. Pupils are supported by a very

good careers education and guidance programme. Child protection procedures are good. Routine health and safety procedures are in place.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Leadership and management are good and ensure a clear educational direction for the school. Priorities for development are appropriate and good actions are being taken to complete such developments. The school is on course to meet its priorities and the financial planning to support those targets is very good. There is a shared commitment to improvement and capacity to succeed.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body is very supportive of the school and understands its strengths and weaknesses. However, they are not fulfilling statutory requirements in respect of the provision of collective worship and implementation of the Code of Practice for special educational needs.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Overall, the school evaluates its performance satisfactorily with good monitoring and evaluation of teaching and very good performance management procedures. The principles of best value are well applied.
The strategic use of resources	Most resources are well targeted and used effectively to support pupils in their learning.

The school is well staffed with experienced teachers. However, like other schools, it has experienced some difficulties in recruiting sufficient numbers of well-qualified permanent staff in some subjects. Good procedures exist for welcoming, training and looking after the needs of new staff.

The school occupies a series of single-storey teaching blocks. Plans are in hand for an extensive rebuilding programme, although, at present, the quality and range of accommodation, apart from art and music, is poor. There is a considerable amount of litter around the school during the day and especially after lunch. The quality of the toilets, especially those for the girls, are poor, a point mentioned in the last report.

The quality and quantity of resources are satisfactory. The ratio of pupils to computers is better than the national average. The library has increased in size a little since the last inspection and there are plans to develop more space because it is inadequate at present for the number of pupils.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Thirty-five parents attended the meeting for parents and 251 of the 1040 questionnaires sent to parents were returned.

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school has high expectations of what pupils will achieve. • Parents feel comfortable in approaching the school. • Children like school. • Children make good progress. • There is a good range of activities outside lessons. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behaviour. • Homework. • Information about progress. • Closer working with parents.

Inspectors agree with all the positive points, but disagree about homework, behaviour and information about progress. Behaviour in lessons is good. However, a minority of pupils do cause disruption in some lessons and there are instances of unruly behaviour around the school. The school has good systems for reporting to parents. Parents of pupils with disabilities are kept well informed, but parents of pupils with general learning difficulties have less than adequate information. Some parents are worried about bullying and the school recognises that some bullying does occur. Procedures to counter bullying are good, especially when pupils make it known what is happening.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

Bushey Meads school has an open access sixth form with 211 students where young people of all abilities and disabilities are welcome. The only criteria for entry are a willingness to work hard and to contribute to the life of the sixth form. Approximately 70 per cent of the students in Year 11 stay on to take post-16 courses. Each year about 40 students transfer into the sixth form from other schools. There are 16 students from minority ethnic groups and most speak English fluently. There are seven students with Statements of Special Educational Needs, five of whom have physical impairments.

The school strives to offer as broad a curriculum as possible to meet the needs of all students and this curriculum is still growing in order to offer as much choice as possible. There has been significant growth in the sixth form in recent years and the school offers twilight provision (after the normal school day) as a partial solution to the problem of very cramped accommodation.

All courses are taught at the school with work experience opportunities being provided in the local area. This is in line with the open-access policy of the school and their aim to provide opportunities for all. The school offers a good range of post-16 courses, including one and two year flexible programmes incorporating A and AS level GCE subjects together with foundation, intermediate and advanced level vocational courses.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

This is an effective sixth form. The overall level of ability of students on entry to the sixth form is below average and lower than average proportions of students have gained A or B grades at GCSE. However, achievement is high. Results in 2001 at GCE A and AS level and in post-16 vocational examinations were above the national average. The sixth form caters well for all its students, providing a very good range of academic and vocational courses to meet a similarly wide range of needs. However, there are insufficient extra-curricular activities to enrich the sixth form curriculum fully. Students learn effectively and have very good relationships with their teachers. They benefit from good teaching in almost all subjects and very good in English, physical education, psychology, art and design, chemistry, travel and tourism, religious education and law.

Strengths

- Standards of work have improved in recent years and students' attainment is now above the national average.
- Students achieve well.
- Teaching is good overall and very good in a few subjects.
- The wide range of courses meets the students' needs and aspirations, including good provision for students with special educational needs.
- The open access and equality of opportunity fully reflect the school's aims.

What could be improved

- Spiritual development, including more provision for religious education as required by law.
- Accommodation generally and resources in some subjects.
- The consistency of sixth form tutors in mentoring their students and providing stimulating and useful tutorial periods.
- More consistent use of the value-added data given to all departments to evaluate the performance of students and to take appropriate action as a consequence of such findings.

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 on how well students achieve. Not all subjects in the sixth form were inspected.

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
English	Good. Examination results were above average in 2001 and most pupils achieved as expected considering their previous results. Standards of work seen in lessons in Years 12 and 13 were average, with a few students developing very confident skills in producing and analysing texts. Teaching is good overall. Some very good lessons have high levels of pace and focus. Relationships in lessons are excellent.
Mathematics	Good. A level standards have varied over the past years; however, the number of students taking mathematics is too small to allow for any accurate comparison with national averages. The quality of teaching in the sixth form ranges from good to very good. The scheme of work for the whole course and planning for each lesson are excellent. Leadership and management are good, and there is a healthy involvement of a team of four members of the department.
Business education	Good. A level results in 2001 were well above average as a result of good teaching and learning. Students have positive attitudes to work and feel well supported. The subject is very well led. This has promoted good staff and student relationships and developed strong links with businesses.
French	Good. Results in 2001 were above the national average. Teaching is good overall and students' attitudes are good. Very good learning is taking place in Year 13. In Year 12, learning is satisfactory.
Art and design	Very good. Results are well above average. Staff have strong subject knowledge and teaching is very good.
Human biology	Good. The trend in examination results has been above the national average. Teaching is good and teachers' expectations and students' motivation are high.
Psychology	Very good. Standards are rising as a result of very good planning and are now at above average levels. Teaching is very good.
Sociology	Satisfactory. A feature of the good teaching is the very good individual support given to students. Standards are mostly average and students' achievement is good.
Design and technology	Satisfactory. A level results were average in 2001. The AS level results were below what might have been expected with no students achieving higher grades. Teaching is good and students following the level A2 course in Year 13 are keen to learn and make good progress. In the AS level course, standards are below expectations.
History	Good. Standards are above average and students achieve well. This is due to good teaching which encourages effective skills of enquiry and analysis. Students are well motivated and have good relationships with the teacher.
Physics	Satisfactory. Standards are about average; they are as expected given students' GCSE results. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Coursework is a strength.
Travel and tourism	Very good. Well-organised learning activities promote very good gains in students' subject knowledge and understanding.
Information technology	Good. The 2001 results in both the GNVQ Intermediate and the Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) in ICT were well above the national average. This shows improvement on the previous years' results.

Most other sixth form courses were sampled and teaching was good overall. In the single lesson of chemistry seen, teaching was excellent. The lesson was superbly planned and promoted excellent progress by very effective use of resources.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Students receive good educational and personal guidance and support. Most of the students' questionnaire returns show that they agree that the range of courses suits their talents and career aspirations well. Attendance is satisfactory. Procedures for ensuring students' health and safety are good and students who are at risk of underachieving are supported.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Leadership and management are good. The head of sixth form and the deputy head teacher responsible for the sixth form work well together to support the needs of their students. They are fully committed to the equal opportunities that are provided through the open -access policy of the sixth form. They have been successful in raising the numbers of students in the sixth form. The school produces very good value-added statistics which are used by most teachers. In most subjects there are effective systems for the monitoring of students' achievement. This is not yet happening in all subjects, especially where information about students' attainment is not being analysed with a view to providing targets for improvement. The sixth form is cost effective and the principles of best value are very well applied. It provides for the needs of all students, including those with special educational needs.

Sixth form attendance is satisfactory, although some pupils experience difficulties with twilight courses.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

There were 136 student questionnaires returned and over half of the sixth formers were interviewed during the inspection.

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers know them well, are very approachable and willingly give up their time to listen and to help. Relationships with teachers are very good. The wide choice of courses are well matched to their interests. The students with physical impairment are very much part of sixth form life. Students do not have supervised study but are allowed to work at home when not attending lessons. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The timing of some of the lessons because they are in the twilight period The lack of information and communication technology resources in their study areas and study space generally. Information about their progress and future options. The range of enrichment activities outside their courses.

The inspection team agreed with the positive comments made by the majority of students. Students appreciate the range of opportunities offered, but most students in the lessons held after the end of the main school day (twilight classes) do not enjoy studying at this later time. They give several reasons for their lack of enthusiasm, including the safety aspects of staying late at school and the length of day when their first class is at the start of the day and their final class is in the twilight period. Inspectors sympathised with students' difficulties. The school agrees that there is a need for further enrichment activities. A dedicated study area with more information and communication technology resources is due to be allocated to the sixth form in the near future. Year 12 students are given good quality careers advice in 12 weekly sessions and the school has recently received further funding for vocational careers guidance.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1 The table below shows the attainments of pupils at the school (school) in the latest reporting year (2001) compared with attainments quoted in the last inspection report and those achieved by pupils nationally in 2001 (national).

Subject	Key Stage 3 1996		Key Stage 3 2001		GCSE 1996		GCSE 2001	
	school	national	school	national	school	national	school	national
5 GCSE grades A*-C					45	44.5	40.1	49.8
5 GCSE grades A*-G					91	86.1	87.0	88.8
1 or more grades A* - G					95	92.2	94.0	96.5
English	57	66	78	64	57.1		57.4	60.8
Mathematics	60	58	85	66	41.1		44.0	48.0
Science (double) ¹	53	57	81	66	47.5		66.3	50.0
Science (single)					0		11.5	16.2
ICT					n/a		91.4	55.1
Art					56.8		51.3	63.9
Design & technology					58.5		58.8	50.6
Geography					53.7		22.2	56.1
History					38.0		38.9	57.5
Music					60.0		-	
Physical education					66.0		61.5	52.3
MFL French					33.3		65.5	47.0
MFL Spanish					16.3		39.0	49.4

N.B. Key Stage 3 is the name given to the pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 collectively. Key Stage 3 percentage figures are for those pupils reaching National Curriculum Level 5 and above.

2 Standards at the end of Year 9 have risen considerably since the last inspection. The percentage of pupils obtaining Level 5 or above is now well above the national average. This represents very good progress because when these pupils started school in 1998 they were the first year group for a long time to have an average ability. The trend over recent years has been one of steady improvement.

3 In 2001, GCSE results were generally lower than in 1996, although attainment in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science was higher, particularly in science. Attainment was also below the national average when comparisons are made with all other comprehensive schools in England for pupils achieving:

- five or more grades A* - C
- five or more grades A* - G and for pupils attaining
- one or more grades A* - G.

4 However, these pupils, who entered the school in September 1996, were the lowest attainers of any year group in the school. Their results in the national tests when they were 11 years old were well below the national average. When these pupils

¹ GCSE double science: this is the study of a number of aspects of science taken from chemistry, physics, biology, earth and space science that leads to an examination which, on passing, leads to the award of the equivalent of two GCSE passes. Single science is the study of these aspects of science, but at less depth and this leads to the award of one GCSE pass.

were tested on entry to Bushey Meads School, using nationally recognised tests, it was possible to make predictions about the percentage of the whole year group that would pass five or more GCSE examinations with grades between, A* - C. Twenty-three per cent were predicted to achieve such grades; therefore, the fact that 40 per cent of them attained five or more subjects with grades between A* - C represents strong teaching and considerable value being added to pupils' learning.

- 5 Attainment in English in the 2001 GCSE examinations for pupils aged 16 was in line with the national average in English Language. Attainment had been above the national average the previous year, after a period of steady improvement. Work seen during the inspection showed pupils making good progress in lessons and demonstrated that standards of writing are above the national average in Years 7 to 9 while in Years 10 and 11 standards are closer to the national average. In English, girls are still attaining higher standards than boys, but boys are closing the gap faster than is the case nationally.
- 6 In Mathematics, in the 2001 national tests at the end of Year 9, the proportion of pupils obtaining Level 5 and above was, at 85 per cent, well above the national average and also well above that for schools with a similar intake to Bushey Meads. The average points score² of pupils was above the national average. The percentage who achieved Level 6 and above was much higher than the national average, despite the fact that the school has to compete for the most able pupils with local grammar schools. It was in line with similar schools. Standards shown by the GCSE results at the end of Year 11 in 2001 were below the national average for the proportion of pupils gaining A*-C grades, but higher than and, therefore, an improvement on the previous year. The average points score was close to the national average and the value added from their results at the end of Year 9 was in line with the national picture. This means that good teaching has had a really good impact on the quality of pupils' learning, so much so that they reached grades higher than predicted for the same pupils when they were in Year 9. In mathematics lessons and the analysis of work, standards were in line with national expectations for all year groups, although they were good for the top groups in Years 10 and 11. In mathematics at the end of Year 9, boys did better than girls for the first time since the previous inspection. GCSE results show that boys' results were lower than those of girls, which is a reflection of the national trend.
- 7 Inspection findings show that attainment is above average in science throughout the school. For pupils aged 14, their national test results were well above the national average and above average for similar schools. For pupils aged 16, their GCSE results were above average. For those attaining the higher grades A*-C, results were well above average. When looking at the results of the Year 9 national tests for those pupils in Year 11 in 2001 their GCSE results were well above average. The end of Year 9 national test results, as with the outcomes in English and mathematics, show the ability profile of the pupils at school is changing, with an increasing proportion of higher ability pupils having joined the school over the past three years than prior to 1998. In science, boys perform as well as boys nationally,

² The average points score provides schools with a single statistic to compare the overall grades attained by their pupils with the grades attained by pupils in another school. At Key Stage 3 the Level attained by each pupil, for example, in mathematics, is given a score. A Level 4 = 27 points, a Level 5 = 33 points and so on. Therefore the average points score in mathematics is worked out by adding up all of the points based on the Level attained by pupils and then dividing by the number of pupils who took the test. Therefore, a school whose average points score for mathematics in the end of Key Stage 3 tests is greater than 33 is one whose pupils are performing above that expected for their age. GCSE grades are also awarded points as are A level grades and these are calculated in the way although the number of points awarded for each grade is different, for example GCSE A* is worth 8 points, grade A 7 points, grade B 6 points and so on until grade G which is worth 1 point.

but girls perform better than their peers do nationally. In science, pupils reach good standards in lessons.

- 8 In English, science, art, geography, history and music, the standards seen in lessons and in the work analysed show that pupils are attaining well compared with pupils in other schools. They were attaining average standards in mathematics, design and technology, modern foreign languages, physical education and religious education. Nowhere were standards overall felt to be below average, although in some specific GCSE courses results in 2001 are below the national average for that subject, for example, in graphic design, food technology, geography, history and religious education. Pupils from minority ethnic groups show higher attainment, on average, than their peers, but this is not significantly higher. Generally, girls performed better than boys but, again, there was not a significant difference.
- 9 In the lessons observed, pupils overall were achieving well in many subjects compared with their previous attainment and their abilities. Achievement was very good in art and good in English, mathematics, science, geography, history, physical education, modern foreign languages and religious education. Pupils achieved satisfactorily in design and technology and music. Achievement amongst boys and girls from minority ethnic groups is carefully monitored and records show that both boys and girls from these groups make better progress than boys and girls throughout the school.
- 10 The school has identified appropriate targets for pupils in 2002, both at 14 and at 16 years of age. For targets at 14 they use a range of information from their primary school, from other nationally recognised data and from end of Year 6 tests. The school makes very good use of the data it collects on pupils. For example, the results of their national tests in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 9 are used to predict pupils' GCSE grades. The school uses this information to set target GCSE grades for pupils to work towards. Pupils' attainment and achievements are tracked throughout their time at school with twice yearly checks in Years 7, 8 and 9 and checks three times each year during Years 10 and 11.
- 11 The school has planned a very good programme to ensure that pupils currently in Year 11 attain as highly as possible at GCSE. Extra classes are run after school, at weekends and will be run during the Easter holidays. Pupils' take-up for these classes is very good and, already, trial examination results are encouraging. Pupils in danger of under-performing are assigned mentors who check with them on their progress and offer support and encouragement.
- 12 The school has recently begun to develop work for more able pupils. They have started to develop a process of identification which will lead to a register of these pupils. At the moment there is a good range of opportunities for pupils who show particular gifts or talents, which run outside the normal daytime curriculum but in the normal curriculum such levels of challenge are rarely present. However, there are good examples in science, and in languages through the chance to study a second foreign language and in mathematics where the most able may take GCSE statistics.
- 13 Standards of numeracy are satisfactory overall and improving in Year 7 as the National Numeracy Strategy works its way through from the work done in primary schools. The weaknesses in place value mentioned in the previous report are still evident, though to a lesser extent as teachers focus on decimals, multiplication and division by powers of 10 and other related facts. The development of mental activities for the beginning of mathematics lessons is improving the pupils' ability to

recognise different number sequences and the speed and accuracy of mental calculation. Some pupils, particularly in the older years, use calculators indiscriminately, also a criticism in the previous report. Only one example arose from other subjects during the inspection of weaknesses in pupils' numeracy and this was managed well by the physical education teacher concerned demonstrating metric distances. Otherwise the numeracy standards of pupils were sufficient for the needs of other subjects and graphical skills of pupils were noted as good in science and geography.

- 14 Standards of literacy are average overall. Few pupils have a wide repertoire of writing skills and expression is generally simple with little variation in vocabulary and sentence structure. As pupils progress from Year 7 to Year 9 they make good progress in structuring their writing for different purposes and to suit the needs of different audiences. Reading is better developed and by the time pupils are in Years 10 and 11 they can read literary texts with a good grasp of character and motivation and the writer's intention. Some higher attainers in Year 9 demonstrate very good speaking skills in a formal situation, but generally speaking and listening are not well developed.
- 15 Pupils who are in the Physically Impaired Unit achieve well and this is, in large measure, due to the effective support provided by the learning support assistants. However, this could be even more effective if time were allowed for planning with mainstream teachers so that in the lessons where they are integrated their learning could be maximised.
- 16 Pupils with general or specific learning difficulties in mainstream classes do not make sufficient progress because of the lack of adequate individual education plans. These pupils do not have targets and their achievement cannot be measured in a way likely to support their needs. Pupils are catered for through the setting system, which does not always provide sufficiently precise learning opportunities to ensure appropriate progress and sometimes work is not sufficiently different between sets or matched to the variation of pupils' abilities within sets, especially the lower sets. Therefore, teachers' planning lacks precision and does not always enable pupils to take a full part or make sufficient progress in lessons.

Sixth form

- 17 In 2000 the students entered for two or more GCE Advanced levels averaged 16 points in comparison with a national average of 18.2. These results were better than the 14.6 points scored in 1999. Students entered for advanced vocational qualifications in 2000 scored 10.5 points, in line with the national average.
- 18 Standards have continued to rise and are now above average in the majority of subjects. In 2001, students attained above average results in art and design, business education, human biology, English, French, design and technology, geography, history, information technology and leisure and tourism. In these subjects the number of higher grades attained are at least in line with national average. There is no significant difference between the overall attainment of boys and girls in the sixth form. The differences in results between subjects and the number of higher grades attained are due mainly to the different ability levels of students on entry to the courses.
- 19 There is open access to the sixth form, so not all students who are in the sixth form attained highly in their GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11. Overall, the attainment of students on entry to the sixth form is below average based on their GCSE points score. The majority of students, including those with special

educational needs, achieved well in their time in the sixth form in 2001. Analysis of their results compared with their predicted performance, forecast from their GCSE points score, shows the majority of students did better than expected. Almost all students complete their courses. In 2001, 5 per cent of students entering the sixth form did not continued with their course and found employment. A high percentage of students progress to higher education.

- 20 In 2000, 68 per cent of students continued with their studies. The teaching of key skills, numeracy, communication and information and communication technology, has been introduced in Year 12 this year. It is too early for results to be available, but students were making good progress in the three lessons seen during the inspection.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

- 21 At the time of the last inspection, pupils' attitudes to school were satisfactory and this continues to be the case. The behaviour in classrooms and around the school is now good and although there is a small amount of unsatisfactory behaviour around the school, the overall position is good as it was during the previous inspection. Attendance has remained broadly the same as at the time of the previous inspection and is in line with national averages.
- 22 Most of the pupils have a satisfactory attitude to their work and there are no significant differences between boys and girls. Many also enjoy taking part in the wide range of activities that take place outside lessons and they attend clubs regularly. During lessons, most of the pupils are keen to learn and they listen carefully to what their teacher is saying. The attitudes of a small but persistent minority of pupils, however, are unsatisfactory. These pupils represent a cross section of the school population and no particular ethnic, gender or year group predominates. Although their teachers usually manage them well, they are slow to settle down to work and are easily distracted. They are reluctant to listen and frequently interrupt their classmates and their teacher when they are talking. Their more motivated and co-operative classmates ignore this disruptive minority and get on with their work.
- 23 When in large groups, such as assemblies and in the dining room, pupils behave well. They listen attentively and respect rules. Pupils' behaviour around the school, however, is more variable. The school is one of the most overcrowded in the country and the buildings sustain considerable wear and tear. Whenever possible, pupils are encouraged to stay outside at lunchtime, but they can come in if they want to use the library or attend the extra-curricular clubs. Many of the pupils who stay outside congregate in groups and chat while others wander around or play ball games. There is a problem with large amounts of litter being dropped, but maintenance staff quickly and effectively deal with this.
- 24 There are long-running problems with the way in which a few pupils abuse the toilets and, during the inspection, the girls' toilets especially were left in a poor state. The school is trying to remedy this situation but, as yet, has not found a way to encourage these pupils to modify their behaviour and take more pride in themselves and their school. Pupils and parents indicate that bullying does occur and the school deals with such behaviour in a number of ways. The school's procedures are usually effective.
- 25 During the year preceding the inspection, governors revised the exclusion criteria in order to deliver a 'short, sharp shock' to the small number of pupils who repeatedly

misbehave. This led to a temporary doubling of the number of fixed term and permanent exclusions. The school has since reverted to the original criteria and the number has gone back down to the national average.

- 26 Pupils' personal development is good. There are a range of ways in which pupils help during the school day and pupils relish the opportunity to assume responsibility. For example, they volunteer to work in the library at lunchtime, and also take part in the School Parliament. Each year group elects their six 'Members of Parliament', and during discussions, pupils indicate that they thoroughly enjoy having this 'voice' in the running of the school. The members duly elect a Speaker and meet regularly in order to discuss issues such as the content and range of school lunches, amendments to the school uniform and the piloting of 'Trust Cards' for Year 11 pupils. Pupils enjoy using their initiative. For example, led by the sixth form pupils, pupils organise and rehearse the Christmas entertainment and pupils have recently competed successfully in a mock trial competition at the Old Bailey.
- 27 Relationships between pupils and between pupils and their teachers are good. Pupils of all races show respect for one another and usually listen carefully when they talk about their different values and beliefs. Pupils who have physical difficulties are very well integrated into school life and are given the respect and consideration they deserve.
- 28 The behaviour of pupils with special educational needs, including those with physical impairment, is very good. They relate very well to adults and other pupils and in many classes and around the school they are supported effectively by their peers. Many respond with understanding and consideration when other pupils have any special difficulty in class. The effective integration of pupils with physical impairment has a significant impact on the social development of their peers and enables pupils to become more sensitive and considerate to the needs of others. Where pupils have challenging behaviour two learning support assistants have been allocated to provide general classroom support. However, currently they have not been given sufficient training and guidance to know when to intervene in the lesson or to be confident in their role. Where pupils feel isolated or disaffected the 'Big Brother Club' at lunch time, established by the special educational needs co-ordinator and the deputy, provides very good opportunities for pupils to work and play together and develop co-operative skills enabling some to begin to form friendships. Attendance is satisfactory and the number of unauthorised absences is very similar to the national average.

Sixth form

- 29 Sixth form students have good attitudes to their work and to school. They are motivated individuals and this is reflected in the fact that three-quarters of the pupils in Year 11 stay on for the sixth form. During lessons and other times during the school day, they behave sensibly and are polite and helpful towards visitors. This positive approach helps them to make good academic progress and is seen in the above average standard of their work.
- 30 Most of the students are conscientious, mature and articulate. They say they are enjoying their final two years at school and the majority will be ready for either the world of work or the next stage in their education by the time they leave. Seven out of eight are pleased that teachers make themselves freely available to help with work and would recommend the sixth form to a friend. Students are co-operative and relationships with each other and with members of staff are very good.

- 31 Students' personal development is good. They are confident and can be relied upon to get on with their work both at home and at school. Through coursework, they become increasingly accustomed to working independently and they cope well with the additional demands that are placed upon them. Students enjoy taking on responsibilities and make a valuable contribution to the welfare of others around the school and in the local area. For example, as part of their community service, students help during open evenings or help younger pupils such as Year 7 pupils with their reading. They also work in local primary schools and help to organise Christmas school entertainment and boxes for senior citizens.
- 32 Attendance is satisfactory overall. As long as students sign in and out when entering or leaving the school, they can come and go as they wish. Spot checks are undertaken in order to ensure that health and safety requirements are met.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

- 33 Teaching in the school has improved considerably since the time of the previous report and is now generally good with some very good and excellent teaching. Improvement has come about through two consistent strategies employed in the school. The first is a systematic approach to monitoring and evaluating teaching by the head, senior management team and heads of department, which, through clear feedback to teachers and good follow-up systems is raising teachers' thinking and planning about improved ways of teaching. The second is through the creation of "professional learning teams" who have worked on aspects of teaching and learning and provided helpful guidance to all staff. One team is currently developing a series of papers containing helpful hints for teachers about effective learning for pupils with a view to developing a teaching and learning policy.
- 34 The quality of teaching observed during the inspection was good overall. It was satisfactory or better in well over nine-tenths of lessons in the main school, good or better in almost three-quarters and very good or excellent in over one quarter of lessons. There were only seven lessons altogether (close to 5 per cent) where teaching was less than satisfactory. There was very little difference in the overall percentage of satisfactory teaching between year groups, although there was more good and very good teaching for pupils aged 14 to 16. This good teaching ensured that pupils' learning too was good overall in between two-thirds and three-quarters of all lessons seen.
- 35 One of the clear reasons for good learning is the quality of relationships that exist between teachers and pupils which leads directly to good attitudes on the part of many pupils. In a Year 10 geography lesson, pupils listened courteously to the teacher and to each other. No adverse reaction was shown when some pupils gave incorrect answers and this enabled the teacher to correct misapprehensions quickly, sensitively and to the benefit of all. In a Year 10 music lesson, the deliberate strategy of seating pupils in a circle for one exercise ensured that pupils began to understand how individual parts in music fit together to form the whole. Good teaching also featured good ways of promoting good behaviour. In one well-paced Year 8 English lesson, the teacher used drama management techniques, such as "freeze", to manage the transition from one activity to another. Where teachers are less in control of groups, the attitudes and behaviour of a minority of pupils spoil otherwise good lessons and sometimes prevent others from learning.
- 36 Teachers show good knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach and this leads to their being able to answer pupils' questions effectively and to

demonstrate clearly the skills and competencies they seek to instil in pupils. In a dance lesson with a Year 10 class, the teacher led the aerobics warm up with good subject expertise, which clearly focused the learning of the pupils. In a Year 9 music lesson, the teacher used personal knowledge of the instruments being used to describe and focus the listening task to be undertaken by pupils. In a Year 11 Spanish lesson, the teacher used Spanish consistently and sensibly which encouraged pupils to ask questions in Spanish. Teachers also use their good subject knowledge to ask probing questions which move pupils' learning forward well, as in a religious education lesson where the teacher's knowledge and understanding helped pupils to understand and relate to issues of free will.

- 37 Teachers plan effectively so that lessons are well structured, leaving time for pupils to reflect on what they have learned. In an information and communication technology lesson, they were enabled to use their notebooks for the final five minutes to record what they had learned and to think about the mistakes they had made. Good planning enabled a newly qualified teacher to provide a series of activities which kept Year 9 pupils attentive and motivated and eager to contribute and repeat words and phrases in French. In a Year 10 netball lesson, a series of very well planned activities helped to develop shooting skills with pupils being thoroughly involved in all aspects of the lesson. In one well planned and well managed English lesson with a lower ability Year 7 set there was a good range of activities which ensured that pupils remained on-task throughout. Learning assistants in the lesson monitored the work pupils were doing and the progress they made and pupils received feedback on their progress.
- 38 Where pupils with a physical impairment are integrated into mainstream lessons, they receive excellent support from learning support assistants which makes sure the pupils can successfully get on with their work. Assistants use different strategies such as writing for pupils who gave them the response to questions orally. Teachers generally include these pupils well, although they are sometimes excluded from some activities such as paired work with other pupils. The very few pupils whose command of the English language is at the early stages of development are often supported by specialist staff who help pupils learn effectively during the lessons. The majority of pupils whose English is an additional language cope with the requirements of the classroom very well. They contribute fully to lessons, such as a Year 7 geography lesson where a boy of Asian origin successfully explained the impact of a high birth and death rate on population, which was listened to carefully by the whole class.
- 39 Teachers work very effectively to ensure that all pupils have equal access to learning. They work carefully with support assistants to give pupils with physical impairment the best possible access to the full range of learning experiences. As a result, these pupils are fully integrated into lessons and teachers take pains to include their contributions whatever issues are discussed. In one Year 10 English lesson a girl who uses a wheelchair made a strong contribution to a discussion about social responsibility and her comments had a clear effect on other pupils' thinking. Teachers are aware of the differences in the way boys and girls learn and offer approaches which appeal to different learning styles. In a Year 10 design and technology group, for example, the one girl in the class was fully integrated in all the activities.
- 40 The quality of teaching of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory overall, but ranges from unsatisfactory to very good. Where it is unsatisfactory there is a lack of clarity in what pupils are expected to learn and the very high focus on supporting pupils with physical impairment often results in a lack of clear support for

pupils with learning difficulties. Where teaching is very good, teachers share information with the learning support staff prior to the start of the lessons. Support assistants are then able to show their high level of skills in providing very effective support in keeping pupils interested and actively involved in their tasks. When this happens, pupils make good progress. Learning support assistants show sensitivity when dealing with children with physical impairment. They are considerate, supportive and encourage good attitudes towards learning amongst all the pupils. There is particularly good teaching in information and communication technology with very good links between the learning support staff and subject teachers. In this situation, staff work together co-operatively and plan and prepare work setting clear objectives that pupils understand. Teachers have high expectations and provide appropriate challenges and target questions effectively to ensure all pupils take part in their lessons. This enables pupils of all abilities, including those with significant physical and intellectual needs, to make very good progress.

- 41 Where pupils are withdrawn for individual and small group-work this is also well planned and appropriately focused. Some learning support teachers write individual education plans with clear and detailed targets, but these are not shared with other teachers so it is not possible to monitor the progress of pupils effectively as they move through the school.
- 42 There is a suitable focus on developing students' literacy and numeracy skills in Year 7 with targeted work in small groups in both these areas. In these groups the quality of teaching and learning is good and often very good. In the literacy groups, staff use the national literacy strategy effectively and use texts and tasks closely matched to pupils' needs. In the mathematics groups the very effective teaching methods and the work planned for pupils ensure that they make maximum progress. However, there are insufficient links between the support teachers and members of the mathematics and English departments to ensure that learning is effective.
- 43 The teachers' own energy and interest were also significant factors in encouraging good learning in pupils. In a middle ability Year 7 English group, pupils initially responded slowly to an exercise about finding synonyms but were won over by the lively and enthusiastic approach of the teacher during this "starter" activity. By the time the main part of the lesson began, pupils were eager to participate fully.
- 44 The quality of teaching of the Key Stage 3 Literacy Strategy is good overall. Teachers are beginning to adapt the structure of their lessons, using starter activities to generate a brisk pace. In the best lessons, teachers give pupils clear information about what they are going to do and what they are going to learn. They refer back to these objectives frequently to ensure that pupils are aware of exactly how far they have progressed. The teaching of pupils in the Year 7 progress units is making some progress in improving the literacy skills of some lower attaining pupils. Support for literacy using the computer-based individual learning system is more successful because pupils are more fully engaged throughout the short sessions. Across other curriculum subjects there is good support for literacy. In history and design and technology, pupils are given good support to structure their writing and the increased pace of learning using individual white boards is now available within history. In geography, music and information and communication technology there has been an increased emphasis on developing appropriate vocabulary. In a Year 9 history lesson, the teacher provided good guidance on literacy to make the tasks accessible for all pupils while still providing challenge. In a lower ability Year 9 science lesson, the very effective emphasis on naming and writing about the functions of body organs not only improved pupils' literacy but also ensured that all pupils were involved and their contributions during group work meant that they

gained maximum benefit. A word bank enabled pupils in a Year 7 geography lesson to create simple definitions for terms they were using.

- 45 Number skills are taught well by mathematics teachers. Mental maths 'starters' to lessons are improving the speed and accuracy of mental calculations and the recognition of different sequences of numbers. There is regular practice of written methods of calculation. Pupils are also shown alternative ways of working out number problems, for example of long division tasks. This ensures that all pupils know at least one method of calculation and those who know several methods show that they fully understand the task. Teachers also value pupils' own methods of mental calculation, but only if they produce accurate results and can explain how they worked out a particular problem. During the inspection, examples were noted of the use of numeracy in a range of lessons. A Year 9 science group was seen using numeracy skills to change mass in kilograms to Newtons. The use of timetable information in a French lesson reinforced basic ideas of time-telling.
- 46 The use of information and communication technology was seen in a range of subjects. Good use was observed in a Year 7 English class and also in a Year 7 science lesson where a multi-media programme was used to successfully extend and deepen pupils' understanding of crude oil and its components.
- 47 There were a few lessons where teaching was less than satisfactory. This was due either to the teacher's lack of subject knowledge leading to a situation where pupils were uncertain or unchallenged or, although the teacher tried hard to discipline pupils, a significant proportion of the pupils' behaviour was unsatisfactory and prevented any form of effective learning occurring. In one instance, the specialist teacher's insistence on a specific way of learning allowed no flexibility to cater for pupils' different abilities in the class. Therefore, despite their initial enthusiasm, pupils rapidly lost interest and their behaviour deteriorated. Sometimes, work set was well below pupils' capabilities so that little progress was made and in one instance work was being repeated and rather than containing examples and ideas to consolidate learning, the repetition simply bored the pupils. However, even in these unsatisfactory lessons, there were elements of teaching which were satisfactory.

Sixth form

- 48 The quality of teaching in the sixth form is consistently good, with very good teaching being a feature of many lessons in most subjects. Subject knowledge is strong and depending on the subject, teachers are able to explain, demonstrate and show students how the tasks, problems, issues and activities they are working on can be solved. Teachers frequently draw on a depth of knowledge, which allows them to make comparisons with students' previous work or about everyday things so that understanding is clear at an early stage. In a physics lesson in which quantum theory was being applied to refraction, the teacher used an example of a person on a beach rescuing a drowning man to promote interest and understanding. In history, for example, students were asked to use their own experiences about any issues they found unfair and then developed their thinking into the core of the lesson about black activist groups in the American civil rights movement. Students are guided and encouraged to do research for themselves increasingly and therefore on occasions, such as in human biology, students prepare a topic which they then teach to their peers. Such work helps to increase the confidence of students. In art, for example, they use sketchbooks which reveal a richness in their research and experimentation that is transferred into final projects and shows very good development of ideas and a good understanding of design and composition.

- 49 Teachers are enthusiastic. They have high expectations and are keen for students to succeed. Lesson planning is consistently good and in some subjects it is excellent. In many lessons, for example in mathematics, human biology, business studies, art, history, psychology and English, teachers have thought about ways to get students thinking deeply about issues. Teachers frequently ask probing questions which helps to ensure that teachers take students progressively deeper into the work in, for example, English with the analysis of the differences in the language used to create different moods at different stages in key parts of *Othello*. In science, history and psychology, students are sensitive to moral and social issues, for example, reflecting on such topics as genetic counselling, conservation or a consequence of receiving vivid descriptions of Bloody Sunday in Russia in 1905 from an onlooker's viewpoint.
- 50 Relationships between teachers and students are extremely good and, therefore, students' confidence grows and both parties have respect for each other. This is particularly evident in the way in which students and teachers talk. It is also a feature of the good quality monitoring of students' work. For example, work is marked frequently, and most importantly students are given guidance on ways to improve the quality of their work. In some subjects this takes the form of informal tutorials which allow students and teachers to talk individually with each other about the subject, their progress and concerns. In another, assignments are first handed to teachers in draft so students can identify areas of uncertainty and the teacher may suggest ways in which improvements can occur. Once again this is a technique which helps students gain in confidence as well as improve the quality of their work.

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

- 51 The quality and range of the curriculum are good in all year groups and this means that pupils successfully build on their learning from the time they enter the school in Year 7 through to Year 11. The school has successfully corrected the small number of deficiencies in the curriculum identified at the time of the last inspection. The curriculum now provided for all pupils is more varied and richer because of the curriculum developments in information and communication technology, mathematics, science, design and technology, which have resulted from the schools' designation as a Technology College. It is further supported by very good careers education and guidance and through the wide range of extra curricular activities available to all pupils.
- 52 All subjects of the National Curriculum, including religious education, are taught to pupils in Years 7 to 9. This provides all pupils with an appropriate curriculum in which their learning is supported by the provision of information and communication technology lessons that provide the basic computing skills needed to support learning in all subjects. However, not enough time is available for teaching all of the necessary planned activities in Year 7.
- 53 Within a number of other subjects there are situations that prevent the full curriculum for that subject being taught. For example, in modern foreign languages there is good planned provision for the most able pupils to study two languages from Year 7 but insufficient time is provided for teachers to fully teach the subject to the depth required. In mathematics, access to an individual computer programme to help pupils learn at their own pace is not available to all Year 7 students with the result that some pupils do not progress sufficiently in mathematics. In music too few

opportunities are available for pupils to use information and communication technology to create, refine and store sounds because the full range of keyboard equipment is not available or music composing programmes used.

- 54 The curriculum provides pupils in Years 10 and 11 with courses that match their aptitude and interest. The majority of pupils study nine GCSE subjects including double science and a modern foreign language. A statistics course is provided to support the development of the most able mathematics pupils. There has been good development of vocational courses to ensure that the curriculum matches the needs, interests and ability of every pupil. Vocational leisure and tourism and art and design courses have been introduced together with an information technology course and these developments have widened the choices available for pupils at the end of Year 9. Good provision is made for pupils for whom the full curriculum is not suitable with modified courses in place in subjects such as modern foreign languages leading to the award of a Certificate of Achievement³. The school has developed a programme of work placements and school courses for a small number of pupils who are unable to cope with full time school attendance and this appears to be effective in supporting both their learning and personal development. Religious education provides an appropriate and well planned course for all pupils who are not doing the GCSE course in religious education, but it does not allow pupils to enter for the short course GCSE examination and so misses an opportunity for pupils attainment to be measured and rewarded.
- 55 The school makes good provision for teaching literacy and has effective ways of teaching it in place. Provision for teaching numeracy is satisfactory. The National Numeracy strategy is being introduced this year and is already improving standards in the mathematics department. A whole staff training day on Numeracy is planned for April 2002, after which discussion in all subject areas will lead to a numeracy audit and a Numeracy Across the Curriculum policy.
- 56 There is a special needs policy but this has not yet been reviewed in order to bring it in line with the new national Code of Practice⁴. The special educational needs co-ordinator is fully aware of the new Code of Practice and is able to inform staff about it, but there is likely to be no change made to the current system until September 2002.
- 57 The school provides access to all parts of the curriculum for all pupils. Equality of opportunity is a feature of the school, but ways of promoting it are not always sufficiently documented in subject planning documents. Both pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language are fully included in all learning activities. However, pupils with special educational needs are likely to make greater progress if teachers were made aware of the individual learning targets of these pupils. There is insufficient focus on the learning needs of the most able pupils in subject curriculum documents and this results in many lessons having too few learning activities that fully develop the learning of this group of pupils.
- 58 There is a good well planned programme of personal, social and health education which successfully builds on pupils' knowledge and experiences as they move from

³ [This is a nationally accredited course and examination for students who are generally lower attainers.](#)

⁴ Code of Practice – this gives practical advice to schools and local education authorities about their responsibilities, duties and tasks to ensure that pupils who have special educational needs receive the most appropriate help and support to further their learning and personal development. This is a statutory duty under the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001.

Year 7 through to Year 11. It includes appropriate provision for sex and health education and drugs awareness with strong support from the local medical services. Teachers have been well trained to teach the course and this has raised the status and relevance of the activities within the curriculum as a whole. The course provides well for the development of a range of inter-personal skills. During Years 10 and 11 pupils are well prepared for their future through lessons that focus on 'the world of work' and 'money management'.

- 59 The programme of careers education is very good because of the quality of its planning and organisation by the careers co-ordinator. The careers education programme, which starts in Year 7, is designed to prepare pupils for adult life by encouraging a positive attitude to both further education and employment. Local organisations support the development and delivery of the curriculum and innovative simulations such as 'The Real Game' together with team building activities and interview practice are used to interest and involve pupils in the lesson activities. The careers service provides appropriate, planned support for pupils who have been targeted for additional advice and this supports pupils with special educational needs. A careers advice surgery is provided and ensures that all pupils have rapid access to up to date careers advice during Year 11.
- 60 The provision for extra-curricular activities is very good and pupils' personal development is well supported through the wide range of activities that are available. Many subject areas provide good support activities that aid and develop pupils' learning. Subjects such as mathematics, information and communication technology and art provide facilities for pupils to prepare effectively for examinations and the homework and breakfast clubs give very good support for pupils working on homework tasks. These activities have a positive impact on pupils' levels of subject understanding. There is a wide and varied programme of sporting activities that promote team and individual performance and the very good provision is positively supported by large numbers of pupils who participate in weekend fixtures. The range of activities provided in the lunch breaks and after school includes a computer club, keyboard practice and a variety of games. Exchange visits and international links as part of the European Union *Comenius* project promote both language development and support pupils' understanding of different cultures. The range of music and drama activities enhances pupils' cultural development through participation in school performances. Teachers give generously of their time to support activities both within and after the school day.
- 61 The school has developed useful links with the business community and these successfully support the development and teaching of the curriculum in the personal, social and health education programme and in the teaching of careers education. However, few subjects make direct use of representatives from local business in the development of learning activities within individual subjects. The school's Student Parliament has received strong support from the two Members of Parliament serving the local community and the debates that occur provides a well-planned forum for pupils to air their views. The governors' curriculum committee supports the development and changes in the curriculum and is clearly aware of its statutory responsibilities. There is good monitoring of curriculum provision, but individual governors are not attached to individual subjects and are, therefore, not able to bring first hand knowledge to committee discussions.
- 62 The school has well-developed links with partner schools, designed to ease the transfer to the school for new pupils. A summer school is provided for primary pupils and this together with a mathematics master class is providing good learning support for primary pupils in the local area around the school. A technology day has

aided local primary schools in the teaching of the subject. Further curriculum support is planned as a part of the school's Technology College development and this will further support curriculum development in partner schools.

- 63 Overall, the school's provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. As reported in the previous inspection, the school places a strong emphasis on its aim of promoting the personal development of all pupils. In terms of social and cultural development it has been particularly successful, but it has not moved forward on spiritual development.
- 64 The provision for pupils' spiritual development was identified as an area for improvement in the last inspection and remains unsatisfactory. Some subjects encourage pupils to explore their feelings and values such as in English, drama and music. Year 7 science pupils expressed excitement about the enormity of the Big Bang Theory, while Year 9 pupils were fascinated by Kenya's landscape. However, only music, religious education and physical education have identified opportunities to promote a spiritual dimension in their policies and teaching plans. Elsewhere, it is not planned for or taught.
- 65 Religious education encourages pupils to make links between spiritual and moral issues, such as discussing medical ethics. More time is provided for the subject in Years 10 and 11 compared with previously. There is now more student involvement in assemblies that are held weekly for each year group. The school takes their organisation seriously and pupils play an important role in reinforcing moral and social values. However, the assemblies do not provide any time for pupils to worship or reflect on any of the messages conveyed or images developed in the assembly. When pupils meet in their tutor groups on other days, there is no time for reflection or a *Thought for the Day*. There are some well-planned and relevant activities on moral issues provided by heads of year, but there is considerable variation in the quality of presentation and opportunities for prayer and reflection. Consequently, the school fails to meet the requirement to provide all its pupils with a daily act of collective worship.
- 66 The provision the school makes for pupils' moral development is satisfactory. New pupils to the school generally feel safe. There are clear policies on anti-bullying, including racial and sexual harassment and on child protection, substance abuse and sex education. Physically impaired pupils are usually very well cared for by other pupils. Moral issues are raised in a number of subjects such as drama, music and geography. English explores the issue of hypocrisy through J.B. Priestley's play, *An Inspector Calls*. History encourages pupils to discuss many moral issues such as slavery and the Holocaust in Year 9. Religious education promotes tolerance and an awareness of faiths other than Christianity. However, in other subjects, there is no clear planning for teaching to allow for the promotion of moral development. Although the attitude and behaviour of most pupils in lessons is good, a number of pupils are not always sufficiently aware of the effect of their behaviour on others.
- 67 The school makes good provision for pupils' social development. There is a wide range of activities both within and outside the school in which pupils can broaden their social experiences and work together. There is an annual residential activity week for Year 7 pupils, a Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme and opportunities to attend clubs and fund raise. The wide provision of sporting activities enables pupils to participate and achieve success on an individual and team basis. The annual Christmas talent show and the Variety Evening of drama, dance and music both involve a wide range of pupils in planning, organising and presenting their own acts.

Physically impaired pupils are very well integrated socially, participating in corporate decision making in the effective Student Parliament and playing wheelchair football. Pupils' achievement is celebrated well in assemblies and through a well-planned system of commendations, merits and certificates, such as the *Student of the Month* award in science and excellent displays of pupils' work in history and geography.

- 68 The school's development of pupils' cultural awareness is very good. The rich provision of activities for pupils of all ages and abilities makes them very aware of their own cultural traditions and those of other nationalities. Pupils' knowledge of the arts have been heightened by theatre trips to the West End and authors and artists visiting the school and regular concerts and drama productions. Geography and history provide many fieldwork trips. Pupils have good opportunities to travel abroad through the residential trips to France, Spain, Canada and the USA, as well as the business studies trip to Eurodisney. The *Comenius* project has promoted strong links with schools in Germany, France and Italy for pupils with a strong architectural interest. Subjects have also promoted a strong awareness in pupils of the cultural traditions of other peoples. Music has encouraged steel bands and an understanding of aboriginal, Chinese and African music. Aboriginal, Russian and Black art are featured in the art syllabus, while design and technology look at oriental dress and food. Year 10 pupils were fully engaged in looking at racial issues in sport in a physical education lesson.

Sixth form

- 69 The sixth form curriculum offers a wide choice of academic and vocational course at all levels. All courses are studied on the school site. It caters very well for the needs of all and students are consulted on the courses they would like to see provided. New vocational courses and other advanced subjects have recently been established to meet the rising numbers and students' aspirations. Psychology, law and information and communication technology have proved very popular. About 70 per cent of students in Year 11 choose to transfer into the sixth form and around 40 students each year come from other schools. Students are able to follow a combination of courses of their choice. This includes studying both vocational and academic courses. The school is responsive to the individual circumstances of students by tailoring programmes to meet their needs.
- 70 The school has broadened the number of courses offered by extending the school day into twilight time for the sixth form. This has allowed the school to enrol more students, but the later times of these courses are not popular. Students do not enjoy waiting for their classes until after the main school has closed and leaving school at a later time than all other students.
- 71 Careers education for sixth formers is good overall. A series of 12 lessons is provided in Year 12 and the careers teacher is regularly available for individual appointments.
- 72 As at the time of the last inspection, the school does not meet statutory requirements with regard to the provision of religious education for all students in the sixth form. There are plans to provide a day per term for all students, but this has not yet happened. However, these days are compulsory only for students in Year 12 and are optional for Year 13 students. Therefore, all students do not have access to the required curriculum because time allocated for religious education in the sixth form is inadequate and in addition, students' spiritual development is poor. The school sees this as an area for development.

- 73 The three areas of key skills are taught in the sixth form and are compulsory for foundation and intermediate GNVQ students. Students on other courses are encouraged to attend these lessons. Detailed planning and training for teachers has led to very successful initial provision. There is no supervised private study and students are allowed to leave the school when not in lessons. Personal and social education is provided for in the weekly tutorial sessions, but further opportunities for enrichment at both subject and whole sixth form levels are limited. Sixth form students have opportunities for responsibility by acting as mentors for younger pupils, doing community service and helping teachers in information and communication technology and mathematics. Sixth form students studying business are provided with good opportunities to visit firms and to have the benefit of employers coming into school.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

- 74 Overall, provision for pupils' welfare is good. It is underpinned by an effective pastoral system that provides pupils with good educational and personal support and guidance. Pupils are well looked after during the school day and this helps to ensure that they feel able to work hard and to do their best. Child protection procedures are good and statutory requirements are met. Routine health and safety procedures are in place.
- 75 Heads of year successfully combine the monitoring of pupils' academic achievements with their wider role of support and guidance. They liaise closely with each other and with their individual form tutors. Their roles are very closely linked to the work of the deputy headteachers who oversee several important aspects of pupils' welfare. Year teams remain constant throughout pupils' time at school and this continuity helps to ensure that tutors and heads of year get to know their pupils well. During discussions with pupils they said that they feel well supported by the school. Relationships between pupils and members of staff are good and this helps to ensure that any emerging problems are identified and addressed at an early stage. Form tutors closely monitor pupils' attendance, punctuality and their student diaries. As well as encouraging a basic work ethic, this also helps to keep tutors in touch with any individual problems the pupils may have. Pupils with particular personal or academic problems are very well supported. The school nurse has recently introduced 'drop-in' counselling sessions and initial indications are that they are proving to be a success. There are good links with those primary schools whose pupils transfer to Bushey Meads school and Year 7 pupils say that they feel safe and happy.
- 76 The monitoring of pupils' personal development is good. Members of staff work well as a team and heads of year maintain an overview of each pupil as they move through the school. At regular intervals throughout their time at school, pupils have personal reviews with their tutors and receive detailed assessments every six to eight weeks. Pupils and their parents use these to reflect upon their personal strengths and weaknesses and on the academic progress that they have made over the intervening period. Pupils then decide upon a set of personal and academic targets. This reflection helps them to have a very good understanding of how they are getting on with their work and what it is that they have to do in order to improve.
- 77 Procedures for promoting behaviour are good. Members of staff provide good examples of how to behave and the majority of pupils have a clear idea of what is, and what is not, acceptable. A minority of pupils, however, lack motivation. Although they may become noisy and disruptive during lessons, the teachers usually

manage their behaviour well. Should pupils behave inappropriately or be late to class they may be placed on report or given a detention. This system of sanctions is very flexible and can be adapted to suit the individual misdemeanour. Procedures to support pupils who are at risk of exclusion are very good. Links with outside agencies are close and pupils who need help may be referred to the student officer or counsellor. They may also attend regular exclusion surgeries with the headteacher or be offered extended work experience. Although pupils indicate that there is some bullying, they also say that there are effective procedures for dealing with it. The school has trained two anti-bullying co-ordinators and, when appropriate, they employ a 'no blame' approach when counselling the bully and their victim. Pupils can also use the Student Watch Box or post concerns about bullying or racism through the school web site.

- 78 Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are good. Teachers register pupils at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions using an electronic registration system and through a traditional class register at the start of each lesson. This ensures that the school is able to monitor individual attendance very closely. The effectiveness of these procedures is reflected in a level of attendance that is very similar to the national average. The education welfare officer visits each fortnight and works closely with the heads of year, the student officer and the attendance manager.
- 79 The provision for special educational needs across the school is unsatisfactory overall. Pupils are placed in ability groups from Year 7, but the work set in most subjects is not sufficiently matched to pupils' specific needs. The special educational needs co-ordinator provides a brief pen picture of each of the pupils with a Statement of Special Educational Need; however, teachers have not been given individual education plans to ensure that they plan work to meet individual targets. Also, the pen portraits are referred to as 'statements' by staff, which often confuses subject teachers about the level of need of individual pupils.
- 80 There is good initial screening of pupils considered to have learning difficulties. Staff use a range of different methods including scrutiny of national assessment tests, information from primary schools, reading and spelling tests and mathematics assessments. However, once assessed, regardless of the level of need, the majority of pupils are placed on the initial stage of the Code of Practice. Therefore insufficient attention is given to identifying the pupil's current strengths and weaknesses or in setting clear and detailed targets on which to focus.
- 81 Individual education plans are in place for all pupils as required by the new national Code of Practice; however, they vary considerably in style, content and quality. Many lack suitable targets to enable pupils to make maximum progress and for some pupils targets set do not match their particular needs. For example, pupils with high-level literacy skills are set low-level literacy targets and some individual education plans do not contain any targets. Where targets are in place these are not shared with subject teachers and consequently work is not set to ensure that pupils are challenged appropriately. Teachers generally have limited information about pupil targets and needs and the 'pen portraits' provided by the learning support department contain little useful information. Teachers have no information about other pupils on different stages of the special educational needs Code of Practice and, therefore, little information on which to base any changes to the curriculum.
- 82 The procedures for the assessment and the monitoring of pupil's standards of work are good. The school's policy for assessment and recording places responsibility for

monitoring procedures with the individual subject departments. The school analyses the National Curriculum assessments of pupils entering Year 7 in order to provide a starting point of attainment from which to calculate achievement in later years. This information, together with the results of a test given to Year 7 pupils when they start secondary school, is given to departments in order to inform their planning and teaching, as well as being used to organise individual subject sets. A comprehensive analysis of Year 9 end of year assessments together with predicted GCSE performance is passed to departments and Year 10 tutors. Teachers use this information when they monitor pupils as they progress through Years 10 and 11. In Year 11 all pupils are carefully monitored to ensure that they reach their potential.

- 83 Pupils' progress in subjects is monitored closely and parents are updated regularly on their children's progress. Each term a personal assessment record is given to parents, which contains performance grades for each subject measured in relation to National Curriculum and GCSE criteria together with teachers' and pupils' comments. Parents use this to record their comments and from this individual pupil targets are set.
- 84 Assessment practice varies from department to department, with many making good use of the school's data to set targets and monitor progress. In Years 10 and 11 GCSE and vocational subjects, assessment schemes are used to great effect to inform pupils of their progress and for them to set goals. Good target setting for improvement, linked to National Curriculum levels, is used in most departments for pupils in Years 7 to 9. However, marking in these years is variable across and within departments. Systems for assessment are good, however the school should consider improving the consistency of approach to assessment by drawing on the best ideas in the school.

Sixth form

- 85 Assessment of students' work and tracking their progress is mostly good. Students' prior attainment is used as a benchmark for measuring progress through out their course. A personal assessment diary is used to record students' attainment at regular intervals. All subject tutors complete the assessment for their students and set targets for improvements. These diaries are shared with both students and parents. This system is monitored by the head of sixth form, but, a consistent approach to recording and setting of challenging targets is not yet rigorously carried out by all tutors.
- 86 A feature of most of the teaching is to talk and pose probing questions to draw out students' knowledge and understanding of their subject. In English and human biology, for example, such approaches lead to teachers giving students good ideas and advice on how to improve. In other subjects, teachers make a point of seeing students individually to talk about their progress and jointly set targets to help students improve. The use of targets is a feature, for example, in physics, business studies and history. Elsewhere, good support and advice help to ensure that students know what they should be doing to improve the quality of their work, for example in the travel and tourism course. It is only in some subjects that information arising from assessment, which includes previous examination or test results, is not used to help teachers plan their lessons. In other subjects, such as information and communication technology, psychology and business studies, the outcomes of assessments are monitored carefully and used to provide additional guidance to students. Overall, the assessment and guidance given to students is helpful and leads to students making sound, but most often good, progress. Staff follow subject

syllabus based assessment systems well and a number of departments have had verification of good marking procedures from external course moderators.

- 87 Sixth form students receive good educational and personal guidance and support. Most of the students who completed the pre-inspection questionnaire agree that the range of courses suits their talents and career aspirations well. Attendance is satisfactory and students who arrive or leave during the school day all sign in and out. This ensures that, in the event of an emergency, the school is able to identify exactly who should be present. Other procedures for ensuring students' health and safety are good.
- 88 Teamwork within the sixth form is very good and this has a significant impact upon the effectiveness of the personal support and guidance provided. Individual tutors are responsible for students' well being, as well as maintaining an overview of their academic progress. Students who are at risk of underachieving are picked up by referral or by the regular and thorough monitoring of their academic records. Twice a year, students and their teachers jointly review the standard of their work and the progress they have made. These procedures ensure that students receive very good advice and guidance in relation to their studies. Their active involvement also ensures that students have a very good idea of how well they are doing and whether or not they are likely to match their target grades. Only students leaving in Year 12 complete a Record of Achievement.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

- 89 This school places great emphasis on working closely with parents and views a close partnership between home and school as being absolutely fundamental to its work. Links with parents are indeed very effective. The overwhelming majority of parents provide their children with good support and 83 per cent of the pupils are represented at consultation evenings. Parents ensure that their children attend regularly and their help and encouragement helps to ensure that their children want to work hard and achieve their best.
- 90 This school enjoys a very good reputation within the local area and it is always over-subscribed. This popularity is reflected by the fact that the school is one of the most overcrowded in the country. Around one quarter of the parents completed the pre-inspection questionnaire and their responses show that they are pleased with all aspects of the school's work, but at varying strengths. For example, around nine out of ten parents indicate that their children enjoy coming to school, feel that they are making good progress in their work and that the school expects their children to work hard. They feel that teachers have high expectations and are pleased with the range of activities that is provided out of lessons. Around one fifth of those who responded have misgivings about the following: the standard of behaviour, the level of homework set, the information provided about the progress their child is making and the closeness of the partnership between home and school. Inspectors disagree with these concerns, although they also feel that the standard of behaviour is not as high as it could be. Although pupils usually behave well during lessons, a minority does not. In addition, some pupils do not behave well as they move around the buildings between lessons and during lunchtime.
- 91 Parents are kept well informed about the day-to-day life of the school. The 'Bushey Meads News' is issued each week and keeps parents regularly updated. It is also posted on the school website and the school issues parents with very helpful and informative year booklets and curriculum handbooks. Parents are also kept well informed of their child's progress. Every two months or so, they receive a detailed

interim report and parents are also encouraged to play a large part in setting their children's targets for improvement. Pupils' annual reports, however, do not always include all the information they should. Although teachers' comments about subjects are usually clear, individual targets for improvement are not always sufficiently specific. There are also several omissions from the governors' annual report to parents.

- 92 The impact of parents' involvement in the day-to-day life of the school is good and they encourage their children to work hard and to do their best. Parents provide good practical and financial help. They support the Future Fund and this helps the school to keep itself up to date with advances in computer technology. In return, parents are able to come along to the Cyber café and use the school's facilities for their personal use. The school association is well supported and it organises various fund-raising and social activities. These include a May Ball and very popular quiz evenings. A significant sum of money is raised each year and these funds are used, for example, to co-fund the school mini-bus and to provide additional resources, such as the security system in the library and the equipment used by the steel band.
- 93 Contrary to the recommendations of the new Code of Practice, parents of children with SEN are not sufficiently involved in any of the school-based assessments for their child. As a result, they do not always understand the purpose of any intervention or programme of action.
- 94 As part of the inspection process, sixth form students were asked to complete a questionnaire and many also spoke to inspectors during lessons and at other times. Analysis of their responses gives a mixed picture. Students' views of the school are satisfactory overall. Although there are several areas of school life that they would like to improve, seven out of eight of those who expressed a view indicate that they are enjoying this part of their education and would recommend the sixth form to a friend.
- 95 This level of satisfaction is reflected in the fact that around three-quarters of the pupils in Year 11 stay on for the sixth form. Around nine out of ten of those who completed the questionnaire feel that the range of courses suits their talents and aspirations well. Almost half of these students, however, would like to have received more helpful and constructive advice when choosing the courses they would study in Year 12. This sixth form is very popular and the large number of students is seen by students as the main reason why teachers do not have sufficient time to give them the level of advice they would like. During discussion students also say that when they are applying for courses they would like to know when their lessons are likely to be. Some students do not like twilight sessions because it keeps them in school beyond the normal school day and in the winter months means that they leave school in the dark. In theory, they are able to come and go as they wish, but many live some distance away and, therefore, the long travel time to get home means that it is not worth leaving school during the school day. Therefore, they have little choice but to spend up to nine hours a day at school. They are concerned about the amount of time they actually spend on site and the lack of any suitable place where they can work in peace during the school day.
- 96 Almost half of the students who completed the questionnaire feel that they are not well informed about the progress they are making. Inspectors do not agree. Twice a year, teachers complete comprehensive reports about how each student is getting on and give details of their predicted and target examination grades. During their two years in the sixth form, students also have regular one-to-one interviews with

their tutors and the head of sixth form helps out if there are any particular problems. This support helps to provide students with good academic advice and this is reflected in their subsequent examination success.

- 97 Half the students who completed the questionnaire feel that they are not provided with enough information about the various options available once they have left school. They would like help and advice to be more readily available and say that it is very difficult for them to find the time they need to conduct their own research. In addition, six out of ten students feel that the range of enrichment activities is too limited. Inspectors agree that the range of enrichment studies could be extended and this is something the school intends to address in the near future.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

- 98 The school is well led and is managed effectively. The school's priorities are concerned with raising attainment and encouraging each pupil to do as well as they can. This also involves promoting a stimulating and caring environment in which each pupil can give of their best. The recent success of the school in achieving Technology College status reflects these priorities, as does the tireless work of the senior management team to secure funding for rebuilding and refurbishment. The mission statement, aims and values of the school are well reflected in its day-to-day work.
- 99 The new headteacher and her senior staff of three deputies and two assistant headteachers are dynamic and hard working. The recent appointment of a bursar is allowing the school to work towards achieving the principles of best value in all its work. Each member of the management group has clear roles and responsibilities and a clear line of management. They meet together as a team twice each week, once with a focus on business and organisation and once to share outcomes of monitoring and to plan further improvements. As a result of their work in monitoring, standards of teaching have risen and overall academic standards in the school also show an improving trend. Standards have risen in Years 7, 8 and 9 since the last inspection and in Years 10 and 11. The average percentage for those achieving higher grades at GCSE is also above what it was at the time of the last inspection. The school has measures in hand to address the lower averages at GCSE in those achieving A* - G grades and in the average points score. The headteacher and senior staff have vigorously promoted the development of a successful sixth form, especially in relation to its open access and equality for all status.
- 100 A key issue identified in the last report was to continue to improve the role of heads of department in respect of their management responsibilities. Heads of department are now clearly involved in monitoring the work of their departments, and they report regularly on teaching and learning and on results to senior managers following the clear lines of accountability. Considerable work has been undertaken in ensuring that school policies and procedures are fully implemented and this is now generally the case. The new headteacher has worked strenuously to secure funding for building and refurbishment in order to improve the quality of the teaching accommodation.
- 101 Middle managers are also effective, which means that the management of academic departments is good overall and never less than satisfactory. Leadership and management in art, English, science, physical education, information and communication technology and careers education are very good and they are good

in mathematics, geography and history. Heads of year also provide good leadership to year teams and use effectively the good systems in place to support pupils.

- 102 Governors are very supportive of the school and involve themselves fully in many aspects of school life. Through their clear committee structure, they are involved in shaping the school development plan, in examining and ratifying strategic decisions and in allocating funds to secure developments. Governors visit the school regularly and talk with pupils, parents and staff. They scrutinise and question outcomes such as examination results and the impact that Technology College status has had on the school. The governing body as a whole has a clear view of many of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Governors fulfil all their statutory duties except in respect of the new special educational needs Code of Practice and the daily act of collective worship, which is a requirement they feel to be inappropriate in a culturally mixed school. The governors' annual report to parents provides an evaluation of provision for physically impaired pupils, but does not consider the provision across the school for other pupils with special educational needs.
- 103 Financial management at the school is very good and educational priorities are very well supported. The appointment of a bursar with considerable experience and expertise has been of great value to the school. Plans for the development and improvement of the school are good. Priorities for building and for developing the curriculum are dealt with in strategic plans. Subject departments and year groups and other defined areas of the work of the school have their own development plans. These are largely satisfactory, and some are good, but most do not pay enough attention to planning in relation to the funds available now and savings required for more expensive items. These plans are, however, based on school priorities and identify the ways in which departments and other areas translate whole-school targets into their own work. However, departments receive funding and priorities are met. Spending is reviewed regularly. Specific grants such as the money for buildings and for the development of information and communication technology provision in the Unit for pupils with physical impairment are effectively used for their specific purpose. Therefore, the school is effective in its pursuit of best value, for example, in the way it plans, consults, and compares all items of significance, including its spending, in the pursuit of ensuring that what happens, works strongly in the interests of its pupils and students.
- 104 The use of information and communication technology in the curriculum is generally good and senior managers use it well and effectively. However, the use of information and communication technology to manage subject departments is only satisfactory at the moment. For several years the school has been developing its information and communication technology resources and, in September 2001, it achieved Technology College status. This is enabling a planned expansion of resources and the development of work with local schools and the wider community. There is a good system of review and evaluation in place that promises to keep matters in line for the school to meet the targets set in its Technology College bid.
- 105 The school is, in most respects, well staffed with experienced teachers. However, in common with many other schools, it has experienced some difficulties in recruiting sufficient numbers of well-qualified permanent staff in some curriculum areas and has made use of temporary staff in some subjects. The headteacher is unwilling to appoint permanent staff whom she considers are not sufficiently good and, therefore, will not bring the benefits to the school that the pupils deserve. The headteacher and governors have made strenuous efforts to find appropriate teachers and have even recruited abroad. This has resulted in the employment of some staff who have had to work hard to familiarise themselves with English

systems and examination boards. For some groups of pupils, the discontinuity of learning caused by a number of teachers leaving has had a negative impact on standards.

- 106 The school is well supported by efficient and conscientious administrative staff who support teachers very well and who also provide effective support to pupils. In addition, the technical, support and maintenance staff are courteous, friendly and effective in their roles. The school is fortunate in the quality of support it receives from these people.
- 107 There are good procedures for inducting and looking after the needs of staff new to the school. All those consulted during the inspection confirmed how supportive the school had been to them. Effective arrangements are also in place to support trainee teachers. The school has good arrangements to support the professional development of teachers. Teacher training days are well planned and are used effectively. For example, recent training has included literacy across the curriculum, the use of information and communication technology in the classroom and ways of improving boys' achievement. There has been joint departmental training with two other local schools. There is also training connected with the needs of pupils with special educational needs such as signing and body language and the use of antidotes for pupils with nut allergies. A senior member of staff is responsible for co-ordinating all areas of professional development and the first round of performance management has been successfully completed.
- 108 Senior staff have given a clear lead in creating an inclusive ethos for the school. There is an appropriate equal opportunities policy that is linked to the provision for pupils with special educational needs. There has been a sustained and constructive approach to identifying, condemning and preventing racist activities. The current selection policy is designed to promote a balanced intake of ability to the main school and the open access sixth form offers fresh scope to pupils who may not have taken full advantage of their earlier opportunities. There are specially tailored courses for those who have difficulty accessing the conventional curriculum, as well as support with anger management and social problems which might contribute to exclusion. This includes making information and communication technology facilities available outside school hours to pupils who may not have access at home. The attainment of pupils from ethnic minority groups is carefully monitored to ensure that they are not disadvantaged. The school takes bullying very seriously and senior managers keep track of incidents by monitoring reports by the heads of year who deal with incidents. The differences in attainment between boys and girls have been identified and staff development has focused both on identifying where problems exist and putting strategies in place to overcome them.
- 109 Overall, the management of special educational needs across the school is unsatisfactory. The special needs co-ordinator has been in post for 10 years, but has one other major role within the school in addition to managing the Unit. This means that there are limited opportunities for the co-ordinator to support and advise teachers, provide training or talk with parents about their child's needs. Contact and working arrangements between staff in the learning support department and subject teachers are poor and there is little monitoring of pupils' progress and a lack of a co-ordinated approach to the provision for pupils with special educational needs across the school. There is no clearly defined role for the deputy special needs co-ordinator at present and the current job description for the co-ordinator does not clearly allocate time to the two roles that she plays in the school.

- 110 There are 49 pupils with a Statement of Special Educational Need, including those with physical impairment. The provision identified on the statements generally reflects pupils' particular needs. However, in some statements the objectives are very broad and the resources necessary to meet the objectives are not included. For example, where the main objective is for a student to use word processing as the main method of writing, there is no resource identified to enable this. Not all of the pupils with statements have short-term targets set to support their learning and behaviour. Annual reviews are carried out regularly and meet statutory requirements, but there is limited provision for other pupils on the register to have their progress reviewed. Where this does occur, reviews are often too informal, there is insufficient comment or input from outside agencies and parents and pupils do not contribute fully.
- 111 Management of the Key Stage 3 Literacy strategy for pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 has been satisfactory overall. The school did not implement an initial audit of literacy needs, but did organise a training day to raise awareness of the potential to raise standards. A three-pronged approach to raise standards of literacy involves specific work within English lessons, support for those with undeveloped language and reading skills, which is managed by the learning support team, and developments in the use of vocabulary within individual subject departments. After the initial impetus of the training day most subject departments have changed the way that they promote the use of technical vocabulary and have developed lists of key words which pupils need to know. Some, like history and design and technology, have devised imaginative approaches to help pupils to improve their writing. However, the programme has only been in place since September 2000 and, therefore, there has been insufficient time available for the co-ordinator to monitor the impact of the improvements that have been made.
- 112 The National Numeracy strategy is being introduced this year and is already beginning to improve standards in the mathematics department. A whole staff training day on numeracy is planned for April 2002, after which discussion in all subject areas will lead to a numeracy audit and a Numeracy Across the Curriculum policy.
- 113 The school occupies a series of single storey blocks generally containing one or two subject areas. Despite plans that are in hand for an extensive rebuilding programme, the quality and range of the current accommodation are poor. Art and design and music have good accommodation with a good range of rooms for practical work; however, the accommodation for science is unsatisfactory. This is because the rooms are inadequate and too small for the numbers of pupils. While there are serious accommodation issues for pupils with special educational needs, the staff have been creative in their use of the accommodation and very small areas and corridors have been transformed into purposeful teaching areas. The new English block does not have sufficient rooms for all English teaching to be done in specialist rooms. Other rooms, for example those used for geography lessons, are often too small to allow group work to take place. Information and communication technology lessons are sometimes taught in the library in order to use the machines there, but this limits the use of the library as a resource for all. There are good indoor sports facilities with very good displays; however, the outside facilities are unusable in wet weather. There are good displays of pupils' work in various parts of the school that have brightened some dark areas, for example the link between the science block and the library. Other very good displays are found in the history rooms. The site becomes muddy in wet weather and pupils do not take sufficient care to avoid bringing mud into the school. There is also considerable litter around during the day and especially after lunch. As noted at the time of the last inspection,

the quality of the toilets, especially those for the girls, are poor with pupils leaving rubbish and other debris on the floors.

- 114 Resources have improved since the last inspection. There is no longer a shortage of textbooks in science and all departments have updated their resources satisfactorily to meet the demands of the curriculum. Most resources have been well chosen to support pupils in their learning. The school continues with its policy of high expenditure on information and communication technology equipment and the ratio of pupils to computers is now better than the national average. In both science and design and technology, the resources are good and this is a result of successful bidding for Technology College status. Most of the school has a wireless link to allow the school's laptop computers to be linked as a network as well as allow access to the Internet. There is a good range of resources to support the learning of pupils with special educational needs, including the use information and communication technology.
- 115 The library has increased in size a little since the last inspection and there are plans to develop more space in the future. It is inadequate at present in relation to the number of pupils. The quality and range of stock and information and communication technology resources are good, if somewhat limited by its size. The library is well used by all pupils at lunch and break times as well as before and after school. Special switches and keyboards are available on some computers which enables access to all pupils to the information and communication technology related learning resources situated in the library. The library continues to be very positive feature of the school and the librarian has a clear vision of how to improve resources it further. Library staff and pupil librarians maintain a high level of service to the school.

Sixth form

- 116 The leadership and management of the sixth form are good. The school's aims are fully reflected in the planning and work of the sixth form and include a strong focus on equality of opportunity by ensuring that courses match the needs of all pupils. The head of sixth form works closely with the deputy head teacher and they have initiated new strategies to improve the monitoring of pupils' academic and personal development. This involves the tutors in a mentoring role. There are some inconsistencies in the quality of this initiative and monitoring of the system has not yet been fully implemented. The sixth form is part of the schools' appraisal system and very good strategies are in place to monitor teaching. Access to the head of the sixth form for all students is open and he provides much individual support and guidance. The leadership and management of sixth form subjects, overall, are good.
- 117 Students' resources for learning vary in quality between different subjects. For example, resources are very good in mathematics, psychology, information and communication technology and art, but unsatisfactory in business education, the library and areas for sixth form private study. Teachers of business studies, for example, are very good at using personnel from industry and business to visit the school to provide real examples of issues being covered. However, while information and communication technology resources in the sixth form for use in lessons have improved greatly since the last inspection, the access sixth formers have to information and communication technology equipment outside timetabled lessons to complete coursework is inadequate for the number of students. Five

computers are available in the sixth form area and nine machines are housed in a very small study area in the library, which is also timetabled for lessons.

- 118 The library has a small area for sixth resources, which provide a satisfactory and up-to-date range of texts. However, these are inadequate for the numbers studying in the sixth form. Up-to-date and relevant textbooks are used on courses, but some students report disquiet that they are required to purchase their own textbooks for some subjects.
- 119 The use of information and communication technology is good in design and technology and in the Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) course for information and communication technology. It allows students to produce high quality work.
- 120 The school has plans to improve the standard of accommodation in the 6th form, but at present the situation is poor. There is a large social area with catering facilities for students. However, there is not enough space for students' private study. They can occasionally use part of the library, but this is not regularly available. The lack of accommodation generally in the school means that several subjects have to be taught as twilight sessions. Students studying business education, law, sociology and psychology are not taught in subject specific rooms. This means these subjects lack a central area where resources can be housed for students to access.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- 121 In order to build on the hard work of the school and to improve the quality of education still further, the governors, headteacher and staff should:
- 1. ensure improvements in the management of special educational needs across the school, including clarification and communication to all teachers of the learning targets for pupils with special educational needs by:**
 - clarifying the role of the special educational needs co-ordinator and deputy special educational needs co-ordinator within the school;
 - ensuring that pupils are placed on the correct stage of the new code of practice following their initial screening;
 - providing consistently good individual education plans for all teachers and others who require them with clear and detailed targets and a suitable timescale for review and revision;
 - by arranging to share these plans with all teachers who teach these pupils and with all those who support them so that work may be planned which is both accessible and challenging;
- (paragraphs 40, 57, 79, 81, 102, 109-110, 148, 154, 156, 169, 178, 185, 187 and 229)
- reconsider the decision on collective worship;
 - continue to refine the process of target setting;
 - publicise the programme for consultation and information to all parents.

2. ensure liaison between teachers and learning support assistants in mainstream classes by:

- providing detailed targets and plans as outlined above;
- building time into the timetable or into meeting times to enable joint liaison and planning to take place;
- by requiring lesson planning to identify the role of the support assistant in activities and assessment;

(paragraphs 15, 28, 41, 81, 109, 126 and 146)

3. ensure that planning within schemes of work and lessons supports the individual needs of all pupils including those who have particular abilities and talents by:

- requiring targets within schemes of work for different groups/aptitudes of pupils with clear indications of how those at the lower end of the ability range may access work and with sufficient challenge for the very able;
- requiring all lesson plans to outline clearly the lesson objectives and the activities and resources to match the needs of pupils with different abilities;
- providing opportunities for independent learning and the taking of responsibility by all pupils thereby enhancing self esteem;
- providing homework matched more closely to the needs of pupils so that the tasks are challenging and worthwhile for all;
- monitoring the teaching and impact of these measures on pupils of all abilities.

(paragraphs 12, 16, 47, 57, 79-81, 85, 91, 140, 145, 149, 154, 155, 177, 179, 189, 201, 203, 207, 213, 229, 249)

4. continue to improve accommodation in all parts of the school by:

- continuing with the building programme in hand;
- improving toilet facilities and continuing measures to keep them in a clean condition;
- instigating measures to control litter;
- providing matting which is effective in removing the worst of mud at entrances to the buildings;
- monitoring the cleaning programme rigorously.

(paragraphs 113, 120, 150, 172, 251, 267, 274, 280 and 288)

In addition, the school should include the following in their action plan:

Sixth form

122 In order to build on the hard work of the school and to improve the quality of education in the sixth form still further, the governors, headteacher and staff should:

1. improve the spiritual development of sixth formers, including more provision for religious education as required by law;

(paragraphs 65 and 72)

2. improve the accommodation and some resources, including reductions in class sizes for some courses.

(paragraphs 117-118, 120, 238, 251, 267, 274, 280, 288, 291, 294 and 301)

In addition, the school should include the following in their action plan:

- ensure that teachers make more effective use of the value-added data provided to evaluate and inform the performance of students and to take appropriate action;
- consult students about their perception of life in the sixth form, such as taking action to reduce the concern that students have over the lack of any suitable place where they can work in peace during the school day; and at the time pupils opt for their sixth form subjects, trying to ensure they know which subjects will be taught in the twilight session.

UNIT for Students with Physical Impairment

123 The unit for pupils with physical impairment is resourced for 22 pupils. Of these, 12 pupils have severe physical impairment. The main aim of the unit is to foster the physical, intellectual, social and spiritual development of the pupils and enable them to be fully integrated into mainstream lessons and the general and social life of the school. The staff are highly successful in this.

124 The special educational needs co-ordinator is ably supported by the manager and a team of dedicated and highly trained learning support assistants. It is the largest team in the school with over 20 members and there is a very strong emphasis on teamwork and sharing good practice. Overall, the management of the unit is very good, and the quality of the day-to-day management of the unit is excellent. Parents praise the calm and ordered environment provided for their child and the strong emphasis on learning and achievement. All staff know the pupils very well and throughout the unit there is a friendly and relaxed approach which enables all pupils to make maximum progress.

125 Considerable thought is given to ensuring that there is an appropriate balance between in-class support and withdrawal for individual support and there is a strong emphasis on the importance and value of attending mainstream lessons where ever possible. However, frequently when pupils are integrated into lessons there is limited liaison between teachers and support staff. Subject teachers do not have access to the pupil's individual education plan and, as a result, teaching is not always focused sufficiently to meet their particular needs or to enable their progress to be monitored effectively.

126 Each member of the team takes on additional responsibilities and most assistants have external qualifications in learning support. A code of practice has been drawn up; however, many of the points recognised as being vital to the role are very

difficult to implement and it does not provide a suitable vehicle for appropriate and efficient liaison with teaching staff.

- 127 Teaching within the unit is excellent. Learning support assistants work closely with individual pupils in lessons and in withdrawal sessions. Individual 'catch-up' lessons are held regularly to reinforce work done in subjects. Learning support assistants are highly skilled in communicating with pupils who have limited speech and movement. Eye pointing is used frequently, using a letter board which staff have developed to meet pupils' specific needs. It is time-consuming and arduous for pupils and demands considerable concentration, commitment and effort, but the enjoyment and enthusiasm demonstrated by pupils are evident throughout the school day. The dedicated and sensitive support from staff enables pupils to communicate very effectively and achieve very high levels of ability. For example, one pupil with severe physical impairment, very limited movement and no speech was able to demonstrate how to design a presentation using a spreadsheet computer program and showed considerable knowledge, understanding and skill in using information and communication technology. Staff know the pupils very well and actively encourage them to communicate their thoughts and interests. During the inspection one pupil using the letter board spontaneously spelled out 'Shh I am singing'. When he was asked what kind of music he liked, he replied 'Bob Marley'. Another pupil with speech problems described his lessons as 'appropriately academically challenging' and how his main aim in life was to become a barrister. All pupils are encouraged to become as independent in their learning as possible and are praised for their efforts as they are challenged to make maximum progress. Staff provide very good opportunities for pupils to talk about their work and demonstrate their knowledge. One pupil working on a project in leisure and tourism discussed the theme park ride she was designing with clear articulation and tremendous confidence.
- 128 All pupils are encouraged to attend the Homework Club. In addition to completing the work they have been set there are good opportunities for them to further extend their use of information and communication technology to support their learning. Learning support assistants take responsibility for ensuring that pupils are well supported in the club and provide transport to their home at the end of the day.
- 129 All pupils in the unit are included in all the activities out of school. A specially adapted minibus enables them to attend theatre trips and other visits. Learning support assistants give generously of their time to enable pupils to attend these as well as residential field trips. They also organise coaching courses for wheelchair football on Saturdays and school holidays.
- 130 Personal and social development and the behaviour of pupils within the unit are very good. All pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and concentrate with considerable effort on their work. Relationships are very good and staff take every opportunity to ensure that pupils build close friendships and co-operate well in pairs and in small and large groups. Pupils are actively encouraged to become independent and as far as possible take responsibility for their own needs. There is a strong commitment to personal achievement and supporting initiative. For example, one of the pupils in Year 12 recently invented 'wheelchair football'. This game was featured in a recent television programme and is currently being supported by Watford Football Club. This has led to the achievement of the 'Diana Award' for the student who has made the most significant contribution to the school. He has also been selected as a torchbearer in the Queen's Jubilee Commonwealth Games. Staff actively promote spiritual development. For example, pupils have recently made a poster showing photographs of 'The Happy Memories of a very

special friend' following the death of one their peers. A poem written by one of the pupils was read out at the funeral and all staff and pupils attended. There is a full time matron who supports pupil's physical and medical needs. She also makes a significant contribution to pupils' welfare in the unit.

- 131 The special education needs co-ordinator and learning support manager have built strong but informal links with parents and provide good opportunities for parents to share issues of concern. Each pupil has a school planner to enable teachers to share information from lessons and there is a daily exchange of information through liaison books. These help families to understand their child's experiences at school and provide opportunities for sharing social or medical concerns or interesting events in the pupils life. All parents are invited to contribute to their child's annual review.
- 132 There is a good range of resources for physically impaired students. Many pupils have special electronic aids and communication aids and use computers extensively to support their learning. However, there is currently no computer for staff to use for administration purposes or for the purpose of trailing adaptive software. There is a learning support assistant who has responsibility for information and communication technology in the unit. She is currently designing a web page for the school.
- 133 Funding for the unit is allocated appropriately and the unit for physically impaired pupils gives very good value for money.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

189

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

85

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection Without 6th Form

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	2	32	57	31	5	1	1
Percentage	2	25	44	24	4	0.5	0.5

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection With 6th Form

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
Number	4	55	86	37	5	1	1
Percentage	2	29	45	19	3	0.5	0.5

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

Y7– Y13

Number of pupils on the school's roll

1040

Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals

64

Special educational needs

Y7– Y13

Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs

49

Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register

132

English as an additional language

No of pupils

Number of pupils with English as an additional language

111

Pupil mobility in the last school year

No of pupils

Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission

15

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

31

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.1
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.8
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	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001	89	81	170

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	61	77	72
	Girls	67	65	64
	Total	128	142	136
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	78 (66)	85 (63)	81 (55)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	35 (26)	52 (35)	31 (14)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	45	72	52
	Girls	61	65	51
	Total	106	137	103
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	64 (52)	82 (72)	61 (49)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	26 (13)	39 (49)	20 (14)
	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

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	77	97	174

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	28	66	71
	Girls	42	86	92
	Total	70	152	163
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	40 (53)	87 (91)	94 (94)
	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	35.0
	National	39.0

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	0
	National	n/a

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	28	38	66

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	36 (35)	45 (38)	81 (73)
	Average point score per candidate	4.5 (2)	61 (2.9)	5.4 (2.5)
National	Average point score per candidate	5.3 (2.6)	5.6 (2.9)	5.5 (2.7)

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	28	38	66	18	9	27
	Average point score per candidate	8.9 (13.1)	15.7 (15.9)	12.8 (14.3)	9.7 (7.8)	16.7 (15)	12 (10.5)
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9 (17.1)	17.7 (18)	17.4 (17.6)	9.8 (10.2)	11.4 (11.3)	10.6 (10.8)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	10
Black – African heritage	5
Black – other	0
Indian	37
Pakistani	12
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	12
White	944
Any other minority ethnic group	19

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7-Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	58.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.8

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7-Y13

Total number of education support staff	38
Total aggregate hours worked per week	1144

Deployment of teachers: Y7-Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	70%
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Average teaching group size: Y7-Y11

Key Stage 3	25.9
Key Stage 4	22.0

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	3	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	71	4
Other minority ethnic groups	1	0

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

Financial information

Financial year	2000-2001
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	£
Total income	£3,843,967
Total expenditure	£3,741,854
Expenditure per pupil	£3,498
Balance brought forward from previous year	£87,127
Balance carried forward to next year	£189,240

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate 24.1%

Number of questionnaires sent out	1040
Number of questionnaires returned	251

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	28	61	7	3	1
My child is making good progress in school.	33	56	9	2	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	18	53	16	5	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	15	57	20	5	3
The teaching is good.	15	63	14	2	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	38	41	17	3	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	41	45	11	2	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	46	46	5	2	1
The school works closely with parents.	29	46	20	2	3
The school is well led and managed.	29	47	12	3	9
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	23	56	14	4	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	27	53	10	2	8

Other issues raised by parents

Some parents were worried about bullying. Some parents identified their concerns about behaviour and the lack of homework occurring in Year 8 where they felt that standards were worse than elsewhere. A small number of parents were concerned that their child was not sufficiently challenged by the work set and not always sufficiently supported to achieve. Some identified this as happening where children were more able and others where children were lower achievers. Several parents were concerned about the number of cover and temporary teachers some groups had. This is a concern of the school too, who are striving to make suitable permanent appointments. A very few parents would like parents' evenings to be organised to allow more time for each consultation and for teachers to request to see a parent if they have concerns rather than leaving it to the pupil to make appointments. Some do not wish pupils to be present. Some concerns, usually about staff cover, were expressed about certain specific subject areas.

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGE 3 (Years 7, 8 and 9) AND KEY STAGE 4 (Years 10 and 11)

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 are well above the national average.
- The curriculum and opportunities for personal development are good.
- Teaching is consistently good.
- The development of very good teaching methods is a strength.
- The quality of marking and individual target setting is good.

Areas for improvement

- Developing new ways to support speaking and listening.
- Raising the importance of pupils' evaluation of their own and others' work in drama.

135 In 2001 the school's results in the national tests for pupils aged 14 were well above the national average and the trend over the last three years has been one of steady improvement. This represents very good achievement for pupils who come into the school with average attainment. Girls are still attaining higher standards than boys, but boys are closing the gap faster than is the case nationally.

136 Attainment in GCSE examinations for pupils aged 16 were in line with the national average in English Language. They were above the national average in 2000 after a period of steady improvement. Results in English Literature were below the national average and again this is a disappointing reduction after improving at a similar rate to the English Language results over the last three years. Work seen during the inspection was better than this, with pupils making good progress in lessons. Results in drama were well below the national average, though there has been a slow improvement over recent years.

137 Inspection evidence indicates that standards of writing are above the national average in Years 7 to 9. Few pupils enter the school in Year 7 with a wide writing repertoire, either in terms of their vocabulary or sentence structure, and most are only adventurous when they are undertaking specifically descriptive writing. By the end of Year 9 most pupils can adapt their writing style for specific purposes because teachers have given them good ideas and effective ways to do so. In Years 10 and 11, standards are closer to the national average. Once again pupils have been well taught and given good ideas to plan their writing, but the range of sentence styles and use of vocabulary is limited. By the end of Year 11 some middle attaining boys in particular were seen to be striving to adapt their writing to meet the needs of a particular task or audience, though these attempts, although good, were not always successful. Pupils studying drama do not have a clear grasp of the different ways to evaluate their own performance. The lack of writing of evaluations and listening to other pupils talk about each others' work is hindering their understanding and performance of drama.

138 Speaking and listening skills are average. In Years 7 to 9, pupils can express their ideas clearly and higher attainers can make fluent and confident contributions to discussions. In paired work, pupils collaborate effectively, for example when a Year 8 class was developing an improvisation based on a "good cop / bad cop"

stereotype. Larger group discussions also contribute to pupils' understanding of how to improve their speaking and listening skills. For example, in Year 11 the teacher cleverly managed the whole class in a successful exploration about the meaning of a very difficult poem about an African wood carver. However, not all pupils show a clear understanding of the different contributions that they can make in group discussions, so their progress is sometimes hesitant. A small number of very high attainers – exemplified by Year 9 pupils rehearsing for a mock trial – can adapt confidently to different speaking requirements and speak convincingly in role as a barrister or a reluctant witness. Listening skills are less well developed. Teachers have to work hard to ensure that pupils pay attention and pupils have too few ways to ensure that they listen effectively either as individuals or as members of a group. In drama, pupils can portray different moods and emotions effectively, but do not have the skills to evaluate their own performances constructively.

- 139 Reading is effectively promoted in each year group so that pupils develop very effective reading skills. In Year 7 the lowest attainers are beginning to see how a writer gives the reader clues about the personality of a character and writes with a certain tone and style. By Year 9, middle attaining pupils have developed a methodical approach to finding evidence about character and motive in the text of *Macbeth* and the lowest attainers in Year 10 can understand the difficult language of J. B. Priestley's play, *An Inspector Calls*. Good teaching allows pupils to move successfully step by step to unravel the language and understand the meaning of plays. In Year 11 lessons, standards were above those attained in the 2001 GCSE examinations, as middle attainers developed thoughtful interpretations of difficult poetry and higher attainers were becoming confident in explaining why a writer uses different kinds of imagery in a novel.
- 140 Overall, the teaching of English is good and it is frequently very good. In the best lessons, teachers maintain a good pace with clear objectives and time constraints. Because pupils can see the progress they are making they stay on task and behave very well. Skilled questioning increases the pace of learning. In the best examples, wrong answers are not rejected, but the teacher acknowledges the thought process that led to the mistake and, therefore, pupils maintain their self-esteem and motivation. In such an atmosphere of learning, pupils feel safe, secure and willing to give answers and say what they feel. The very good relationships are based on a range of approaches that cater for different needs. In one instance, patience and persistence enabled a low attaining Year 10 group to overcome their own lack of confidence to discuss the moral lessons from the play they were reading. Another teacher's sheer enthusiasm engaged less motivated boys to explore a story by Thomas Hardy. In Years 10 and 11 in particular, teachers' assiduous marking is beneficial when pupils are drafting examination assignments. However, teachers sometimes take too much responsibility for pupils' learning, so when they are not directing activity the rate of learning slows. Teachers work well with support assistants to ensure that pupils with special educational needs relating to physical impairment are totally integrated into lessons, make a good contribution and achieve very well. Pupils who are learning English as an additional language are also well supported to get involved in the work quickly and achieve well. Teachers devise good quality tasks and different ways of working for pupils who have identified learning difficulties. However, because they do not have information about their specific needs and individual targets they cannot always adjust the work appropriately.
- 141 The head of department's very good leadership has been a major influence on pupils' achievement. He has created a team ethos where teachers collaborate and support each other well. He has promoted a curriculum and teaching approaches

which balance improving standards with the way English contributes to personal development so that opportunities to consider spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues are grasped whenever they arise. He has maintained standards by giving good support to new and temporary members of the team and has effected a good level of improvement since the last inspection. The most significant improvement has been to the standards of attainment in Years 7 to 9, based on a thorough overhaul of teaching strategies, so that the team of English teachers have provided very good preparation for pupils ready for the national tests. Similar developments have been introduced in the sixth form – where the different ways of teaching are now being evaluated and refined. Teachers are exploiting new technologies so that pupils are motivated by presenting their ideas using computers. Pupils who come to the school with undeveloped literacy skills make good gains because they have access to a computerised individual learning system which helps improve their literacy step by step. The principles of the Key Stage 3 Literacy Strategy have been adopted, though there is some way to go before the benefits are seen in every lesson. As a result of this initiative the school has developed closer links with primary schools and there is scope for much closer liaison to ensure that there is no interruption to learning when pupils transfer between schools.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Standards achieved in the end of Year 9 national tests in 2001 are well above the national average.
- The new leadership of the head of department together with a committed team of qualified mathematics teachers.
- Good curriculum improvements and better resources through the National Numeracy Strategy and Technology College funding are a strength.
- Good teaching by the majority of the department includes activities which interest and involve pupils.
- Good planning takes into account teachers' frequent assessment of pupils' work.

Areas for improvement

- Poor attitudes and behaviour by a significant minority of pupils, who sometimes disrupt lessons.
- Inconsistency in the quality of teaching between different members of the department.
- Low expectations by some teachers of some classes and, therefore, a poor match of class-work and homework to pupils' prior attainment and previous experience.
- Accommodation and furniture; at present, there are too few rooms, no mathematics office, insufficient number of chairs and poorly maintained environment.

143 The 2001 national tests at the end of Year 9 were a vast improvement on previous years. The proportion of pupils obtaining Level 5 and above was, at 85 per cent, well above the national average and well above that for similar schools. The average points score of pupils was above the national average and boys did better than girls for the first time since the previous inspection. The percentage of pupils reaching Level 6 and above was much higher than the national average, despite competition from local grammar schools, and in line with similar schools on the basis of free school meals.

144 Standards shown by the GCSE results at the end of Year 11 in 2001 were below the national average for the proportion of pupils gaining A*-C grades, but this was higher

than the previous year. The average points score was close to the national average and the amount of progress made by pupils since Year 9 was as expected. The ability range of pupils in Year 11 in 2001 was similar to that expected in a secondary modern school but both the average points score and percentage of A*-C grades were well above those for modern schools in 2001. Boys' results were lower than those of girls; this mirrors the national trend.

- 145 Inspection findings show that standards are in line with national expectations for all year groups, although above expectations for the top groups in Years 10 and 11. Pupils are set in Years 7 to 9 according to ability, however, most teachers do not provide tasks which sufficiently challenge the most able in each group. Teachers are given plenty of assessment data about pupils, but the information is not used sufficiently by a few teachers and, therefore, pupils' work is not properly matched to their needs. Sharper planning is required. A very good Year 8 bottom set lesson on frequency used football league tables from 1900, 1930 and 1950, and discussion of 'yesteryear' and the name of clubs added extra interest, literacy skills and a cultural dimension for pupils. Good features of most teaching are the use of mathematical terminology, precision in explaining techniques to solve problems and valuing pupils' own methods of accurate mental calculation. For example, in a Year 9 top set about loci, a well planned lesson successfully set out to get pupils to understand key mathematical terms and explain how movement of an object can produce a mathematical shape and for pupils to form a mental picture of that movement. However, most pupils' learning was spoilt by a minority of girls chattering and muttering throughout the teacher's important and necessary commentary about the mathematics, despite being asked by the teacher to listen. Some perceptive questions were asked by interested pupils and lively discussion in pairs by the majority of pupils followed the teacher's explanation.
- 146 Year 10 standards in lessons are not as high as expected when compared to pupils' end of Year 9 results. The teaching sets are very large and in some middle sets the attitude and behaviour of a significant minority of pupils are spoiling learning for the whole group by slowing the pace of the lesson and taking too much time and attention from the teachers. In such situations the teacher's class control strategies are not coping with the levels of disruption. The top set, however, was working very well. These pupils are being stretched and challenged in their statistics work. The top set in Years 10 and 11 take GCSE statistics in addition to GCSE mathematics. This extends and deepens their knowledge of mathematics, especially in the area of handling data, and provides a good challenge for these higher attaining pupils. Year 11 pupils were revising those topics needing most attention and teachers had planned well to cover the weakest areas of understanding for most individuals by providing practice in examination-style questions. Physically impaired pupils work alongside others in all year groups and their learning support assistants are excellent in providing for their very individual special needs. A Year 11 low set had three such pupils with their learning support assistants. They were successfully demonstrating different methods of long division to provide alternatives for those pupils finding the task difficult. The confidence and competence of all pupils in the group improved by the end of the lesson. Physically impaired pupils are accepted and valued by other pupils and pupils, and by teachers. However pupils with learning or emotional and behavioural difficulties are less provided for because teachers have been provided with little information about their needs, or targets for improvement.
- 147 Pupils have good attitudes to learning on the whole, apart from the disruptive minority. Most behave appropriately and work well in lessons, showing interest and occasionally enthusiasm for their mathematics. However, there is a tendency for

pupils to ignore teachers' instructions, especially at the end of lessons when some disorderly behaviour and unruly dismissals occur. Pupils are punctual to lessons and this is an improvement since the previous inspection. They usually settle down well and come to the lesson with the right equipment. Pupils work well with each other, discussing methods and answers in pairs, although at times somewhat noisily. Boys and girls have equivalent attitudes and often work together voluntarily, although teachers did not plan or organise any discussion on topics or questions deliberately set by the teacher, group-work, or mixed gender pairing. No sexism, racism or bullying were seen in mathematics lessons. Pupils from different minority ethnic groups and those with English as an additional language were fully integrated and worked equally well as all others.

148 Teachers use the National Numeracy strategy to write their schemes of work in Years 7 to 9 and plan lessons. Special funding for numeracy has allowed attractive new text-books to be purchased for Year 7 and 8. The new books improve pupils' attitudes to learning about mathematics. Mental maths starters for use at the beginning of each lesson are being developed. Number skills are generally well taught, with an emphasis on place value and moving the digits not the point in multiplication and division. One teacher, however, spoke of 'knocking off noughts', confusing pupils by careless use of language. Individual whiteboards⁵ were well used in a Year 7 bottom set lesson on multiplying decimals by powers of 10, allowing instant assessment of pupils' achievement. Three learning support assistants in this lesson enabled pupils with severe special educational needs to succeed and the teacher referred one pupil who was still having difficulties to the special educational needs department for more intensive work. An information and communication technology programme has successfully been introduced and is helping Year 7 pupils to improve their numeracy skills and confidence in mathematics. It allows pupils to work at the computer independently of other pupils and, therefore, at his or her own pace. In one well-managed Year 7 lesson half the class used this programme on the 15 computers while the others were learning about angles. They swapped activities half-way through the lesson. Good use of information and communication technology was also seen in a Year 7 top set lesson using formulae on computer spreadsheets. A Year 9 middle set used eight laptop computers well to revise topics for their forthcoming national tests. Pupils are expected to provide their own calculators for work in class and examinations and some were used unnecessarily when numbers were simple enough for mental calculation, also a criticism in the last inspection report.

149 The quality of teaching is good overall, with 60 per cent good or better in Years 7 to 11, although two lessons seen were unsatisfactory, both in Year 10. Most teachers planned their lessons well and the best had a range of teaching and learning methods and a variety of activities for pupils. Although teachers set objectives for each lesson, they were rarely shared with pupils and this did not help pupils take more responsibility for their own learning. The time management of some teachers is weak. This leads to time wasting at the end of lessons or not finishing the lesson before the bell sounds, for example, teachers rarely make time to either summarise the key learning points made during the lesson or make sure they know the extent of the learning made by pupils. In many lessons, apart from top sets, the pace is too slow and expectations of pupils are also too low. In these situations, higher attaining pupils in each class wait unnecessarily for others to finish and are not being stretched or challenged to improve the quality or quantity of their work. Homework is set regularly each week, but it is often not enough. The homework set is most

⁵ An individual whiteboard is a small board, covered in material similar to 'cling-film'. Pupils write on the board using special pens, hold it up for the teachers to see their answers, and then the answer can be erased ~~so~~ so that the whiteboard can be used for the next calculation. They are being used successfully and are a recommendation of the National Numeracy Strategy.

frequently the same for all pupils in each class, regardless of prior attainment or aptitude and this is unsatisfactory. Marking is good on the whole, with constructive comments and helpful corrections, but is inconsistent between teachers in the department.

- 150 The leadership of the new head of department has given vision and direction to the well qualified team of teachers. There are appropriate priorities for development and Technology College status has improved the funding for mathematics. A whole staff training day is planned for April 2002, after which a Numeracy policy will be drawn up aimed at improving the teaching of numeracy skills through mathematics teaching and in all other subjects. Management of resources is good despite the poor storage facilities and no office space. Accommodation is unsatisfactory as there are only four rooms for six staff. These rooms are poorly maintained and there are insufficient chairs in good order for all pupils. However, it appears that the situation is a vast improvement since the previous inspection. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching, learning and pupils work takes place, but is unsatisfactory. Improvements in mathematics since the previous inspection has been good overall.

SCIENCE

- 151 Overall, the quality of provision in science is **good**.

Strengths

- Pupils achieve good standards in knowledge and understanding and perform well in practical investigations.
- Good teaching is attributable to staff commitment. They challenge and extend pupils, building effectively on earlier learning.
- Relationships between teachers and their pupils are good, encouraging them to achieve their best.
- Very good leadership motivates a committed team of teachers.

Areas for improvement

- Personal guidance to pupils through the use of individual targets is weak.
- The targets for most pupils with special educational needs are not clear enough.

- 152 Attainment is above average at the end of both key stages. The school has improved results because teachers have good expectations of what pupils can achieve. For pupils aged 14, results in their 2001 national tests at the end of Year 9 were well above the national average and above average for similar schools. For pupils aged 16, the 2001 GCSE results were above average. For those attaining the higher grades A*-C, results were well above average. Boys perform as well as boys nationally, but girls perform better than this and better than their peers nationally. Compared with their prior performance at Key Stage 3, pupils' GCSE results were well above average. End of Year 9 results show the profile of the school is changing, with an increasing proportion of higher ability pupils.

- 153 Pupils reach good standards in lessons. By Year 9, higher attaining pupils have a good grasp of pressure, because the teacher uses good resources and encourages them to talk about their ideas. They use good computer skills to extend their knowledge and understanding of the industrial breakdown of crude oil into different commercial products. A lower set finds the concept more difficult and needs more time to consolidate learning. By Year 11, higher ability pupils calculate the percentage mass of different chemical compounds and show that they are making

very good progress in their lesson because the teacher is very good at explaining and simplifying the work so that pupils can latch onto ideas which helps them to understand. Similarly, pupils in the lowest set understand the variety of cell structures because the teacher uses very good resources to show them.

- 154 Achievement is good and has improved significantly since the last inspection because the programme of work is now designed to ensure that pupils build on earlier learning. Year 7 pupils really enjoy the challenge of conducting a lively enquiry into a crime, applying very good observation skills and applying earlier learning about solutions. They gain a very good appreciation of how science affects everyday lives. Year 8 pupils talk convincingly about the results of soil erosion as they observe soil particles settling into different layers. High ability pupils in Year 10 successfully use their knowledge of electrolysis to write chemical equations. Those in a low set become successful in calculating electrical power because the teacher gives them very good guidance. Boys and girls generally contribute equally in lesson, although a few lower attaining boys lose concentration and need careful management. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress when working with an adult. Others do not always make best progress because teachers do not have detailed targets based on their individual needs. Those who speak English as an additional language make good progress because they take part in discussions.
- 155 Teaching and learning are good. Pupils think about abstract ideas, drawing on good subject expertise of teachers. Pupils are given good opportunities to improve their use of scientific language, but lower ability pupils need further challenge to speak clearly in explaining their ideas. They use and apply mathematics appropriately. Planning shows that pupils develop good skills in information and communication technology, but they need more frequent access to computers to analyse and interpret experimental data. Teachers match work well to student needs, enabling most pupils to reach expected standards or better. At best, teachers vary activities within a lesson to closely match the different needs of groups, but this aspect of planning requires further development. They review key aspects of pupils' learning at the end of the lessons, but sometimes lose its impact because they have not left sufficient time for pupils to speak about their successes and their difficulties. Pupils have clear guidance about test and examination criteria, with helpful targets for groups of different abilities. They would gain from personal self-assessment to ensure maximum progress of each individual.
- 156 Leadership is very good. A cohesive team reflects the aims of the school in its work to raise standards and do the very best for pupils of all abilities. Good targets have been set for the end of Year 9, showing strong determination to raise standards further. The team is well placed to improve GCSE results further. The targets for most pupils with special educational needs are not clear enough. The strategic use of information and communication technology is not well developed for subject teams to easily translate school information into department targets. Committed teachers work hard to fulfil school policies, evident in improvements in schemes. Good planning for information and communication technology has improved standards, but further investment in resources is needed. Attention to equal opportunities is effective. The quality of work provided by technicians is very good, but they are pressed for time in the light of increasing demands for sixth form teaching. The department shows very good improvement from the last inspection. Standards have risen because teaching and learning have improved.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Pupils achieve very well and have very good attitudes to the subject.
- GCSE results are above average and in the 2001 GCSE Art and Design examination they were well above average.
- Relationships are very good and the staff and pupils work very well together. There is a very good equality of access and opportunity for all pupils.
- The quality of teaching is consistently very good. Teachers have a very good subject knowledge and expertise.
- Tasks are challenging, stimulating and relevant to a balanced art and design curriculum.
- There is a good balance between two and three-dimensional work.

Areas for improvement

- Standards in the GCSE Graphic Design examination.
- The provision of the present range of examination courses and their impact on standards.
- The five art rooms require decoration and refurbishment.

158 High standards have been maintained since the last inspection. By the end of Year 9, the majority of pupils, both boys and girls, are achieving above the national expectation. At present, the school enters Year 11 pupils for two GCSE examinations, art and design and graphic design. By the end of Year 11, inspection findings and GCSE results show that standards are well above the national expectation in the GCSE art and design examination. However, inspection findings and GCSE results in 2001 show attainment below the national expectation in the graphic design examination. The school has maintained well above average standards in the GCSE art and design examination and below, or well below, average standards in the GCSE graphic design examinations, from year to year. The school and inspection findings indicate that standards will be maintained in the art and design and will rise in the graphic design examination this year. The school also offers a GNVQ course where pupils are attaining at least average standards. A decision has to be taken as to whether the art and design department should offer additional vocational courses.

159 The range of courses on offer is at present too wide and reduces overall standards. The good qualifications of the four teachers that work in the department are best suited to art and design GCSE courses and for the teaching of the National Curriculum in Years 7 to 9. Here they consistently produce very high standards from the pupils. This has been the case in the graphic design course offered over the past four years. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls.

160 Standards across the school are supported by a good scheme of work and good planning. Pupils use a range of media and materials confidently, covering two and three dimensions. They demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of how artists use colour, line and shape. In using the wide range of resources well, illustrating the work of a wide range of artists as a stimulus or starting point in their work, they show a very good interpretation of the artists' work. This adds a strong cultural dimension to many projects. For example, pupils in Year 8 used their very good awareness of symbols in Aboriginal art to create their own symbols representing a journey, which they were going to paint at a later stage in an Aboriginal style. The pupils' literacy standards were very well supported by the use

of their sketchbooks where they successfully wrote about the journey they were taking.

- 161 There is a very good progression of standards across the school. On entry in Year 7 the pupils have a varied experience of art and design from their previous primary schools and standards are very variable. Supported by good teaching which builds on skills gained in primary schools, they quickly achieve well. By the time they enter Year 8, standards are already at least above average. In Years 10 and 11, pupils build upon the rich experiences gained in their course spanning Years 7 to 9. They start to achieve very well, making very good progress and are able to sustain themes and develop ideas. Many are using colour and line with considerable skill and imagination, constructing three dimensional models very successfully from their two dimensional work. This was seen in a Year 10 lesson. Here the pupils very successfully sculptured human or fantasy heads using clay. Supported by excellent teaching and aided very well by the input of the art technician, they showed an excellent learnt awareness of how to prepare, assemble and design their clay heads. Pupils in Years 8, 9, 10 and 11 are able to sustain themes and develop ideas with considerable skill and imagination. They discuss their work with knowledge and confidence, giving reasons for their decisions and how their work is going to develop. Older pupils make a good use of their sketch and notebooks, carefully presenting and developing their work. All pupils show high levels of enthusiasm, motivation and interest in their work.
- 162 Overall, very good teaching across the school is having a high impact on pupils' learning, attitude and achievement. It has improved since the last inspection. Teachers have very good specialist knowledge and expertise. Lessons are carefully planned according to a well-designed scheme of work and engage and involve pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language. This is achieved by good use of visual support material, discussion, directed questioning and encouragement. The needs of each individual are given a high priority and there is an excellent inclusion of all pupils, irrespective of their needs, in all lessons. There is a good use of the pupils' literacy skills and a developing satisfactory use of their numeracy skills.
- 163 Visits to museums, galleries, exhibitions and the very good use of information and communication technology enrich the curriculum. The numbers taking GCSE courses are increasing as a result of the good quality course in their first three years at the school. Assessment procedures have improved since the last inspection, although the use of assessment to inform the taught curriculum is sometimes insufficiently used. This was seen in the pupils' sketchbooks and notebooks where teachers had provided insufficient comments for pupils to further progress in their work. Pupils' attitudes to the subject have improved since the last inspection and they are now very good.
- 164 The leadership and management of art and design are very good. The curriculum leader and the other three teachers in the department are a strong team and work very well together. The range of displays in and around the art room and around the school values pupils' achievement. The head of art and design makes good use of available funds. He purchases a good range of resources to enhance the pupils' learning. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection in all areas of weakness. There is now a need for repair and re-decoration in all the art rooms and a further organisation of space to provide more storage.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Most teachers have good subject knowledge.
- Examination results for textiles technology are very good.
- Practical work in textiles technology and systems & control is good.

Areas for improvement

- Boys' examination results are low in relation to their other subjects.
- The teaching of food technology is unsatisfactory.
- Pupils have insufficient skills in developing their designs.
- Assessment systems for pupils' work from ages 11 to 14 are unsatisfactory.

166 GCSE results for 2001 for pupils attaining grades A* to C are slightly above the national average, but show a decline over time since the previous inspection. In textiles technology they are very high. Girls' results are significantly better than boys' and are better than in their other subjects. Boys' results are similar to national averages, but are significantly lower than in their other subjects. The department is taking steps to improve boys' results.

167 The current work of 16-year-old pupils is in line with what is expected at this age. In textiles technology and systems and control technology, pupils produce good quality practical work. Higher attaining pupils studying systems and control have a good understanding of the function of some electronic devices. When designing, pupils take account of the views of people likely to use the items they produce. However, they have insufficient skills in the interim evaluation of ideas derived from research. They do not carry out sufficient refinement of a selected design idea. This is evident, for example, in pupils' work in food technology where standards are below expectations. Pupils make good use of information and communication technology (ICT) for research and presentation of their work. However, design sketching is not well developed. Some work leads to pupils having a satisfactory understanding of elements of other cultures, for example, in textiles technology, where 15 year olds consider clothing fashions from a range of ethnic cultures.

168 The attainment of pupils by the age of 14 is in line with expectations overall. There is no significant difference between the work of boys and girls. Practical work in electronics and textiles technology is of good quality. Pupils can use a variety of techniques to explore design ideas, but reasons for design decisions are not always evident. Pupils' work is below expectations in food technology, as they have insufficient opportunities to develop related design skills. They have a good understanding of forces that might act on a structure and know how to produce a stable structure by using triangulation. Teachers stress the development of pupils' literacy skills, leading to most pupils having a good understanding of specialist technical language. Pupils make good use of information and communication technology facilities such as desktop publishing techniques and graphs to present their work. However, pupils have no opportunities for working with pneumatic systems.

169 Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. The department is accessible to pupils with physical disabilities, with some equipment modified to meet their needs. In the case of some pupils with severe physical disabilities the progress they can make is very restricted, but skilled support from ancillary staff ensures that

these pupils take as full a part in lessons as possible. For other pupils with special needs, progress is only satisfactory because insufficient account is taken of their needs in lesson planning.

- 170 Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers use good question and answer techniques to reinforce and extend pupils' knowledge. Teachers generally have good subject knowledge, which is used very effectively, for example, when working with individual pupils. However, subject knowledge is not secure in food technology, where there is a lack of appreciation of the design elements required, leading to pupils making unsatisfactory progress. Well-planned and resourced topics engage pupils' interest, as in a Year 10 textiles technology lesson, leading to high motivation and good learning. In lessons planned to give pupils direct opportunities to handle materials they develop a good understanding of their working characteristics.
- 171 Where the teacher is the only source of information, for example in a Year 11 food technology lesson, teaching lacks pace, pupils lose motivation and make unsatisfactory gains in knowledge. This also means that pupils have no opportunities for the development of research skills. There is insufficient stress in teaching on the development of pupils' graphic skills. It is unsatisfactory for pupils who have not brought in materials to be excluded from the practical elements of a lesson.
- 172 Leadership and management are satisfactory. The recently appointed head of department has a clear vision of how the subject should grow, evident through good quality development planning, which takes account of the school's recent change to Technology College status. There is satisfactory delegation to department members, leading to the production of well-written units in the overall schemes of work. However, some of these have yet to be completed. Although there is a good system being developed for the assessment of pupils aged 11 to 14, this has not yet been implemented and current procedures are unsatisfactory. There is insufficient use of assessment data to help with planning or to track pupils' progress. Accommodation is satisfactory, but the standard of general cleanliness in one food technology room is poor. Resources for learning are satisfactory. Use of the recently enhanced information and communication technology facilities, obtained since the previous inspection, is leading to an improvement in the quality of pupils' work. Planning shows that appropriate use is made of computer controlled machinery. However, there are insufficient resources for teaching pupils about pneumatic systems. Similarly, there are insufficient kits to aid the teaching of electronics, which limits pupils' opportunities for modelling electrical and electronic circuits. The lack of specialist facilities for conventional graphics has an adverse impact on the quality of pupils' design drawings.

GEOGRAPHY

- 173 Overall, the quality of provision in geography is **good** because teachers provide learning activities that are effective in developing pupils' knowledge and understanding of the subject.

Strengths

- Teaching is consistently good with very good features.
- The use of a wide range of resources enables pupils to understand human and natural features.
- Pupils are effectively in presenting and discussing ideas and information.
- There is good use of fieldwork.
- The use of computers to support the collection and analysis of information.

Areas for improvement

- The use of detailed comments on key pieces of pupils' work to allow pupils to see their strengths and areas for improvement.
- The progress of the more able pupils in lessons.
- Opportunities for pupils to provide ideas and information from their own research.
- The development of a subject handbook to include sample lesson plans.
- Knowledge about the subject learning needs of all pupils with special educational needs.

- 174 Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2001 show that standards are slightly below those found nationally, but with girls achieving more of the higher grades. These results indicate an improvement in the standards achieved in 2000. The progress made by pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. Pupils with English as an additional language make good progress because they are fully integrated into all learning activities.
- 175 Results in the GCSE examination in 2001 were well below the standards achieved by all schools nationally. This represents a decline over the standards achieved in 2000. There was a difference in the pattern of boys and girls grades with more boys achieving the higher grades. The attainment of pupils with learning needs was good and most passed their examination.
- 176 Pupils develop a good knowledge of the processes that create different environments and can describe human and natural features. The well-planned use of maps, diagrams and video clips supports good understanding of each topic with pupils encouraged to identify important features within whole class discussions. In a lesson about Kenya the teacher read from a book about the landscape and supported the reading by showing a video so that by the end of the lesson pupils answered questions that showed recognition and understanding of the features of the Savannah landscape. This emphasis on using information to answer questions and in some cases solve problems is emerging as a strength of the subject. Pupils of all abilities are encouraged to use geographical terms accurately and to write clear, descriptive answers and this is supporting the good development of knowledge that the majority of pupils show by the end of Year 9. However teachers do not make sure that pupils record key geographical words in such a way that they not only understand them but will be able to use them again in subsequent work.
- 177 The displays of work in classrooms indicate that standards of presentation are good, with information recorded accurately on maps and diagrams. The preparation of displays containing written information supported by diagrams enables Year 8 pupils to understand the causes and destructive forces of a hurricane. Pupils are not

encouraged to be independent learners because there are few occasions where they select their own methods to record, display and analyse information with the result that pupils in Year 10 use the same approach when displaying the results of an investigation about Brighton.

- 178 The good standards that many pupils achieve in lessons reflect the positive attitude they have towards the subject. This is because all teachers plan their lessons carefully to include a variety of learning activities. For example, in a lesson about population, Year 7 pupils talked about the influences on population numbers and were encouraged to identify and discuss the meaning of key terms such as birth rate. The pupils finally produced an accurate description of one country's population structure. As a result, both boys and girls across the ability range enjoy the subject and the majority want to do well. Pupils answer clearly when asked questions and teachers make good use of discussion to support understanding. However, most of the discussions depend upon the recall of information with few activities planned so that pupils can bring information from previous learning such as their own homework and use it to help explore and explain new topics. Both boys and girls work well in groups and pairs to collect information and to identify reasons to support their ideas. Pupils with special educational needs are fully included in all lessons and are encouraged to answer questions in whole class discussions. The use by the teacher of a carefully worded questions helped one boy to provide simple facts about the climate of Kenya and his answers aided all pupils' understanding. The impact of this positive approach is hindered by the lack of information each teacher has about the precise learning targets set for each pupil with special learning needs.
- 179 Consistently good teaching with some very good teaching within parts of some lessons is a strength of the subject. Where teaching is very good teachers clearly explain the activities that will be undertaken, set clearly defined time targets and provide a range of written and discussion activities. This positive approach supported pupils in Year 10 in developing an understanding of green belt zones because the teacher provided a range of up to date resources about a transport planning issue that was within the green belt area around the school. This enabled pupils to consider and make connections between the facts and the judgements made locally and, as a result, they learnt that there is rarely a right answer to planning issues that affect the environment. Very good subject knowledge enables teachers to respond accurately to pupils' questions. Lessons are well organised to match the ability level of each class, but in many cases the most able are not sufficiently challenged because few additional tasks are provided to enable them to learn independently. Good use is made of praise to recognise good answers and the effort made by pupils to participate. This approach encourages pupils with English as an additional language to provide information and ideas, for example, in Year 7 when information was provided about population. Teachers use information and communication technology to enhance teaching. For example, in making worksheets for pupils and through the use of a computer linked up to a projector. This computer link allowed the teacher to gradually construct a map which effectively showed pupils the location of important places and landscapes. Good use is made of computers in a number of learning activities. This enables Year 7 pupils to collect, process and present information to produce a report of a fieldwork visit to a local town. Fieldwork is well planned to support understanding from Year 7 and improvements in the way it is used have the potential to improve the standards pupils reach by the end of Year 11.
- 180 The teacher in charge of developing the curriculum has encouraged a team approach to the development of learning activities. As a result, a number of innovative approaches have been developed which contribute towards the positive way that

pupils view the subject. For example, Year 8 pupils, in a lower ability group, work enthusiastically in teams to build a model of a shanty town and in doing so learn about the way such a settlement will grow. This activity together with other newly developed teaching ideas could be recorded in an up-dated subject handbook so that all teachers can continue to develop the quality of their subject teaching based on sharing ideas, especially known examples of good practice. There is good monitoring of teaching with clear strategies in place to support all teachers so that changes in staffing no longer affect the attainment of pupils at the end of Year 11 as has occurred recently. Since the last inspection the department has fully developed pupils' use of maps so that by the end of Year 11 all pupils use a variety of maps and atlas information to collect and record information. Assessment strategies have been developed with marking now indicating to pupils what they have done well, but with limited indications about strategies for improvement. The improvements made in the planning and teaching of the subject over the last year are raising levels of attainment through more challenging activities that involve pupils directly in their learning. The department is well placed to improve the results pupils attain in their GCSE examinations.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Pupils achieve well by the end of Year 9: they develop effective history skills of enquiry and written and oral communication.
- Good learning is promoted by good teaching with well planned lessons and a variety of stimulating activities.
- The department is well led and considerable improvements have taken place since the last inspection.
- Pupils have a good relationship with the teacher.
- The subject is enhanced by a good programme of visits and use of information technology.

Areas for improvement

- More frequent and consistent use of the good quality marking so that pupils' work and achievement is more closely monitored, especially in Years 10 and 11.
- The clear identification of the learning needs of pupils with special educational needs so that resources and tasks are matched specifically to their learning needs.

182 Standards in work seen by the end of Year 9 are broadly average. This closely reflects the proportion of pupils attaining Level 5 and above in teachers' assessments for 2000 and for 2001. Boys perform as well as girls. Pupils achieve well in relation to their attainment on entry in Year 7, which was below average in terms of their skills of using sources and enquiry to understand history. This is consistent with standards reported in the last inspection.

183 GCSE results in 2001 were below the national average, as indicated by the average points score. All pupils gained at least a G grade, which is above the national average. Results in 2000 were above average from a more able group of pupils. In both years, boys and girls who gained A*-C grades achieved equally well. Overall, this represents satisfactory achievement for all pupils compared with their attainment at the end of Year 9.

184 By the end of Year 9, pupils of all abilities have a sound knowledge and

understanding of key events and the dates on which they occurred. They have good skills of enquiry and recording of evidence from different sources. This was seen in their project work in Year 8 on Elizabeth I and in Year 9 on the Suffragettes. The most able pupils write good critical analyses in response to challenging questions posed in each project. They also have well-developed skills of interpretation of evidence as the teachers have high expectations of their skill development. Year 9 pupils effectively compared life and conditions in a 19th century English factory with slavery or decided on evidence to include in a recruiting campaign for the First World War. The ability to analyse sources for bias and reliability are less well developed. Speaking skills are also being well-developed in pupils of all abilities. Pupils are encouraged to read aloud in class and Year 8 pupils gave well-researched presentations on the Great Fire of London and the Plague, with some pupils using computerised illustrations. Skills of writing at length in a well-structured way and in various forms are well developed as there is a strong emphasis on these aspects of literacy development in history teaching. Lower attaining pupils are helped to write by teachers' well-structured guidance, including starter sentences and resources which match their learning needs.

- 185 However, pupils with special educational needs do not make such good progress. They are not always clearly identified and teachers do not have their individual educational plans to target their particular needs. This was seen in a very good Year 9 lesson on writing a report on the battle of the Somme. Two pupils with special educational needs statements did not make the same good progress as others without support from writing frames (these are guidance materials prepared by teachers to help pupils with their writing). Pupils who are physically impaired receive very good support from very caring assistants. Pupils who speak English as an additional language are effectively helped by learning assistants and make satisfactory progress.
- 186 Standards of work seen in Years 10 and 11 are close to the national average. Pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of the key ideas and historical events under study. For instance, they compare accurately different periods in the history of medicine in terms of changes as well as how much stayed the same. All pupils are developing sound skills of selecting and recording evidence. More able pupils evaluate sources well and write fluently and analytically with supporting evidence; for instance, Year 10 pupils evaluated the importance of the Long March in China and Year 11 pupils compared the effectiveness of nursing in the Crimean War. However, skills of analysis and detailed evaluation by pupils of average ability are not so well developed and their work is often too descriptive. On occasions, their progress on this aspect of their work is being hampered by incomplete work, despite comments by teachers in their marking.
- 187 Teaching and learning are good overall. They are occasionally very good. This is a marked improvement on the last inspection. In setting high expectations, teachers now set varied and challenging tasks that involve pupils actively in enquiry work and problem solving. Pupils make good progress in lessons in acquiring a secure knowledge and learning important new skills of enquiry, communication, organisation and interpretation of evidence. For example, Year 9 pupils were first stimulated by a well-chosen film of the battle of the Somme to explain the huge number of deaths. Using carefully prepared guidance on writing and connecting words, they were then challenged to produce a realistic report to the Prime Minister on the battle and how to reduce casualties. Using the thorough schemes of work, the well-qualified staff plan lessons carefully to match the learning needs of most pupils. However, pupils with special educational needs do not always receive sufficient support. Teachers generally manage time well. There is now a good pace to most lessons, a criticism in

the last report, and clear deadlines set for tasks. However, time is only rarely allowed at the end of each lesson to assess pupils' understanding. Pupils show a strong interest in their history lessons and this is encouraged by teachers' warm relationship with them and by their good classroom management.

- 188 Pupils in Years 7 to 9 know how well they are doing in history because teachers tell them their National Curriculum levels and also give ideas on how to improve. This is done through the good use of the review sheets after units of work are assessed. Marking of exercise books, however, is not consistently thorough in explaining to pupils their weaknesses and giving advice. It is more thorough in Years 10 and 11. Pupils in Year 11 are aware of their predicted grades, their current performance and what they need to do to improve. However, marking is not done frequently enough to pre-empt and rigorously check the failure of some pupils to complete all their work.
- 189 The subject is effectively led by an enthusiastic head of department. As in the case of the previous inspection, management is meticulous and very efficient. All teachers of history are strongly motivated to improve the quality of pupils' work and raise standards. The head of department's clear educational direction has produced significant improvements since the last inspection. Priorities for raising achievement strongly reflect those of the school. A much improved programme of information and communication technology is now integrated into the schemes of work and is beginning to be implemented. Pupils' work, often illustrating their information and communication technology skills, is very well displayed to celebrate their achievement. There is a good programme of outside visits, which stimulates interest in the subject. The good assessment procedures use data well to set individual targets in Years 10 and 11, though monitoring of progress in Years 10 and 11 lacks consistent rigour. Monitoring and evaluation of marking has not been fully developed to ensure that the good practice in so much of the department is shared by all teachers.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

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

Strengths

- Leadership and management are good.
- Good subject knowledge of a specialist team.
- Standards are above average in examinations.

Areas for improvement

- Opportunities for higher level attainment in Years 8 and 9.
- Development of a system to include assessment of cross curricular ICT work.
- Ensuring consistency in assessment procedures.

- 191 Standards of work in Years 7 to 9, observed in both separate information and communication technology lessons and across the curriculum, are satisfactory. In Years 10 and 11, standards are good. Attainment by the end of Year 9 is in line with national expectations. GCSE results for 2001 are well above the national average and pupils performed better in information and communication technology compared with the average in their other GCSE courses. Pupils now in Year 10 and 11 have the opportunity to follow a GNVQ Part 1 course in ICT. Results for completed units of work in these courses indicate good standards in Year 11 and very good in Year 10. Although few girls take these courses, there is no significant difference between

the attainment of boys and girls.

- 192 The attainment on entry to the school varies considerably from below to above average because some pupils have had very little experience of information and communication technology at primary school and others are attaining higher than expected levels at the end of Year 6. Pupils make good progress in Year 7 in skills, understanding and knowledge in relation to a range of uses of ICT. During the inspection, Year 7 pupils competently presented to the class ways of using a spreadsheet for budgeting and drawing of graphs. Others showed the various techniques available in both word-processing and desktop publishing for designing documents. In Year 8, pupils increase their use of computer applications by tackling more demanding problems in a wider range of contexts as well as looking at information and communication technology and its use in the wider world. By the end of Year 9, pupils use a range of applications competently, including word-processing, desktop publishing, graphics packages, spreadsheets and databases; they also use the Internet effectively for research. Year 9 pupils in an information and communication technology lesson successfully designed their own Web pages with appropriate links to other web-sites. However, in order for attainment to improve above national expectations in Years 8 and 9, the scheme of work needs to be modified to allow for different tasks to be set for the different ability groups. This means that teachers' planning will match tasks to improve the standards of the least able and stretch the most able. The evaluation of the increasing amount of cross-curricular ICT work that pupils are doing is not being considered sufficiently in the final assessment of pupils' achievements or otherwise at the end of each school year.
- 193 In Years 10 and 11, the school offers a good range of ICT courses, both at GCSE and vocational level. For those pupils not opting for an information and communication technology related course, key skills in ICT are offered in Year 10. Good progress is made on all of these courses with a high standard of coursework produced by pupils of all abilities. This is reflected in the results, which are well above average. Pupils at all stages work independently on projects displaying a mature approach to their work.
- 194 Pupils with physical disabilities make good progress as a result of special keyboards and input devices available on equipment in the teaching rooms. Pupils are also given effective support from their assigned learning support assistant.
- 195 Overall, the quality of teaching in information and communication technology is good. In Years 7, 8 and 9 more than half the lessons seen were good or very good. In Years 10 and 11 all lessons seen were good or better. The information and communication technology staff have very good subject knowledge, lessons are well planned and are taught at a good pace with effective use of whole class teaching and questioning to ensure understanding. A few of the non-specialist staff who teach occasional classes in Year 7, 8 and 9 are less secure in their information and communication technology subject knowledge which results in lessons of a slower pace and less rigorous marking of work. Teachers' assessments of pupils' work in Years 10 and 11 are detailed and tell pupils exactly what they have to do in order to reach even higher standards. GNVQ and GCSE pupils are very well informed about the criteria by which their assignments will be assessed and this results in high quality work. A good system for assessment in Years 7 to 9 has been introduced and is based on topics plus a final examination. The success of this system is that it gives pupils information about their individual progress together with a statement about the National Curriculum level they have achieved. Not all teachers are consistent in its use yet and further support and monitoring by the head of

department is required to ensure it is fully effective for all pupils.

196 The use of information and communication technology in other subjects is much improved since the last inspection as a result of successful bidding for Technology College status. The fruits arising from this successful bid together with the good use of Government money⁶ allocated for teacher training in the skills of ICT has increased pupils' access to information and communication technology facilities for all departments. The use of ICT is good in art, mathematics, science and design and technology because teachers have planned for regular use of computers in pupils' units of work. Use in other departments is developing well and excellent technical support has encouraged teachers of all subjects to use computers in their lessons. Use of information and communication technology for coursework is evident in all subjects. There is no assessment of pupils' ICT capability in their use of information and communication technology within subjects. This needs to be addressed to ensure a correct assessment of pupils' achievement is given at the end of Year 9. Information and communication technology schemes of work also need to be reviewed to ensure that pupils, when studying other subjects, can build on learning arising from specific ICT lessons. All pupils have good access to computers outside lessons. In addition to a computer club there are lunchtime clubs for web design and coursework. Computers in the library are also available for use at lunchtimes. These clubs are well attended with pupils observed completing coursework, carrying out research using the Internet and using a wide range of other electronic learning resources.

197 The head of department provides clear direction and vision for the department and works well with the ICT director who is responsible for information and communication technology across the curriculum. Members of the department work well together, sharing ideas and expertise. Departmental documentation about the use of information and communication technology is comprehensive. The development plan is appropriate with clear realisable targets and the department is well placed to introduce the Key Stage 3 information and communication technology strategy for pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 later this year. The introduction of a wide range of ICT courses has allowed pupils of every ability to progress in information and communication technology at all levels. This is a department with many strengths and the capacity and vision to improve further.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

198 Overall, the quality of provision in modern languages is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Subject knowledge of the teachers is very good.
- Good planning of a range of activities in lessons.
- Pupils have good positive attitudes to their learning.

Areas for improvement

- Better use of target language in the classroom.
- More challenge and extension in lessons for pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9.
- More rigour in monitoring within the department.

⁶ The Government money being used is ~~under~~ from a scheme called 'National Grid for Learning'. Money has been allocated to all schools to be used exclusively on training to improve the ICT skills of all teachers.

- 199 GCSE examination results in French have improved since the last inspection. The proportions of both boys and girls gaining A*-C grades in 2001 were above the national average. However, only a narrow ability range was entered for the GCSE examination with fewer pupils sitting the examination than at the time of the previous inspection. Results in GCSE Spanish were below average in 2001. At the end of Year 9, attainment was broadly in line with national averages in 2001, but currently is slightly below average.
- 200 In Years 10 and 11, pupils in GCSE groups make good progress and in Entry Level Certificate⁷ groups they make very good progress. Pupils working towards the GCSE in French and Spanish are able to read texts in the foreign language and understand important points for comprehension purpose. Listening skills are well developed and written coursework is well prepared to meet the requirements of the examination. Pupils are less confident in oral work and more hesitant in speaking without support.
- 201 Pupils' progress in Years 7, 8 and 9 is mainly satisfactory. However, it could be better if pupils were challenged or extended further in lessons and in the quality of the work given for homework. Listening skills are generally good and pupils are happy to work at simple written exercises. In oral work pupils are able to repeat words with fairly good accents, but sentence structure is limited and requires broadening.
- 202 Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are making good progress. There is a marked improvement from work in Year 10 to examination work in Year 11. Higher attainers are able to use a wide range of vocabulary and syntax suitable to their topic and handle confidently the different tenses of present, past and future as appropriate. Pupils in the Entry Level Certificate classes are achieving the realistic targets set for them.
- 203 Teaching ranges from good to satisfactory. The subject knowledge and understanding of the teachers are strengths of the department. All teachers are proficient in one language and many teach both French and Spanish. Two teachers are native speakers. Planning of lessons is a good feature. A variety of activities including listening, speaking, reading and writing are incorporated into lessons to interest and motivate pupils. However, many of the activities are at a level which pupils find too easy and where the pace is slow therefore too few opportunities are given to challenge and extend pupils' abilities. In good lessons, a brisk pace is maintained and pupils are encouraged to work independently. For example, in a Year 9 Spanish lesson, pupils worked in pairs to practice asking and answering questions about travelling by train. In a Year 7 French class, the teacher used games to get pupils to use productive language when teaching about items of clothing. In Year 10, the teacher used a series of challenging texts to test pupils' comprehension. A small proportion of poor teaching was seen when work inappropriate to the level of the class was set and classroom management was too lax. Most teachers do not use the target language consistently in the classroom for giving the aims of the lesson, instructions and homework. Where teaching was satisfactory rather than good, it was because the teacher uses English too much, impeding the pupils' foreign language development.
- 204 Learning by pupils at all levels ranges from good to satisfactory. Pupils learn new vocabulary and form short sentences using the new words. In lessons observed, the

⁷ [An Entry Level Certificate course in a foreign language is a nationally accredited course like GCSE, but is aimed at slower learning pupils.](#)

pupils, including pupils with special educational needs, made gains in understanding and in the development of their language skills particularly listening. Students whose English is already an additional language do very well in language lessons. In a Year 11 Spanish class, pupils consolidated their examination work by using information from a listening task on holidays to support answers in oral work. In all year groups, pupils are hesitant in oral work and have difficulty putting together sentences to form short conversations and in transferring persons, for example from using 'je' to 'il'. In the Entry Level Certificate class, pupils spoke readily at their level when the teacher used flashcards to teach about pets. Many pupils in Year 11 use information and communication technology successfully to present and enhance their work.

- 205 The majority of pupils have a very positive attitude to the learning of languages. Their good behaviour and keenness to work create an atmosphere that greatly aids learning. They are very supportive of each other and work well individually, in pairs and in whole class situations. In a Year 9 French class, when two pupils carried out a role play in front of the class, the rest of the class listened attentively and gave praise. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good.
- 206 The marking policy is followed consistently, but the quality of comments is insufficient to help pupils make progress. More attention is paid to improving presentation rather than to improving accuracy in work. Since the last inspection, schemes of work for all years are now in place and the step by step use of these is having a good impact on pupils' learning.
- 207 The monitoring within the department is not yet fully effective and lacks rigour. Inconsistencies in assessment and approaches to teaching, such as the use of the target language and lack of challenge in Years 7, 8 and 9, have not been identified. Resources within the department are adequate. The department makes a valuable contribution to the cultural development of pupils by offering two annual trips to France and one to Spain. In 2001 a very successful languages day enhanced the language learning of pupils.

MUSIC

- 208 Overall, the quality of provision in music is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Standards achieved by pupils at the end of Years 9 and 11 are good.
- Teaching is good, with very good teaching in Years 10 and 11.
- Relationships are good.
- Very good contribution to pupils' cultural development.

Areas for improvement

- Regular recording and evaluating by pupils of their practical work.
- Ensure that pupils know how to improve their work.
- Increase the number of pupils participating in extra curricular activities.
- Access to sufficient and appropriate information and communication technology equipment for all pupils.

- 209 The standards achieved in 2001 by pupils at the end of Year 9 were above the national expectations for all pupils. The achievement of boys was in line with that of boys nationally, but girls achieved well above national expectations. There were no pupils entered for the GCSE in music in 2001. In 2000, despite a small group of pupils, 94 per cent achieved A*-C grades in their GCSE examination. This was a

considerable improvement on the results of the previous years. Twice as many girls studied music than boys, but boys achieved the highest grades.

- 210 The work seen during the inspection confirms that pupils in Year 9 are achieving in line with expectations. Strengths in their work include a good understanding of musical note values and their relationships to each other. When music is being made many pupils are able to maintain an independent part either when clapping or playing a keyboard melody. Pupils generally have a good recall of previous learning, but are unable to give specific details. However, for some pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 their musical standards are lower than expected. This is due to the changes to their teachers due to the illness of their main class teacher. For these pupils, despite being set musical exercises in lessons, the lack of expertise and knowledge of the replacement teachers means that work is not explained properly. Lessons consist of time-filling activities and so these pupils do not make progress in class. Written work for all pupils is minimal. Pupils do not regularly evaluate their own and others' music in order to become self critical when composing and performing. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, as do those with physical impairment. They have equal access to all parts of music lessons and are being very well supported by classroom assistants, some of whom have a good understanding of music.
- 211 The standards achieved by pupils in Years 10 and 11 are in line with expectations. Compositions are melodically and rhythmically simple in style reflecting different musical styles. However they lack real musical flair and imagination because the harmonies and keys chosen are unadventurous. Regular aural exercises ensure that pupils are competent when listening to pieces of music and notating musical dictation. However these pupils lack a clear understanding of music history, an area already identified as needing further study.
- 212 Teaching is good overall and there is some very good teaching in Years 10 and 11. Teachers have strong musical knowledge and use their enthusiasm for the subject to challenge and inspire pupils. In a lesson with Year 10 pupils the use of a four part vocal exercise removed all reticence regarding performance. Pupils grew in confidence during the lesson by asking to lead different sections. This meant that four groups of pupils learnt a different section of the same piece of music and in performing their piece, one on top of the other, they quickly understood the complexities of layering different rhythms together. Planning is good with activities and homework linked together. However, the teachers do not always review learning at the end of lessons to help pupils remember what they have done in class. There is a strong emphasis on musical literacy as evident by the colourful and good use of display within the music rooms. However, the lack of written evaluations means that this area is underdeveloped and pupils cannot express opinions about their own and others' music.
- 213 Pupils generally have good attitudes to the subject. Where this is not the case it is because the work set is not challenging enough to retain and develop their interest and enthusiasm. In one lesson that was challenging, Year 7 pupils joined in enthusiastically dancing a pavane in order to understand the style of music they were about to play. Pupils listen carefully during practical work and support each other in paired and group situations. As at the time of the last inspection only a small number of pupils participate in extra-curricular activities and have instrumental lessons. The subject does not promote itself strongly within the school, although it is beginning to. To this end pupils are beginning to perform in assemblies, which is helping to develop their self-confidence and self-esteem. During the inspection several pupils performed, including the newly established steel pans group. Their playing was

confident, rhythmically precise and helped to raise awareness of music from other cultures. Many of the issues raised at the time of the previous inspection have been addressed and there has been good improvement.

- 214 The department has been managed satisfactorily ensuring that disruption to pupils' learning has been at a minimum during staff absences. Much of the normal monitoring and developmental work has not happened, but there are plans to address outstanding issues. At present, there is a lack of information and communication technology access for all pupils, but especially those in Years 10 and 11. As a result, pupils' knowledge and use of music technology is less than expected. Despite good procedures for teachers to gather information regarding pupils' progress in different musical areas, these are not shared with pupils effectively. As a result, they are not clear how to improve their predicted examination grades. A more regular and systematic recording and evaluating by pupils during practical activities is needed.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Attainment in Years 7 to 11 is above the national average.
- The leadership and management of the department are very good.
- Teaching is good and very good in the sixth form.
- Pupils' achievement is good.
- Pupils' attitudes are good and very good in the sixth form.
- Extra-curricular provision is very good.

Areas for improvement

- The small number of lessons in which teaching does not address the evaluative strand of the National Curriculum.
- The consistency of teaching across the department to ensure equally effective engagement and motivation of pupils.

- 216 In the 1998 GCSE examinations, 50 per cent of pupils attained A*-C grades. In 2001, pupils' results were much improved with 62 per cent of pupils attaining A*-C grades. These results were above the national average. Girls' and boys' results were similar and the majority of pupils achieved well in relation to their below average attainment at the end of Year 9 which was similar at the time of the previous inspection. Pupils' results in 2000 and 2001 were slightly better than those attained in their other subjects. The present GCSE pupils are working to a standard above the national average. The presentation of girls' written work in Year 10 is excellent. They draw detailed diagrams and illustrate movement analysis with appropriate visual images. Boys in Year 11 are fit, active and competitive. Several boys have high attainment levels, for example in rugby, football, athletics and boxing. Pupils have researched fitness information to supplement their coursework and have used information and communication technology to present their final training booklets.
- 217 The majority of pupils in Years 10 and 11 in the non-examination classes attain standards in line with those expected nationally. Girls' performance skills in trampolining and dance and boys' in football are above this level. However, in basketball and badminton pupils do not have good basic techniques and do not fully understand the rules. Pupils' analytical and evaluative skills are not well developed and there is a lack of guidance in promoting this strand of the National Curriculum in

the schemes of work.

- 218 In all lessons observed, pupils of all abilities, in all years, made good progress. Their achievement is good overall and illustrates well the department's commitment to the inclusion of all pupils. On entry to the school, pupils attain average levels in a few activities and by the time they reach the end of Year 9 their attainment is above the national average. Boys and girls in Year 7 are well co-ordinated and have a basic knowledge of some major sporting events, such as the Olympic games. The majority of pupils in Year 9 are able to warm up and stretch independently and effectively. Girls have good skills in rhythmic gymnastics showing body tension and control. Several girls work confidently on their hands. Many boys in Year 9 are very able footballers. Their skill level is high, but the very poor quality of the school field hinders their ball control and team tactics.
- 219 A few individual pupils and teams achieve high standards in district and county competitions in athletics, rugby, gymnastics, netball, boxing, cricket, golf, trampolining, dance and football. The attainment of these talented pupils is well above the national average and they benefit considerably from the opportunities offered by the hard work and dedication of their teachers. The numbers of pupils who attend extra-curricular activities and the increased numbers taking the examinations demonstrate the positive involvement of pupils in the subject.
- 220 The quality of teaching observed during the inspection was good overall and this promoted good learning in the majority of lessons. All teaching is satisfactory or better, with one third being of good quality and one third being very good. In the best lessons, pupils' learning benefits because a wide variety of challenging tasks are set and very good relationships have been established with pupils. In examination lessons, teachers effectively link practical and theory work and this helps pupils to understand through their own experiences. Questioning is rigorous and pupils are challenged both physically and intellectually. Teachers recap previous work and share the lesson objectives at the beginning of the lesson with the pupils. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject and their demonstrations give pupils a clear visual image of the activity and show them how to improve their skills. All lessons begin with a health and fitness section which promotes pupils' knowledge of this strand of the National Curriculum. However, opportunities are not frequently provided to encourage pupils to look at and evaluate their own and the work of others, especially in games lessons. The department focuses on developing literacy skills in their indoor lessons where key words and objectives are displayed in the gym and sports hall, but ways of developing numeracy and information and communication technology are not as regularly used.
- 221 Most boys and girls have positive attitudes and work well together. Girls have a mature approach to the independent activities in gymnastics and dance and these attitudes promote good learning. A few boys, however, are restless and lack concentration in their lessons. This hinders their learning and that of others and teaching does not always manage their behaviour effectively.
- 222 The curriculum meets statutory requirements and provides a good varied programme of activities. The head of department provides clear educational direction and very good leadership for the subject. He leads by very good example with his teaching and supports the newest members of staff well. There have been extensive improvements both to standards and administration since the previous inspection. Advanced level examination courses have been established. Schemes of work and assessment procedures have been put in place for all courses and teaching is

regularly monitored. Pupils are well informed about their work and future targets and these strategies have helped to raise the attainment of pupils in all years.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Teaching by specialist teachers is good and often very good.
- Effective schemes of work have been developed by using the advice and guidance from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority and the locally agreed syllabus.

Areas for improvement

- Giving Year 10 and 11 pupils, who are studying the general religious education course, the opportunity to take the GCSE short course examination.
- Using data provided by the school to raise the achievement of pupils at Years 10 and 11.
- A greater degree of planning to meet the needs of all pupils.
- Increased support for non-specialist teachers by further detailed development of schemes of work.
- Increasing the use of visits and visitors to enhance pupils' understanding of different faiths.

224 GCSE results have declined since the last inspection, from 58 per cent receiving grades A* – C in 1999 to 44 per cent A* – C in 2001, and are now below the national average of 55 per cent. Reasons for this decline have not been examined or evaluated by the teachers of religious education. One reason for the decline may be a consequence of the increase in numbers of pupils taking the GCSE and, therefore, a wider range of ability levels of those opting for the subject. The school's results, overall, declined in 2001. There has been some suggestion that the content of the syllabus being used was not the most interesting for pupils and, as a result, a change has been made in the syllabus from September 2001 with a view to improving the GCSE pass rate. The department is not yet using data available to help raise pupils' attainment.

225 Attainment of most pupils by Year 9 is in line with the expectations of the levels in the locally agreed syllabus and for more able pupils it is above expectations. The achievement of pupils in Year 9 is satisfactory, while for many pupils in Years 7 and 8 it is good. By the end of Year 9, pupils know about the main beliefs and customs of some of the world's main religions. They know, for example, about pilgrimages in different religions and about rites of passage. They begin to think about questions such as "where did the universe come from" and "why do people suffer?" The more able pupils show some thoughtful ideas in writing about these topics because they are challenged by questions which require them to think in depth about topics. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 show a sound knowledge of many of the main stories of Christianity, for example about events in the life of Christ, his death and resurrection. They are able to see the parallels between the events of the last week of the life of Jesus and the story in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* and more able pupils understand that this is an allegory. They know about the beginnings of Christianity in Britain and talk and write enthusiastically about a visit made to St Albans. More able pupils are able to write about the differences between belief and fact and express their own beliefs.

226 Pupils in Years 10 and 11 who are studying for the GCSE examination are generally

attaining in line with expectations and some at above this level. Most make good progress as they develop skills in philosophical and theological discussion. More able pupils develop an understanding of concepts of various moral systems and give their own views on these. They use key words such as incarnation and salvation when writing about Christianity. All pupils show understanding of many of the issues involved in questions about abortion, suicide and marriage and many are able to link these to religious beliefs. Pupils with physical disabilities are enabled to show their understanding as learning support assistants provide good support for them. These pupils are making progress in line with their abilities. Pupils, particularly those in Years 10 and 11, are helped to develop study skills so that they understand what is needed to achieve well in their examination. They are encouraged to work together in, for example, preparing a display about the relevance of the Ten Commandments today, or in developing a survey about peoples' views of life after death. In these situations pupils work well together, supporting one another and listening carefully to one another's views. Pupils are encouraged to share their own beliefs where this is appropriate and others listen attentively and respectfully when this happens.

- 227 As in the last inspection, those pupils in Years 10 and 11 who are studying the general religious education course make only satisfactory progress and for some, progress is less than satisfactory. This is often linked to pupils' attitudes to the subject, which some value less because it is a non-examination subject. The course which they follow is the GCSE short course and the information given to them at the beginning of Year 10 indicates that they will be given the opportunity of taking the examination. In Year 11, however, this is not followed up with pupils and they do not have the chance to take the GCSE examination. Consideration could be given to entering all pupils for the examination. Many of the lessons are suitably based on discussion of issues such as belief in God and the idea of a just war, but there is an inappropriate balance between discussion and writing, with most pupils completing very little written work to reinforce their learning and extend their thinking.
- 228 The teaching and learning at both key stages are good overall, with a range from satisfactory to very good. This represents good progress from the last inspection when there was a number of unsatisfactory lessons. The best lessons have clear aims, which are explained to the pupils so that they know what is expected of them. Teachers use questions effectively to help pupils to recall previous lessons and to ensure that all pupils are involved. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and good class management keeps pupils' attention and involvement in lessons, ensuring that they concentrate well. Good opportunities are given to pupils to research topics and many make use of the Internet for this. Information and communication technology is also well used in the recording of some pupils' work, enhancing its presentation. This allows pupils to work independently and they respond well, for example, in looking up information about people such as Martin Luther King and Mother Theresa as part of a unit of work on justice.
- 229 Less effective lessons are not structured enough to keep those pupils on task who lack concentration. For example, pupils watch a video, but are not told what issues to focus on while they are watching and because it lasts a long time they lose interest. On a few occasions, the lessons tend towards personal and social education and the religious education link is not immediately clear to pupils. Sometimes, non-specialist teachers do not have the subject knowledge required to answer pupils' questions and to develop their in depth knowledge of the subject. In a number of lessons there is limited evidence of planning for different tasks matched to the different ability levels in the classes. This is, in part, due to the fact that teachers have very little information about those pupils in their classes with, for example,

special educational needs.

- 230 The subject meets statutory requirements in all years. Management of the department is satisfactory. The head of department has worked hard to develop effective schemes of work in line with national advice and to incorporate the required elements of the locally agreed syllabus. Lesson planning is weak because the scheme of work has not been completed and teachers are not specialists in religious education. There are no agreed systems for recording pupils' progress, so writing reports or giving levels of attainment to pupils is a difficult task, with teachers often having to track back through exercise books. Pupils' books are marked frequently, but teachers rarely write comments which would help them to improve their work. However, a system of assessment is being devised to ensure that pupils are made aware of what they have to do to improve. The area of assessment, recording and reporting is one in which more consistency is required. The curriculum is making an effective contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, with opportunities to consider the moral and social teachings of the different faiths, including ways in which these impact on peoples' lives. There are few opportunities at present to enhance the curriculum, for example, by visiting places of worship of different faiths.

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

231 In the inspection, 11 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.

N.B. AS refers to GCE Advanced Supplementary courses, which are normally taken in Year 12. A2 courses are a continuation of the Year 12 AS course, but studied at GCE Advanced level. This course is followed in Year 13.

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	13	46	87	7	43	3.2	5.8
Human biology	12	100	88	42	34	6.0	5.25
Physics	5	80	88	0	40	3.2	5.67
Design and technology	9	66	91	0	30	2.2	5.38
Business studies	0	All doing 2 year AVCE course					
Information and communication technology	0	All doing 2 year AVCE course					
Art	11	100	96	55	46	6.9	6.57
History	9	100	88	33	35	6.7	5.45
Psychology	31	97	n/a	26	n/a	5.5	n/a
Sociology	17	65	86	18	35	3.5	5.32
English	30	93	92	43	30	6.6	5.28

GCE A level and advanced GNVQ courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	8	100	87	25	43	5.3	5.8
Human biology	7	100	88	29	34	5.4	5.3
Physics	1	0	88	0	40	0	5.7
Design and technology	3	67	91	67	30	6	5.4
Business Studies – A level	13	100	92	54	32	7.2	5.5
Information and communication technology – Advanced GNVQ	6	2 distinction, 2 merit, 1 pass, 1 unit award					
Leisure & tourism – Advanced GNVQ	7	4 distinction, 1 merit, 2 pass					
Business – Advanced GNVQ	3	1 merit, 2 pass					
Art – Advanced GNVQ	8	6 distinction, 1 merit, 1 pass					
Art	5	100	96	60	46	7.6	6.6
History	5	100	88	20	35	6.0	5.5

Psychology	14	100	87	21	34	5.6	5.3
Sociology	18	94	86	22	35	5.3	5.3
English	20	90	92	30	30	5.6	5.3

Intermediate vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		Average point distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Business	5	100	n/a	50	n/a	4.8	10.5
Health & social care	9	100	n/a	33	n/a	-	n/a

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

232 The inspection covered the AS course in Year 12, the A2 course in Year 13 and the 'Application of Number' key skills course, available for all Year 12 or Year 13 students needing or wishing for extra mathematics accreditation. The modules covered in the 'A' level course are pure mathematics 1 and 2 in Year 12 with pure mathematics module 3 in Year 13, and Statistics module 1 in Year 12 with Statistics module 2 and Mechanics 1 in Year 13. Five lessons in total were observed, with analysis of work in lessons, and in depth for one Year 12 student's pure mathematics 2 work and one Year 13 student's statistics module 2 work.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- The teaching of the Year 13 A2 mathematics course is very good.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is good.
- Teachers are good at ensuring students' work is assessed and that the information is used to help students improve their knowledge and understanding.
- Relationships between teachers and students are very good.
- The introduction of the sixth form key skills course 'Application of Number' has been successful.

Areas for improvement

- The uptake of Year 12 AS course and the retention rate of students staying on to study A2 mathematics.
- Greater encouragement for Year 11 students to choose mathematics at post-16.
- Attendance in Year 12 AS course and the attitudes of some Year 12 students.
- The use of information and communication technology is at present insufficient.

234 Standards in the A level mathematics course has varied over past years, with numbers too small for comparison with national averages. The 2001 results were below those for 2000, with 25 percent obtaining A and B grades compared to 67 per cent the previous year. The 'value added, which is a measure of the extent of the improvement of a students' understanding and therefore attainment, from GCSE to 'A' level was below the national average line for 2001, but above for 2000. The

decline is partly explained by the difficult staffing situation in the autumn term 2000. However, the pass rate has consistently been 100 per cent and most A level students proceed to higher education. The AS results for 2001, the first year under the new system, was only 58 per cent. Thirteen students were entered, but because of absence or other reasons, only seven students passed, and six of these continued with the A2 course in Year 13 and all are expected to obtain better grades in their final examination.

- 235 A key skills 'Applications of Number' course has been introduced this year, taught for three periods over the two-week timetable by a mathematics teacher. This has been well planned and is structured to give the required accreditation. A student at Level 3 showed greater knowledge and understanding than others at Level 2, such as the purpose of a scatter graph and how it shows a correlation between two sets of data. Most of these students could give a clear definition of 'hypothesis' and gave opinions about the task concerning sport for life after a brainstorming session led by the teacher. Pupils listened well to their teacher and each other, but were less keen on producing written work. The teacher stressed the importance of communication skills and the opportunity to use information and communication technology. At the end of the lesson the teacher summarised learning well, eliciting responses from students. The effectiveness of this lesson, however, was lessened by the poor attendance rate, less than 50 per cent.
- 236 Attendance was also a problem in the Year 12 AS mathematics course at this stage of the year, because some of the 15 original students on the course have in effect given up. Those students present in lessons worked well, showing interest and a good attitude to learning. Most achieved grades A or B at GCSE. The scrutiny of work showed satisfactory progress over the year, a developing skill of making notes, greater speed and accuracy in written answers and an understanding of concepts and methods. One lesson observed was timetabled for a lunch-time and the practicalities of eating packed lunch in a lesson detracted from the level of concentration seen at other times. This lesson was on revising topics from the pure mathematics module 1 course, which was much needed in view of the limited response to some typical exam-style questions. All three AS topics are to be taken together in June, so students have a heavy workload, with no external feedback yet. The other Year 12 lesson challenged students to use the sign-change rule to find approximate solutions to equations and using the decimal search method to produce sequences converging to a root of the equation. Graphical calculators were introduced for students to draw curves of equations, to demonstrate finding the solution and to make a comparison with a decimal search method. The well-planned lesson showed the high level and depth of knowledge of the teacher and her communication skills. The summary of learning by the students at the end of the lesson indicated the value of using graphical calculators, for the first time for some students, and their realisation of developing understanding of the topic.
- 237 The six students taking 'A' level in Year 13 concentrated hard throughout their mathematics lessons, following the teachers' demonstrations on the whiteboard and trying hard themselves on questions from the well-presented text-books. Both teachers of Year 13 have very good subject knowledge and an understanding of how to teach to this level. Students following the pure mathematics module 3 course were successfully expressing rational algebraic fractions as partial fractions and building on work in the previous lessons. In the statistics 2 module the hypothesis testing started the previous week was successfully being extended. The teacher used coloured pens on the whiteboard to good effect, showing alternative methods of calculation, and went through the text-book examples in great detail so that all students understood. Both teachers had very good questioning techniques and

students contributed well in response and in discussion. The teachers know their students well and work closely with them to ensure good levels of understanding even when the students said that they were floundering. Verbal question and answer provided instant assessment of learning, as well as the oversight of written notes and examples. Students willingly continued text-book tasks at home, as well as completing formal revision or tests. The outcome of such homework tasks were assessed and marks recorded by teachers. The analysis of one student's work in both pure 2 and statistics 2 courses showed excellent presentation skills, detailed notes and annotations to their own work.

- 238 The quality of teaching in the sixth-form was good to very good, with excellent planning of lessons and the whole course. Teachers' knowledge of their subject was very good and they understood well how to teach to this high level. Relationships between teachers and students were very good and benefited students' learning. Text-book resources are very good for both Year 12 and 13, and the purchase and introduction of graphical calculators was needed but there is insufficient use of other information and communication technology, which would benefit work in all modules. There is sometimes a lack of variety in the teaching and learning styles used, in particular, of research skills and the presentation of such research would benefit students' all-round development. There are few opportunities for students to use initiative and take responsibility for their own learning in AS or A level mathematics. Leadership and management are good, with the healthy involvement of four members of the department in the sixth-form; for example, the good decision to extend the work on statistics rather than do mechanics in the sixth form because of the extra statistics work covered in Years 10 and 11. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory overall.

Science

- 239 The focus was on human biology and physics, but chemistry was also sampled. In chemistry, numbers have been small, but examination results were in line with the national average in 2001, with students doing as well as expected from their GCSE results. One chemistry lesson was seen in which the teaching and learning were excellent. Students were inspired by their teacher to use their knowledge from previous lessons and a wide range of sources of information, including the Internet, to extend their understanding of an industrial process. Overall, the quality of provision is very good.

Human Biology

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

Strengths

- The trend in examination results has been above the national average.
- Student achievement is good, some showing high levels of motivation.
- Teaching is good with high expectations for students' involvement in learning.
- Good management is characterised by a team committed to improving standards further.

Areas for improvement

- Students who are finding elements of the course difficult would benefit from structured time for personal guidance.
- Information is not always used effectively to maximise student progress.
- Investment in information and communication technology resources is necessary to raise standards further.

- 241 Standards are above average, reflecting examination results in 2001. Numbers taking the examination are usually below 20, making statistical comparisons difficult. However, results show good improvement over the last three years, with very good results in 2000, when attainment was well above average and two thirds of the students gained the highest grades A or B. This represents significant improvement since the last inspection, when standards were well below average. Results do not show significant differences between boys and girls over time because numbers are too small. Results in the first year of the new AS course are encouraging, with a good proportion of students gaining the highest grades, A or B, adding good value to GCSE grades overall. The new course has been successful in recruiting more students, including those who are generally more interested in humanities subjects. The study of human biology helps to broaden their studies. About half continue into the second year of the advanced level course and are successful beyond the sixth form, with a good proportion continuing to higher education.
- 242 Standards in lessons are good because teachers communicate subject knowledge effectively, preparing students for examinations with great care. Students in Year 13 apply mathematical skills to biological problems, as seen when they apply the “Hardy Weinberg“ statistics principle to the genetics context of “tasters” and “non-tasters” of an organic chemical. They develop good language skills because teachers place a high profile on its importance. Year 13 improve their knowledge of the formation of ova and spermatozoa because the teacher presents the information in a clear flow chart. In reading a section of an essay on the interdependence of organisms in the Rainforest, students synthesise information well for others in the class. Coursework shows good standards of writing, but students need more regular access to the use of information and communication technology as an integral part of teaching and learning. The current Year 12 students are well above the national average. They have a very good grasp of medical applications of genetic engineering, quickly understanding the idea of a “gene probe” and its relevance in identifying the target gene for modification.
- 243 Achievement is good. Boys and girls perform equally well in lessons. Students from ethnic minority backgrounds perform at least as well as their peers, contributing to lessons well. Able students sustain good progress from GCSE because they are well motivated. Lower attaining students rise to the challenge of the group in lessons, but sometimes find aspects of the course more difficult. They would benefit from further individual support and guidance from a subject specialist.
- 244 Teaching and learning are good. At best, teachers ask probing questions, provoking students to offer logical explanations. They work hard to ensure individuals have understood, as seen when individuals and small groups in Year 12 were given time with the teacher to discuss the power of DNA to affect human lives by its capacity to recombine in many forms. As a result, students are very confident to seek clarification and correct errors in their thinking. Lesson planning takes full account of the need for students to become progressively more independent. Consequently, students benefit from preparing “lessons “ for peers and this helps to refine their abilities and improves their confidence. They increase language capability as they explain to others. They participate well in discussion because they enjoy good relationships with teachers. They have good regard for the teacher’s subject expertise and are committed to improving their abilities. They are sensitive to moral issues, reflecting this in good writing about topics such as global warming, genetic counselling and conservation. A good session on lateral thinking captured their interest and widened their horizons about creativity in science. Assessment of students’ work is good and could be extended even further as a tool for determining how well individuals have understood key points of the lesson.

245 The subject is managed well. The team of teachers meets regularly and this has been influential in raising standards by making provision more consistent. They know students well and are in a good position to use information about them in a more structured way to set rigorous targets by harnessing their strengths.

Physics

246 Overall, the quality of provision in physics is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Teachers are enthusiastic and knowledgeable about the subject and communicate this well.
- Relationships in lessons are good.
- The courses are well structured and organised, with stimulating coursework activities.
- Good use is made of information and communication technology in coursework.

Areas for improvement

- Teaching and learning activities are not sufficiently well matched to the abilities of individual students.
- Students do not always take sufficient responsibility for their own learning, except for coursework.
- Examination and assessment results are not monitored rigorously enough to ensure that all students make good progress.

247 Over the last four years A level physics results have been below average when compared with all other schools. Numbers taking the examination have been small, making statistical comparisons difficult. Only 10 per cent have been girls, which is below the national average. When results are compared overall with those in their other subjects, students do less well in physics, but in 2000, 30 percent of the candidates achieved A or B grades. When prior attainment at GCSE is considered, more able students achieve results that are better than expected. Since the introduction of the new AS and A level course, numbers taking physics have increased and results at AS level in 2001 were as expected based on their results at GCSE.

248 The standards of students currently in Year 12 are matching expectations. In lessons they are achieving well for the AS course and have made good progress. They have developed their knowledge and understanding of reflection, refraction and diffraction beyond GCSE level and are coping well with quantum electro-dynamic theory. Coursework is done well, with all students achieving good results for their abilities. They make good use of information and communication technology to present research they have done on materials such as superconductors and manipulate data well in their instrumentation tasks. In Year 13, students are working at the standards expected. They show good understanding of the principles of electromagnetic machines, which they are able to explain using appropriate words and concepts. Practical investigations are done well, with good guidance and support from teachers, providing challenges for the students. For example, a study of double-glazing produced unexpected results which led to further investigation and research into ideas beyond those normally met at A level.

249 Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Teachers are enthusiastic with good subject knowledge and they present this clearly and effectively. In a lesson in which quantum theory was being applied to refraction, the teacher used an example of a person on a beach rescuing a drowning man to engage interest and explain the idea

of shortest trip time. Students are encouraged to improve their understanding by reading further about topics because their teacher uses examples from books that had helped his own understanding. Lessons are well structured and worksheets provide a framework for students' notes, avoiding unnecessary writing, and help students catch up after absence. Over the whole course a range of activities is used, but the lessons seen were mainly whole class teaching at a pace directed by the teacher and did not always meet the learning needs of individual students. In a Year 13 lesson, time was spent assembling simple apparatus and an investigation of changing flux linkage was carried out with students making simple observations when the activity could have been developed into a quantitative study. Students' knowledge and understanding are checked frequently by appropriate questions, but the first response is often accepted without allowing all students the opportunity to attempt an answer. Homework is set which extends the work in class. Work is marked thoroughly, with corrections and suggestions for improvement, and important points are discussed in lessons.

- 250 Students show interest in the subject and come to lessons ready to work. They work co-operatively with each other and their teachers in lessons. The more able students respond well to the teaching and extend their understanding by asking relevant questions, but some students, although they complete the tasks in lessons, make few contributions to the discussions and so do not make as much progress. Students are well guided and supported in their coursework tasks, but are less clear about their progress in their other work. They are supported by informal tutorials arranged out of normal teaching time. Good use is made of the CD-ROM that supports the Advancing Physics course.
- 251 Management of the department is improving under the overall leadership of the head of science. There is now a more stable staffing situation and the teachers are keen to improve standards. There has been some useful staff development with teachers of physics in other schools for joint planning and sharing of good practice which could be extended. Learning materials are well prepared, but some apparatus is out-dated and in need of replacement. Best use is made of the inadequate accommodation and preparation facilities, which are due for replacement. Some observation of lessons takes place, but there is insufficient monitoring of teaching and students' progress. This should be developed in conjunction with colleagues in the science department and there should be further development of teaching and learning activities.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

- 252 Two courses in this curriculum area were inspected: GCE AS and A2 Levels in design and technology: product design. The courses are reported under one heading: design and technology. Two AS lessons were observed in Year 12 and two A2 in Year 13. Teaching and learning in one was satisfactory and in the others was good or very good. Standards in the A2 course are in line with expectations; students have very good attitudes to learning and make good progress. In the AS course, standards are below expectations.

Design and technology

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

Strengths

- Teachers make good use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support work in both courses.
- Practical work in Year 13 is of good quality.

Areas for improvement

- AS level results are below expectations.
- Design work in the AS course is inadequate.
- Monitoring of AS students' progress is inadequate.

254 A level results have been above the national average from the previous inspection until 2000. In 2001 the new A2 level results were in line, although only a small number of students were entered. AS level results for 2001 were below what might have been expected, with no students achieving higher-level grades.

255 Students following the A2 course make very good use of the Internet and outside agencies for research. They make good use of information and communication technology for presentation of work. In one instance a student has made excellent use of computer graphics to represent a complex three-dimensional drawing. Some students understand the properties of new materials, such as a light-gathering plastic, which are incorporated into designs and constructions. Students have a good understanding of the value of modelling as part of the design process. They are not as secure about the testing of materials to establish if they are sufficiently strong to fulfil a function, for example for the back of a chair. Links between research and final developed ideas are not always made. Practical work is of a good standard and indicates a good understanding of a range of manufacturing techniques. The attitudes to learning of these students are very good, with evidence of much independent work.

256 Students following the current AS level course are working below expectations, taking account of their prior attainment. Elements of design work lack the required detail. For example, some research is at a superficial level. Students generally have a good knowledge of practical processes, but their understanding of materials and their properties and how these factors impact on design is less well developed. They are beginning to make good use of computer-aided design and manufacture for the production of components. However, basic design sketching skills are limited. These students show interest in lessons, but their lack of progress with design elements indicates that they have insufficient motivation to devote the necessary amount of time to this subject out of lessons.

257 Overall, teaching and learning are good. Teachers have a good understanding of the subject and examination requirements, which they transmit to pupils to help them to improve their work. Lessons are well organised and resourced, leading to students being able to make good use of time. Students are given very good levels of individual support, which enables them to make good progress, particularly in the A2 course. Very good relationships are significant factors in the good progress they make. Teaching of the AS level course has insufficient focus on elements of the design process.

- 258 Leadership and management of these courses are satisfactory. Resources are good. The range of ICT facilities has improved since the previous inspection, enhancing the scope of work that can be undertaken. This results in students producing some high quality work. Students are given good levels of verbal feedback. However, they have insufficient written feedback on which to base their future work. There is insufficient monitoring of the work of the AS level students. Students have good access to all facilities out of lesson time.

BUSINESS

Business Education

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

Strengths

- A level results in 2001 were well above average.
- Students in Year 12 are achieving well in both GNVQ Intermediate and Advanced vocational courses.
- Teaching and learning are good as a result of well-planned lessons and good support for students of all abilities.
- Teachers use information and communication technology effectively to enhance learning.
- Students have positive attitudes to learning and are well motivated.
- The subject is very well led, especially in encouraging good relations with staff, students and local business.

Areas for improvement

- To ensure the best teaching practice is shared through more systematic classroom observation.
- To improve the accommodation so that rooms are suited and resources are more readily available to students for independent study.
- To encourage Intermediate students to use a wider range of resources.

- 260 A Level was examined for the last time in 2001. Since then, the school decided to concentrate on GNVQ Intermediate and the Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) single and full awards, although it is planned to reintroduce A level in September 2002 as there is a strong demand for it. Standards at A Level were well above the national average at grades A to B and based on the average points scored. All students passed. Students achieved well and did significantly better in business studies than in their other A level subjects. Males and females did equally well. There has been a marked upward trend of improvement since 1998. Results in GNVQ Intermediate and Advanced in 2001 were above average. Results at AS level in the Advanced Vocational course in 2001 were broadly average in the proportion attaining the higher level. Nearly all students achieved as expected. All those taking the AS course have continued with the A2 Level in the AVCE course.

- 261 Overall, standards in work seen are in line with the national average. This represents satisfactory achievement for the AVCE students in Year 13 compared with their prior attainment at GCSE. The large group of 23 students on the Year 12 AVCE course are achieving well compared with their prior attainment. Students have a good knowledge and understanding of the key business terms and concepts, for instance in understanding the value of a firm's induction programme for new recruits in Year 13. There was more variability in the understanding of Year 12 students of how different motivational theories relate to the work place. Students have at least

competent literacy skills. They are able to select and record relevant information and have good skills of reading and speaking. Most of the Year 12 AS students spoke clearly and confidently in making their impressive presentations on the effect of the Dyson company moving its factory to the Far East. The good support by a fellow student and learning support assistant also enabled a student with a physical impairment to participate fully. Students also showed good skills of critical analysis and could empathise strongly with the inhabitants, business people and the chamber of commerce in the town affected. This was promoted by the high expectations set by the teacher and the challenging questioning. The students' thorough research showed their enthusiasm as well as the well-developed skills of using the Internet, which students display generally. They confidently use spreadsheets, bar charts and pie graphs, as well as word processing, to support their research, especially in their case studies on business at work.

- 262 Higher attaining AVCE students in Years 12 and 13 write at length with precise relevance, fluency and well-supported analytical arguments. Year 12 students applied business theory very well to the practice they found in their case studies of an airline and a construction company. One student showed excellent initiative by testing her hypothesis on "democratic management" in a firm by devising a questionnaire for staff. Results were then tabulated using information and communication technology. Skills of extended writing amongst other students vary according to their ability. There are weaknesses in structuring paragraphs and in, lower attaining students, their written expression, unless they are regularly checked by teachers. There is sometimes a tendency to retell the data provided rather than evaluate it critically.
- 263 Standards of students in Year 12 on the GNVQ Intermediate course are broadly average. They achieve well as many of them had below average attainment in GCSE. Students have satisfactory note-making skills and follow the assignment specifications well. The most able apply evidence gathered from their case study to the business theory, as when a student used evidence from a supermarket to exemplify practices in human resources. Most students have at least satisfactory information and communication technology skills and the best competently use computer programmes to illustrate their talks. This was seen when four students on the course eagerly prepared a presentation for the final of the NatWest Tender competition outside school, in which they came second.
- 264 Teaching is good. It is often very good and is never unsatisfactory. Teachers have a very good subject knowledge which is used well to plan a variety of challenging tasks. Assignment objectives are clear and explained well to students, including the criteria for the attainment of higher grades. There is a lively pace to lessons which stimulates strong interest and response from the students. Marking is very thorough and students are guided carefully on how to improve on their initial submissions of their case studies. Teachers set high expectations and monitor progress carefully, as seen in a Year 12 lesson when the teacher firmly checked homework. The good relationships that teachers have with the students promote a good response and create a positive learning atmosphere. The use of information and communication technology is strongly encouraged for research and word processing, as when Year 12 AVCE students were guided to different websites to research into customer services for different firms. Access to computers, however, is constrained as lessons take place in many different rooms.
- 265 This good quality teaching produces good learning with positive and productive gains in students' knowledge and skills in nearly all lessons. It is also promoted by the good attitudes of the students to work. They co-operate well with each other and the

teacher, as seen when the Year 12 AVCE students enthusiastically and tolerantly listened carefully to each others' views in their role playing of the different interest groups reacting to the closure of the Dyson works. Most students display the maturity and motivation to take on the responsibility of working by themselves as the tasks are stimulating and well explained. Consequently, nearly all students meet deadlines and are enthusiastic about the subject. However, there is a minority of students whose attitude is less positive. This can lead to some lateness to lessons and a failure to give in homework on time.

- 266 A very clear educational direction is provided for the subject by the enthusiastic head of department. Schemes of work are thorough and helpful. The departmental development plan strongly reflects the plans for improvement of the whole school. There are good assessment procedures with information of pupils' prior attainment being well used to set targets and track progress. Pupils are fully aware of their progress and know how to improve. The curriculum and learning are strongly enhanced by the very good business links. Students benefit from visits to Eurodisney, to local manufacturing firms, a bank, hotel and to the University of Hertfordshire. Many firms also come into the school to provide valuable stimulus and resources for the students. Learning resources are well managed and all staff are very well supported. However, the use of regular and mutual classroom observation as a way of monitoring teaching and sharing good practice, has not been fully developed. Accommodation is unsatisfactory. There is much inconvenience caused by the wide dispersal of teaching groups. Although there is a business studies base room the school is well aware of the difficulties which GNVQ students face with independent study and has plans to address the situation. The school is well aware of this and has plans to address the situation.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

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

Strengths

- Levels of achievement in both intermediate GNVQ ICT and AVCE ICT are good and improving.
- High expectations and good subject knowledge of staff ensure that students make good progress.
- Good use is made of industry links to support learning at the advanced level.

Areas for improvement

- Development of industry links in the GNVQ intermediate course.
- Updating of accommodation.

- 268 Since the last inspection ICT courses have become part of the post-16 provision. In addition to Intermediate GNVQ and AVCE ICT, Key Skills in ICT is offered at both Levels 2 and 3. The 2001 results in both the GNVQ Intermediate and AVCE ICT were well above the national average. This shows improvement on the previous year's results. Although very few girls take these courses, there is no significant difference in attainment by gender.

- 269 The work of students seen in all post-16 ICT lessons including coursework in portfolios confirms that standards, overall, are good. Students give accurate

responses to teachers' questioning, showing understanding of theoretical and the practical aspects of the course. Year 12 AVCE students showed very good understanding of the use of a high level programming language (Visual Basic) to devise a user interface, such as used in Windows, and later in the lesson displaying competently the practical skills required for the task. Most students show evidence of independent research skills and presentation of coursework is of a high standard. Mature and effective use of Internet resources and competency with a range of ICT applications is apparent in students' work.

- 270 Teaching is good in the ICT courses in the sixth form. Students benefit from experienced specialist teachers who have had a number of years industrial experience within different aspects of the ICT industry before becoming qualified teachers. This enables them to support both the theoretical understanding and practical skills in project work required at Advanced level. As a result of high expectations and generally good resources, students on all post-16 information and communication technology courses work at a good pace and are able make good progress. Both work in lessons and completed coursework showed good progress by most students in relation to the units studied with students working independently in practical sessions in a mature manner. Great emphasis is placed on students knowing the project and examination criteria and what they need to do to meet it. This contributes to the levels of good achievement made by pupils.
- 271 Good use of industry links is made to support learning on the AVCE course. A professional graphic designer visits to support work on the graphic unit. Students also make visits to organisations to examine their use of ICT in relation to specific units of coursework. All students have visited the ICT Centre at the nearby University of Hertfordshire which has resulted in a majority of the Year 13 pupils being motivated to achieve the required grades for a university place to study IT. Industrial links for students on other ICT courses needs be developed further.
- 272 All the students show interest and enthusiasm for the subject. Key skills students reported that they found ICT Key Skills useful and that it supported their work in other post 16 courses. Many of the Intermediate GNVQ students wish to take an advanced ICT course if successful.
- 273 There is good leadership and management of the subject. Systems for monitoring individual students' progress are well established. Results for each unit are recorded with pupils given individual targets in order to improve achievement. Overall, resources for ICT in the sixth form are good and well managed. This is with the exception of one teaching room, which is inadequate to deliver whole class ICT effectively.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

- 274 The focus was on travel and tourism, but physical education was also sampled. Teaching is very good, as are relationships. Students are enthusiastic and hardworking. They work very well together on both AS and A2 courses and show good understanding of the topics studied. Lesson planning is thorough and students demonstrate attainment which is in line with national averages in the subject on the A2 course and above average on the AS course.

Travel and Tourism

- 275 Overall, the quality of provision in travel and tourism is **very good** because well-organised learning activities promote very good gains in students' subject knowledge and understanding.

Strengths

- Consistent very good quality teaching supports the development of independent learning.
- Good quality in-depth and constructive evaluation of students' work helps students improve their work.
- Good relationships between students and teachers supports good quality learning.

Areas for improvement

- The development of additional tasks that extend the most able students within lessons.
- The development of packs of student resources plus a subject handbook that includes full details of lesson activities.
- Accommodation for the subject so that the vocational element can be displayed and promoted.

- 276 The Advanced Vocational Certificate in Education (AVCE) was introduced in 2000 and to date no students have taken the Travel and Tourism AVCE examination. Results in the GNVQ Advanced Leisure and Tourism course in 2001 were very good with the small group of students achieving grades well above national standards. Over half the group was awarded a distinction. This result maintained the upward trend in attainment shown over the last three years. Girls and boys achieved similar standards. The standard reached by current students in Years 12 and 13, as seen in lessons and in their written work, is well above average. Results of assessed work, that contribute towards students' final grade, indicate an improvement over time and give a clear indication that standards at the end of the course will be high.

- 277 Students develop a very good knowledge of the wide range of activities that contribute towards the development and provision of tourism because the course is very well planned and clearly presented. Lesson objectives are clearly outlined at the start of each lesson so that all students know what they are expected to do and this approach supports the good progress students make over time. For example, following a visit to two local hotels the teacher reviewed the aims of the visit and highlighted the way in which the report was to be written. This enabled students to create a report that incorporated their own judgements following an analysis of the evidence they had collected. As a result of this approach, which fully involves students in their learning, all students display a mature and committed attitude towards the course. Students are encouraged to work as a team and the very good relationships that have developed between teachers and students support learning within the small teaching groups. Many opportunities are provided for students to take responsibility for an element of their learning with, for example, a recent successful visit to study tourism in Copenhagen being planned and organised by members of the group. The wide range of visits is doing much to ensure that students can explain and analyse different tourism and hospitality features based on first hand knowledge and this is effective in raising standards.

- 278 The course is well structured to support the development of students as independent learners with students working individually on reports and planning activities that form the assessed part of their course. This approach provides a good level of challenge to which students respond positively and is supporting the improvement in standards that all students show over time. However, there are few planned activities within the

taught part of the course for the most able students to make a planned contribution to discussions by providing information from additional tasks or research they have carried out in preparation for the lesson. Good use is made of key terms and ideas with students expected to use them accurately in discussion and written work. This is supporting accuracy and understanding as well as promoting students' literacy development. In a lesson about tourist development over time, students were taught how to recognise how and why a particular stage of development had occurred with understanding supported through the accurate use of key terms linked to the processes of development and change. All students benefit from the thorough and evaluative marking of their work because there are clear indications of the provisional grade awarded together with what is needed in order to bring about an improvement.

- 279 The subject is very well managed and this makes a positive contribution to the way in which both students and teachers are fully involved in all aspects of the course. Monitoring of teaching is good and this ensures that an effective learning process is in place. Teachers work well as a team to provide students with good advice about structuring and refining their work in-order to reach the highest possible individual standards. Resources are satisfactory and individual items are available to support each taught unit of the course and to support individual student investigation. Currently, there are no packs of resources to support fully independent learning in each unit of the course or to enable students to make an informed contribution to whole class discussions as a result of extra research. The vocational element of the subject is not fully promoted and displayed because the accommodation for the subject is unsatisfactory. Teaching takes place in many different rooms with no easy access to resources and no provision for work to be displayed. The subject makes very good use of information and communication technology to collect, process and display information. Well-planned use of the Internet enables students to incorporate up to date ideas and evidence into their written reports.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

- 280 The inspection did not focus specifically on this area but one GNVQ intermediate lesson was observed. Students' attainment is mostly above course requirements and four students are working at merit standards. Courses are thoroughly planned and have positive links with the vocational and occupational element of the subject.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

- 281 The focus was on art and design but one lesson of theatre studies was sampled. Examination results in theatre studies were below average in 2001, though overall pupils did as expected based on previous results. The standard of work seen in Year 13 was average. Teaching is good with careful questioning supporting gains in understanding. Overall, the provision is good.

Art & Design

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

Strengths

- Students make very good progress and achieve very well.
- AS and A2-level results are well above the national average and have been maintained since the last inspection.
- The quality of teaching is very good, with high quality individual help given to students supported by a strong subject knowledge.
- Students show high levels of interest, enthusiasm and motivation through their AS-level course and the majority convert to A-level study.
- Relationships among students and their interaction with teachers are very good.
- Very good management of the subject by the head of art and design and teamwork amongst the four teachers supports high standards.

Areas for improvement

- The accommodation is in need of re-decoration and refurbishment.

283 The standard of achievement in art and design has been maintained at well above average levels since the last inspection. In 2001 examinations, students attained well above average levels. A high proportion of students attained the higher A and B grades. There is no significant difference in attainment between male and female students.

284 In Year 12, students sustain and develop their skills from their GCSE course and are able to translate these skills in drawing and painting and three-dimensional work to greater depth. Sketchbooks demonstrate a wealth of research and experimentation that is transferred into final projects. Work in folios in both Years 12 and 13 are of a high quality. They show a very good development of ideas and a good understanding of design and composition. Students apply their well-developed skills with a feeling and sensitivity for the media being used. For example, students in a Year 13 lesson show a very good analysis of their work, influenced by a wide and relevant range of research from many artists. A student had greatly benefited from a 10-day work experience in the design department of a young men's magazine. Students show a very good application of their information and communication skills in image distortion and development to produce work, influenced by their wide range of research, in their own styles.

285 Teaching is very good overall and has improved since the last inspection. Most teaching is on an individual basis within the small groups. Teachers, applying their very good subject expertise and knowledge to teach AS-and A2-level courses, effectively analyse, evaluate and support the development of the students' work with a good awareness of how it can be improved. Many opportunities are provided for students to explore a wide range of artists' work from across the world. Students are given an extensive range of opportunities to see and practice the development of the styles of their work. Here they make a detailed analysis of a wide range of artists' work before developing their own style. Progress and achievement are monitored regularly and students know what they need to do to improve. A good range of opportunities is provided for two and three-dimensional work.

286 Students respond very positively to the high-quality sensitive help given. They use their time well, showing independence and maturity in their approach. The high quality teaching they receive adds to their high levels of motivation and interest.

They work very well together and benefit from challenging targets and activities. They show high levels of interest, motivation and enthusiasm for their work. An increasing number of students go on to higher studies in art and design when they leave the school.

- 287 The very good management of the sixth form courses ensures varied teaching styles and gives the students good levels of individual help to check progress and suggest development and research needs. The accommodation is in need of re-decoration and refurbishment and provides the students with limited opportunities to suitably store their work and to leave it out while it is being developed.

HUMANITIES

- 288 The focus was on history, psychology and sociology, but geography, law and religious education lessons were also sampled. Teaching is good in geography and students are attaining well. In law, teaching and learning are very good and students' attainment is good. In religious education, teaching is very good and attainment is above average. Relationships are very good in all three subjects. There is a good range of resources and this, together with the good quality of explanation given to students, underpins students' learning.

History

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

Strengths

- Standards at A level have improved and are above the national average.
- Students achieve well and often exceed their targets.
- Good teaching encourages good learning, especially in giving the students the skills and confidence to work effectively by themselves.
- Students are well motivated and work well with each other and the teacher.
- The department is well led and managed; this promotes high standards and the subject's growing popularity.

Areas for improvement

- To develop skills of source work analysis and extended writing with well-supported arguments in lower attaining students.
- Promote more awareness of the views of a range of historians through more wide ranging analysis work and a greater variety of book resources.

- 290 In the GCE A-level examinations in 2001, standards were above the national average on the average points scored and on the proportion gaining A to E grades as all students passed. The five students entered, all females, achieved broadly as expected. This was not as high as in the previous year when A level standards were well above average and some of the best in the school. Females have consistently done better than males in the last three years, though numbers are too small to be significant. AS results for 2001 were close to the average: all passed and most achieved as expected. Retention rates are excellent with all of the nine students continuing onto the A2 course in Year 13.

- 291 Standards in work seen are above the national average. In Year 13, students are achieving well in relation to predictions based on their GCSE results. They have a good understanding of the main concepts of the periods under study. Skills of note making and recording of relevant evidence from a number of sources are also good.

In a Year 12 lesson, students worked effectively in groups to examine how bad conditions were in the nineteen-thirties using a mixture of primary and secondary sources. Students generally show good understanding and fluency in expressing their views, as when Year 13 students in class discussion confidently analysed the conflicts between different black civil rights groups in America. Year 12 students, however, were more reticent about discussing in pairs anti-Semitism in Nazi Germany.

- 292 More able students have mature skills of analysing and evaluating key issues. They discuss complex ideas with considerable insight and write well structured, analytical essays. Supporting evidence is used well and strong feelings of empathy are often accurately expressed. Year 12 students vividly described Bloody Sunday in Russia in 1905 from an onlooker's viewpoint, while Year 13 students wrote passionately about their feeling against the Ku Klux Klan as if they were southern whites and blacks. This has been promoted by the high expectations set by the teachers in developing enquiry and analytical skills. A physically impaired student in Year 13 was also making good progress, especially in being fully involved in the class discussions with insightful comments. Middle and lower attaining students in Year 12 are achieving as expected for this stage of their AS course. However, they sometimes find it difficult to make balanced judgements and write relevantly and accurately with well-supported arguments without encouragement to plan and draft their work first. Students of all abilities are not always fully aware of the range of different historians' interpretations on a subject, partly because of limited book resources.
- 293 Teaching overall is good and occasionally very good. Consequently, students learn well. Teachers use their very good knowledge of the subject to plan lessons which offer stimulating activities based on the students' own enquiry. Where teaching is most effective, there is a brisk pace to the lesson, time is used well in setting deadlines and providing quick-fire questioning to check understanding and to stretch students' thinking. Tasks frequently make challenging demands on their skills of analysis. Year 13 students were constantly engaged throughout the lesson by the teacher challenging their thinking and encouraging others to do so when comparing different black activist groups during the American civil rights movement. There were clear gains in their knowledge and understanding, while their speaking and analytical skills were strongly reinforced.
- 294 This good learning is also promoted by the good relationship with the students, based on the teachers' readiness to give time to monitoring and guiding the students' progress. Marking is done very thoroughly with very helpful comments so that students know their weaknesses and how to improve, though weaknesses of essay style and structure are not always fully addressed. Students respond well and gain the confidence to work independently. Their attitude to work is good and occasionally excellent. They use time well and most are productive in their work. Students expressed strong appreciation for the support and guidance given by staff and their encouragement.
- 295 The very effective leadership and management of the subject also promote the good teaching and learning. In displaying good organisation and strong commitment to the subject, the head of department sets high expectations of standards and effort. Both students and staff respect this and respond well. Schemes of work are clear and challenging in their tasks. The setting of specific targets for students after assessments provides well-focused direction for improvement, to which the students readily respond. A wider range of resources would provide the students with more stimulus and support for detailed, private study.

Psychology

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

Strengths

- Standards are high and are at least above average.
- Students make very good progress and achieve very well.
- Teaching and leadership of the subject are very good.
- Planning and the preparation of resources to support students' learning are very good.
- Students' work is thoroughly assessed so students know their strengths and what they need to do to improve.
- Students have very positive attitudes to learning and show a very strong commitment to the subject. The course is very popular and numbers taking it have greatly increased.

Areas for improvement

- There is only one teacher to teach over 70 students currently studying the AS and A2 courses.
- There is no designated room for the teaching of psychology and there are no opportunities for display to aid students' learning.

297 Psychology was not taught at the time of the last inspection. In the 2001 examination too few students attained the higher A and B grades. Evidence from samples of previous work, lessons seen and examination results from students who sat the examination again to attain higher marks, indicate that standards are now rising towards being at least above average levels of attainment. This is due to the very thorough preparation of learning resources by the teacher. These resources, together with the use of carefully chosen texts aid very well the students' achievements and attainment.

298 In Year 12, students show a very good awareness of the main authorities who have written on developmental psychology, individual differences, disorders and the influence that nature and our up-bringing has on the way we function. In a Year 12 lesson, students use their 'A' level textbook, the very comprehensive range of notes provided by the teacher and their own detailed notes very well. This input enables them to distinguish the influences memory has on the way we function. Their awareness is greatly heightened by the very good range of illustrations the teacher provides, supported by video input, for them to examine in practice the ways memory works.

299 In Year 13, students achieve well in relation to predictions based on their AS results. In lessons, they are highly motivated to do well and work effectively in pairs or larger groups to complete taxing and challenging tasks. The teacher has high expectations, a very good subject knowledge and very well supports the students' learning. For example, students are effectively examining the biological and medical ideas of behaviour and how our attitude to our lifestyle can affect our health. They show a very good awareness of how published studies in psychology indicate the various ways people behave towards health and illness. Students translate this awareness, effectively word processing their answers, into their well thought out written descriptions. Many students, in their essays, are intelligently starting to include a wide and relevant range of references to authorities and researchers that have published work.

300 Some still find this difficult and the teacher is effectively encouraging and supporting them to do so. In this group there are two students from a local selective school that

does not offer psychology at A2 level. They comment very favourably on the course they are now receiving.

- 301 Teaching is very good overall. The teacher applies her very good expertise and knowledge to teach AS-and A2-level courses. The use of very good resources to aid the students' learning is supported with a very good analysis of how students can improve their standards. Relationships are excellent, lessons proceed at a brisk pace and high levels of support are given to develop the students' independent learning skills.
- 302 Students respond very positively to the high quality help they receive. They use their time very well, showing independence and maturity in their approach. They show very high levels of enthusiasm and motivation to learn. Some students are already considering careers that involve psychology. For example, a student is considering a career in art therapy. When asked they all talk very highly of the teaching and support they get to further their psychological knowledge. There is no specialist room for the teaching of psychology. This means that the opportunities to use interactive displays to celebrate and to further inform the students' learning is limited. Nevertheless, the leadership and management of the subject are very good.

Sociology

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

Strengths:

- Achievement of students is good in relation to their GCSE points score.
- Attitudes of students are very good. Students are attentive and work hard to succeed.
- Teaching is good.
- Individual feedback gives students a clear indication of how to improve their work.

Areas for improvement:

- The limited variety of teaching methods. Teaching relies heavily on handouts.
- Schemes of work are insufficiently detailed and do not include teaching methods or assessment opportunities.
- The use of examination result analysis and assessment findings to widen the approaches to teaching and ways students learn to promote higher standards.

- 304 Sociology is offered at GCE Advanced and Advanced Subsidiary levels. Courses are gaining in popularity and there are 26 students in Year 12. Over the previous three years, attainment has fluctuated a little but has been broadly in line with the national average. A few students have attained higher grades, but the percentage has mostly been below the national average, except in 2000. The majority of students attain as well in sociology as they do in their other subjects. Students' achievement has been good when compared to their GCSE results. Boys and girls achieve comparable standards, though many more girls than boys join the courses.
- 305 Students' work seen during the inspection indicates average attainment in Years 12 and 13. Students' achievement is mostly good, based on their GCSE average point score. There is a wide range of abilities in Years 12 and 13. Students understand concepts more fully in Year 13 and have an awareness of developing issues, for example the acknowledgement of domestic violence as a criminal offence when previously it was often accepted and tolerated. Higher ability students are confident and articulate and extend their thinking beyond the initial topic. They showed

evidence of this in a lesson about families and the links to crime and deviance. A few students accept only one perspective and do not always challenge or debate sufficiently. Lower attaining students lack depth in their essays, especially in the evaluative content. Students' files are organised and presented very well. They take pride in their work.

- 306 Teaching is good overall and students of all abilities learn well as a result. Teaching has clear aims and objectives that are shared with the students at the start of each lesson. The teacher has very good subject knowledge. Relationships are very good and students are prepared to ask for help and clarification. A strength of the teaching is the quality of support given to individual students as they are helped to understand how well they are doing and how they might further improve their work. Year 12 students planning their research project are advised well. They are skilfully helped to adapt their own ideas to meet the examination criteria.
- 307 When the teacher uses contemporary events to illustrate sociological theories and provides the students with the relevant newspaper articles, learning is very good. However, the lack of range of teaching methods used sometimes limits the level of students' participation in lessons and inhibits their learning through discussion and debate. Resources used in lessons are mostly limited to handouts. There is very little evidence in students' files of the use of information technology in lessons or for research. However, a wide range of subject specific support material for study skills is available to students. Marking is thorough and gives students a clear indication of what they need to do to improve.
- 308 Students' attitudes are very good. There is a very good level of engagement in all lessons. Students are attentive and want to succeed. Students in Year 13 sustain their concentration until tasks are complete. However, a few students in both years do not undertake sufficient independent reading and research and this hinders their learning.
- 309 Leadership and management are satisfactory. There is only one teacher in the department and this necessitates there being 26 students in one class in Year 12. Students in this group do not feel that they always have enough individual attention. Written units of work are superficial. They give no indication of teaching strategies, of assessment opportunities and of the use of different learning resources. The analysis of assessments, performance data and results is not used effectively to guide curricular planning. Teaching rooms are spread around the school. This means the teacher has to transport the teaching resources for every lesson and the formal furniture arrangements in most of the rooms are not appropriate for group work.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

- 310 The focus was on English and French, but Spanish was sampled. In 2001, Spanish results were above the national average. Teaching and learning are good and students have positive attitudes.

English

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

Strengths

- There is some very good teaching and some lessons are very well planned.
- Students' attitudes to the courses are very good.
- Students' results are above the national average.

Areas for improvement

- Feedback to students on current attainment.

312 At the time of the last inspection, standards were in line with the national average. In 2001, results in the GCE A level examination were above the national average and there has been a trend of slight improvement over the last three years. When compared to students' attainment in GCSE examinations two years earlier, these results show satisfactory achievement.

313 English is a popular subject with students and numbers taking the A level course have remained large enough to run two classes in both Years 12 and 13. The standards reached by current Year 13 students, as seen in lessons and in their written work, were close to the national averages and showed satisfactory progress from their AS results at the end of Year 12. All but eight of the successful 28 students who passed this examination have elected to continue their study of English to A level (A2).

314 Students in Year 13 are developing effective methods of analysing and comparing texts. They can identify features from the context of a piece of writing which defines a writer's purpose and intended audience and then compare texts from different periods and genres. They use structured discussions to explore the features of a piece of writing and assemble evidence, such as the use of pronouns, to support their interpretation of the nature of a particular text. Some higher attainers work from an initial consideration of evidence to a reasoned appraisal of a piece of writing. One girl, for example, identified a socio-political theme in a passage about travel in Afghanistan. She was then able to direct her partner to evidence supporting her view that this was the writer's primary interest. Most students, though, were still at the stage of identifying the features that help to describe a text, without offering a coherent interpretation. Students show good oral skills, expressing their ideas confidently and fluently and approaching discussion methodically. They listen well and give due attention to other people's views when they are forming their own ideas. After discussion they approach their texts with a sharper focus and reach a more secure analysis. They have developed a good grasp of the characters and their motivation in *Othello* and are beginning to analyse the differences in the language used to create different moods at different stages in the plot. In the unit of work where they are required to transform a text from one genre to another they have made significant progress over a six-month period. This shows particularly in the depth of background research – covering both appropriate literary models and social and political background - and the detailed evaluations of their own writing. They make good use of the drafting process to refine their work, moving from a functional written style to one that is fluent and polished over the two-year course.

315 Students in Year 12 make good progress, quickly adapting to the needs of the course and developing a mature and critical approach to literature. They show a good appreciation of complex poems in which Wilfred Owen considers an after life, and can focus on the rhyme scheme, imagery and rhetorical devices to make a clear link between the writers' intention and effect. In a lesson where they were preparing

spoken commentaries on the texts which they had produced, students worked tentatively at first to develop an understanding of the concept of a “voice”, and then collaborated very effectively to identify ways in which this can be varied to achieve a particular effect.

- 316 Overall, the quality of teaching is good. Lessons are very well planned to engage students in a variety of activities designed to develop understanding and to probe progressively deeper into the texts. Assignments are set up very carefully, giving students ample opportunity to clarify exactly what skills are required. In the best lessons, tight time constraints ensure that students work at pace, and students are clear about the standards they are achieving. Responsibility for the outcomes of each activity is left firmly with the students so that they are managing the range and depth of their own learning and are developing independent study skills. Good use of questioning challenges students' assumptions and deepens their understanding. Questioning is well timed to focus discussion and to keep the challenge high. It is used to provoke curiosity, but students are encouraged to satisfy this for themselves. Regular changes of groupings for different activities maintain the focus the work.
- 317 Relationships are excellent because the teachers and the students treat each other with respect. This is particularly evident within the marking process, which is a dialogue between student and teacher. Draft assignments are submitted part finished and students can identify areas of uncertainty so that the teacher can suggest new directions or confirm the quality of what has been submitted. This contributes particularly to the gains in confidence and the improvement in the quality of students' writing. When students are discussing their own work the teacher circulates effectively, listening to their views and finding opportunities to probe and question further. No suggestion is rejected; rather ideas are tested and then adopted or adapted. This support for self esteem is a key to the successful teaching of communications skills to students who are working towards Level 2 qualifications in Year 12. Their growing confidence enabled them to deliver carefully planned presentations in a semi-formal situation – a task which would have been well beyond them until recently.
- 318 In Drama, examination results were below average in 2001, though overall pupils did as expected based on previous results. The standard of work seen in Year 13 was average. Students developed a good grasp of character and motivation, although they lacked the fine control of movement to portray these clearly. Teaching is good with careful questioning supporting gains in understanding. Overall, the provision is good.

FRENCH

- 319 Overall, the quality of provision is good.

Strengths

- Teachers' language skills are very good.
- Relationships between students and teachers are very good.
- The contribution of the foreign language assistant is a valuable asset to the sixth form students.

Areas for improvement

- The development of oral skills in Year 12.

- 320 Standards in French at AS and A level in 2001 match national averages, but the numbers of students taking French have been low. All four candidates gained grades B or C and this represents satisfactory achievement in comparison with students' GCSE results.
- 321 The current Year 13 has only one student who has continued from AS level. In the lessons observed work is of a high standard. In Year 12 there are eight students of whom three are boys. Standards vary within the group from very good to just below average.
- 322 Teaching is good overall and students learn well as a result. The teachers, including the foreign language assistant, have clear objectives, good planning of lessons and a variety of tasks to incorporate all four language skills. The quality of the teachers' subject knowledge and skills is very good. They are fluent in the target language. In both Year 13 and in Year 12 lessons, the teacher plans a variety of tasks all interrelated on the theme of the lesson – crime and punishment and racism. In a Year 13 lesson on the death penalty, the teacher used open questions to give the student an opportunity to talk and expand on the issues being raised with the teacher challenging the student further by asking for examples. In a Year 12 lesson on the topic of racism students were asked in turn to provide ideas for an essay which had been prepared for homework. The teacher used these ideas skilfully to give students an opportunity for further discussion. Teaching took place in French most of the time, but too often many of the instructions were given in English. Work in folders showed a wide range of grammatical exercises, extended writing and tests on vocabulary, all suitable for the demands of the examination. Marking of work is good with supportive and informative comments.
- 323 Students learn well and relationships between teacher and students are very good. In Year 13 the student is very confident in oral work and is able to sustain an argument in a conversation in the target language. The quality of independent study is very good. French newspapers and magazines are read often and French films and videos are used to enhance listening skills. Students in Year 12 are less confident. They are more hesitant in speaking the target language without the support of the text book or a prompt sheet. Work in folders varies in standard and there are many inaccuracies in grammar in written work.
- 324 Both A and AS courses include topics such as abortion and the death penalty which offer considerable opportunities to consider moral questions. The teacher treats these issues in a sensitive way. The good teaching and learning result from work in the subject being well led and managed. Standards in French have continued at a similar level to those at the time of the previous inspection.