

INSPECTION REPORT

LONGDEAN SCHOOL

Hemel Hempstead

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117523

Headteacher: Mr A N Matthias

Reporting inspector: John Godwood
18242

Dates of inspection: 21 – 25 January 2002

Inspection number: 191826

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

© Crown copyright 2002

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

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Rumballs Road Hemel Hempstead Hertfordshire
Postcode:	HP3 8JB
Telephone number:	01442 217277
Fax number:	01442 233098
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr C Bullen
Date of previous inspection:	March 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
18242	John Godwood	Registered inspector	Equal opportunities	What sort of school is it? How high are standards; the school's results and pupils' achievements? How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
11094	Ian Blair	Lay inspector		How high are standards; pupils' attitudes, values and personal development? How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
31329	Katie Barratt	Team inspector	History	
3958	Maureen Cawdron	Team inspector	English	
			Drama	
10391	Val du Plergny	Team inspector	Special educational needs	
			Music	
10561	Angela Fraser	Team inspector	Design and technology	
13054	Michael Pennington	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
10392	Donaleen Ratcliff	Team inspector	Geography	
10288	John Richards	Team inspector	Art and design	
			Design and technology	
23030	Caroline Runyard	Team inspector	Physical education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
27662	Elizabeth Schofield	Team inspector	Religious education	
6432	Mick Sewter	Team inspector	Science	
10053	Janet Simms	Team inspector	Business education	
			English as an additional language	
22491	Lorraine Small	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
22691	Ray Woodhouse	Team inspector	Mathematics	

The inspection contractor was:

Open Book Inspections
6 East Point
High Street
Seal
Sevenoaks
TN15 0EG

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

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

REPORT CONTENTS

Page

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

7 - 15

Information about the school
How good the school is
What the school does well
What could be improved
How the school has improved since its last inspection
Standards
Students' attitudes and values
Teaching and learning
Other aspects of the school
How well the school is led and managed
Parents' and carers' views of the school

ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

16 - 20

The school's results and students' achievements
Students' attitudes, values and personal development

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

20 - 24

HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED STUDENTS?

24 - 29

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

30 - 32

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

32 - 33

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

33 - 38

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

38 - 40

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

41 - 45

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

46 - 72

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

73 - 89

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Longdean School is a community comprehensive school of above average size with 1217 students, aged 11 to 19. The school is oversubscribed. Most students come from the Bennetts End or Leverstock Green wards of Hemel Hempstead. There is a wide range of backgrounds, but few students come from the more affluent areas. Fourteen per cent of students come from minority ethnic backgrounds. Most of these are of Pakistani origin, though there are small numbers from Black Caribbean, Black African or other Asian backgrounds. Eleven per cent of students have English as an additional language, which is higher than average, and 36 are beginners in English. The main home languages are Urdu and Gujarati. Nine per cent of students are eligible for free school meals, which is broadly average. Twenty-six per cent of students have special educational needs, which is above average. Of 82 with more significant special needs, 20 have emotional and behavioural difficulties, 57 have learning difficulties, two are visually impaired and three have physical needs. Nineteen students have statements, which is below average. The attainment of students on entry to the school has been rising in recent years. In Years 7 and 8 it was average, whereas in Years 9 to 11 it was below average. The school has had significant difficulty recruiting qualified staff in some subjects, most notably in science, but also in English and modern languages.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Longdean School is a good and improving school. Standards of attainment are average, though they are better in some subjects than others. Standards are above average in the sixth form. Students achieve well. Teachers provide a good level of care and support and, because of this, most students like school, have a good attitude to their work and establish good relationships. Students' progress is monitored carefully. Teaching is generally good and some is very good or excellent, though some teachers need more support in developing their teaching skills. The school is well led, and a vigorous approach to monitoring standards and taking action in areas of under-performance has resulted in improvement in recent years. Finances are very well managed and the school gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- Students achieve well and standards are improving.
- Teaching is good and some is very good or excellent.
- Students receive a high level of pastoral care.
- Students' progress is carefully monitored and they are given appropriate support.
- There is a strong commitment to evaluating the school's performance and taking action to raise standards.
- There are particularly high standards in mathematics, music, religious education and geography.
- Sixth form students achieve very well.

What could be improved

- Standards of attainment vary between different subjects.
- Staff development does not ensure that all teachers develop a full range of teaching skills.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) is not used sufficiently to support learning in other subjects.
- Opportunities for spiritual development need to be more carefully planned.
- A small but significant minority of students arrive late for school and registration time is not used well.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in 1997. Since then, the school has made a good improvement. Very good progress has been made in raising standards through higher expectations, better assessment and more consistent management of behaviour. GCSE results have improved at a faster rate than the national trend and teaching has improved significantly. The revised timings of the school day make significantly better use of time, but only limited improvement has been made in the use of registration time. Very good progress has been made in improving the buildings and satisfactory progress in rectifying health and safety deficiencies. There has not been enough improvement in the provision for spiritual development.

STANDARDS

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

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

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

Standards in tests at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were average in English and science, and above average in mathematics. Results were generally in line with similar schools, but in mathematics they were well above. Year 9 test results have improved over the last five years at a similar rate to the national trend.

The trend in GCSE results over the last five years has been one of improvement faster than the national trend. The 2001 results went against this trend and were below average and well below similar schools. This is partly because the students had lower prior attainment, and, in relation to their Year 9 results, they made satisfactory progress. The other reason for the lower results was staff turnover and a shortage of teachers in some subjects. The staffing situation is now somewhat improved and standards seen in the inspection were average. The school narrowly missed its GCSE target in 2001, and its target for improvement in 2002

is challenging, but realistic. In the sixth form, A-level results in 2001 were well above average and students made good progress from GCSE to A level.

In work seen, standards at the end of Year 9 are at least average in all subjects and are above average in mathematics, history, geography and religious education. At the end of Year 11, standards are at least average in all subjects except design and technology, where they are below average. Standards are above average in mathematics and music and well above average in religious education. Overall, students achieve well in the progress they make from Years 7 to 11.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Most students are proud of their school, participate fully in activities and have a positive attitude to work. There is a minority of disaffected students, mainly in Years 10 and 11.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Students have a clear understanding of the school's code of conduct. Most behave well even when not supervised. A few students are challenging but are generally managed well by teachers.
Personal development and relationships	Good. There are good relationships among students and between them and staff. Bullying is rare and there is no racial tension.
Attendance	Attendance is satisfactory, though in Year 11 the level of unauthorised absence is above average. Punctuality to lessons is satisfactory but too many students come late to school.

The school is a community in which most students feel comfortable. There is mutual respect between different ethnic groups. Students become increasingly independent learners as they progress up the school. They show initiative and respond well to opportunities to take responsibility.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Throughout Years 7 to 11, teaching is satisfactory in English and good in mathematics and science. Teaching is at least satisfactory in all other subjects and is good in geography, history, art and physical education. It is very good in religious education and music. In design and technology, teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11.

Teachers typically have good subject knowledge and high expectations. They manage students well and establish good relationships. Most lessons are conducted at a good pace. Marking is generally done well, though in a few subjects more consistency is needed. In many subjects ICT is not used enough to support learning. Homework is generally set appropriately. The school has had staffing difficulties in some subjects, especially science, modern languages and English. In a small number of cases, a lack of teaching experience

results in some unsatisfactory teaching. At the same time, some of the new teachers and heads of department are raising standards. Literacy is taught satisfactorily and numeracy is taught well, though there are no policies to co-ordinate the teaching.

The school meets the needs of all its students well through an emphasis on equal opportunities and by monitoring the progress made by different groups of students. Students show good interest in their work and concentrate well. They are well informed about the progress they make.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The curriculum is broad and balanced, with a good range of choices. Extra-curricular activities are particularly strong in music, drama, dance and sport.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Their progress is monitored and supported well. Students with specific learning difficulties have additional individual lessons. Some students in Years 10 and 11 need more support in class.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Specialist staff ensure that language needs are met and skills developed. As a result, students with English as an additional language take full part in the school's curriculum.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. There is good provision for students' moral, social and cultural development. Some subjects, such as music and religious education, provide good opportunities for spiritual development, but the planned provision for spiritual development across all subjects is unsatisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. The school provides a safe and secure environment. Many tutors have a very good rapport with students, though tutor time at the start of the day is not used well.

The school works well with parents. Parents are well informed and have opportunities to express their views. The school monitors attendance well. Pastoral care is excellent and the behaviour policy is applied consistently. Assessment procedures are good. Students have individual targets, and procedures for monitoring students' progress are very good.

Provision in Years 7 to 9 is enriched by drama and a second modern language. Additional courses in Years 10 and 11 include business studies and a leisure and tourism GNVQ. The use of ICT in learning other subjects is under-developed and many students in Years 10 and 11 omit one section of the ICT National Curriculum. Careers education is satisfactory but careers guidance is unsatisfactory because not all students have a careers interview before they leave school.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher sets a clear educational direction. There are thorough procedures for monitoring the quality of education and firm action is taken to raise standards.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors are well informed and know the school well. They are very supportive of school developments, particularly in ensuring the school is fully staffed and in improving the buildings and facilities.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good overall. Examination results and the quality of teaching are monitored carefully. However, monitoring processes are insufficiently developed to ensure that all teachers have a good range of teaching skills.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. There is a high standard of financial planning, and full use is made of the school's finances to support the school's priorities.

The match between staff qualifications and their subjects is satisfactory overall. Many staff are very well qualified, but there are some temporary or unqualified staff in English, science and modern foreign languages. The accommodation is satisfactory. Some parts of the buildings are not a pleasant working environment, but the school has made several significant improvements and there are some good facilities. Learning resources are adequate.

The school is well led by the headteacher and senior management team. Subject management varies in quality but is generally good. Financial management and planning are very good and the school applies the principles of 'best value' very well.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school expects children to work hard. • They feel comfortable approaching the school and generally get a good response. • Children like school. • Children make good progress. • The school is well led and managed. • Pastoral care and the transition from primary school are good. • The school has improved in standards and behaviour. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is too much homework or it is inconsistent and not properly monitored. • Some parents are concerned about information on progress and the use of students' planners. • Some do not feel the school works closely with parents. • A small number feel behaviour disrupts some lessons. • Some have concerns over the buildings. • There is too much staff turnover, especially in science.

The inspection supported parents' positive views. Inspectors found that homework is generally set appropriately, though some students have difficulty planning their time and need more support with this. The school provides good information on progress and makes considerable effort to work closely with parents. Students' planners are generally well used to record homework, but not much used as a communication vehicle. There is occasionally disruptive behaviour, but generally behaviour is good. The buildings are adequate though not all are pleasant; the school has made significant improvements. There has been too much staff turnover in science, though the school has done all it can to appoint high quality permanent staff.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form of this larger than average 11-18 comprehensive school has 164 students. Courses are offered in a range of AS and A-level subjects; intermediate and advanced vocational courses in business studies and information technology; and GCSE retakes. Sixty per cent of Year 11 students continue into the sixth form and a small number join from other schools. There are more girls than boys in Year 12. Seven per cent of students are eligible for free school meals, which is average. A significant minority of students are from minority ethnic backgrounds, mostly Pakistani. Two students have special educational needs. The entry requirements are five grade Es at GCSE, and the attainment of students on entry is below average.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

Longdean School has a very good sixth form, which is cost-effective. Standards are above average and students achieve very well. Standards have risen since the last inspection, when they were average. Teaching is very good in most subjects, though high staff turnover has until recently affected teaching in science. Teachers are enthusiastic and knowledgeable and expect a lot from students. Students' progress is monitored carefully and there is good individual support. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good, with a clear commitment to meeting the needs of students and making continual improvements.

Strengths

- Standards are above average and students achieve very well.
- Students have very good attitudes; they are mature and have a good work ethic.
- Teaching is very good.
- Students make a good contribution to the life of the whole school.

What could be improved

- Students need a more coherent approach to developing the key skills of communication, application of number and information and communication technology (ICT).
- Some students arrive late for school and registration time is not well used.
- Not all students receive their statutory entitlement to religious education.
- The arrangements for managing vocational education are unclear.

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Very good. Standards in mathematics and further mathematics are well above average. Teaching is very good, with very good relationships and regular monitoring of progress.
Physics	Satisfactory. A-level results have been well below average for two years, due partly to staffing difficulties and partly to students' low prior attainment. With experienced teachers in post, standards are now average and students are making good progress.
Business studies	Satisfactory. Standards are average, and above those in Year 12. Teaching is good and students have mature attitudes. Arrangements for managing the subject are unclear and the accommodation is unsuitable.
ICT	Very good. Standards are well above average and teaching is very good. Relationships are very good and students learn to be independent.
Physical education	Good. Results are above average and Year 13 students achieve very well. Teaching is very good. The A-level course is not well suited to the needs of some Year 12 students.
Art	Good. Standards are above average and are improving. Teaching is very good and carefully planned. Some Year 12 students do not work independently enough.
Geography	Very good. Results are well above average. Teaching is very good and students achieve very well. Not enough use is made of ICT.
English Literature	Satisfactory. A-level standards are average. Good teaching develops students' understanding of literature. Students receive good individual support but need to become more articulate in discussion.
French	Good. A-level standards vary from year to year, and are currently above average. Very good teaching exploits very high levels of motivation and enables the students to sustain very good progress.

In other subjects, work was sampled. Teaching was always at least satisfactory. Good lessons were seen in drama and design and technology. Very good lessons were seen in music and religious education.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Good induction and guidance on subject choices mean that very few students leave before completing their courses. Students are well advised on how to organise and improve their work. Relationships with teachers and tutors are very good and students are encouraged to play a full part in the sixth form and school. However, morning tutor periods are not used well and punctuality is unsatisfactory. Assessment procedures are regular and thorough and help students to achieve very well. Procedures for monitoring and supporting students' progress are very good. There is some inconsistency in the use of assessment data to match the teaching to students' individual needs.

Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Good. The school has clear aims for the sixth form and strategic planning is overseen by the senior management team and the governors. New A-level and vocational courses have been introduced to respond to students' aspirations. However, the management arrangements for the vocational courses are unclear and inhibit developments. Standards and the curriculum are monitored carefully. Financial planning is very good. While there have been difficulties with staffing some subjects, the match of staff qualifications to their subjects is currently good. Equal opportunities are promoted well through the range of courses provided. Students from ethnic minorities achieve well.
--	--

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a good choice of subjects. • They are treated as young adults whose opinions are valued. • They are given autonomy for the management of their own work. • They have autonomy in the social life of the sixth form. • They are kept informed about their progress. • They are offered responsibilities as prefects, mentors and helpers around the school. • They have good support and guidance provided by their subject teachers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There has been too much staff turnover in science. • The materials used in the personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme are not appropriate.

Students have very positive views about the sixth form. Inspectors support students' positive views. It is true that staff turnover in science has affected progress, but the school has worked hard to improve this and teaching was good at the time of the inspection. The topics covered in the PSHE programme are thought provoking and encourage a broader view of citizenship, but students are justified in their view that the course materials are not challenging.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

1. Results in the 2001 national tests at the end of Year 9 were average in English and science and above average in mathematics. The results were in line with similar schools, except in mathematics where they were well above similar schools. Over the last five years, Year 9 test results have improved at a similar rate to the national trend, though the improvement has been greatest in science and least in English. Boys and girls have done equally well in mathematics and science. Girls have done better than boys in English, though the difference is similar to that found nationally.
2. In work seen during the inspection, standards at the end of Year 9 are average in English, science, modern languages, design and technology, ICT, music, art and physical education. Standards are above average in mathematics, history, geography and religious education.
3. The trend in GCSE results over the last five years has been one of improvement faster than the national trend. The 2001 results went against this trend and were below average and well below similar schools. Results in 1999 were average and in 2000 above average. The lower results in 2001 were expected by the school and were partly because the students had lower prior attainment. In relation to their Year 9 results they made satisfactory progress. The other cause of the lower results was staffing difficulties in a number of subjects. Girls achieve better GCSE results than boys, though in most years the difference is less than that found nationally. In the 2001 results, boys did significantly less well than the girls and it was this that caused the decline.
4. Recent difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff have been most marked in science, but have also affected English and modern languages. At the time of the inspection the staffing situation has been somewhat improved, though there remain temporary or unqualified staff in all three departments. The school's staffing has also been improved by the appointment of new heads of department in art, modern languages, physical education and design and technology.
5. In work seen during the inspection, standards at the end of Year 11 are average overall. There is considerable variation between the standards of different subjects and the school is aware that appointing well-qualified teachers and ensuring that all departments are well managed are essential factors in raising standards further. Standards are above average in mathematics and music, and well above average in religious education. They are average in English, science, ICT, modern languages, geography, history, art and physical education. They are below average in design and technology. The reason that standards seen are higher than those of the 2001 GCSE results are partly that the prior attainment of the students is higher and partly that the more stable staffing has resulted in improved teaching, particularly in science and design and technology.
6. Students' achievements in relation to their prior attainment are good at the end of Year 9 and at the end of Year 11. In Years 7 to 9, students' achievements are good in all subjects except mathematics, religious education and music, where they are very good, and English, modern languages and ICT, where they are satisfactory. In Years 10 and 11, students' achievements are good in all subjects except religious education and

music, where they are very good, and English, design and technology and ICT, where they are satisfactory.

7. Students with special educational needs achieve well in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactorily in Years 10 and 11. Achievement is better in the lower years largely because most of the support is targeted here, to ensure that these students make a good start in their new school. They are often in smaller sets, and where teachers take account of their needs as listed on their individual education plans, they achieve well. They do particularly well in mathematics. In Years 10 and 11, the progress made by students with special educational needs is limited in some subjects because they need additional support in class.
8. Gifted and talented students make good progress throughout the school. Their progress is very good in the practical subjects of art, music and design and technology and in the sixth form. This is largely because they are well supported by teachers, and are often particularly self-motivated. However, their progress could be improved further, particularly in English and ICT. The school acknowledges this, and has recently appointed a co-ordinator to identify gifted and talented students and establish extended provision. These plans are at an early stage.
9. The achievement of students with English as an additional language (EAL) is as good as that of other students. The EAL department and subject teachers track progress carefully, and communicate well. Close liaison between EAL staff and the special educational needs department supports students' progress by ensuring that support teachers and classroom assistants are aware of students' language and other needs.
10. The school analyses GCSE results according to students' ethnic backgrounds and this analysis shows that students of Pakistani background achieve results that are as good as other students. There is no evidence of the small numbers of students from other minority ethnic backgrounds underachieving. In the 2001 GCSE results, the Pakistani students made progress that was as good as, or better than, other students. In lessons and work seen during the inspection, students from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve as well as other students.
11. The school exceeded its GCSE targets in 1999 and 2000, but narrowly missed its target in 2001. School targets are set carefully, using information from students' prior performance, and progress towards them is monitored regularly. The GCSE target that has been set for 2002 is above the national average. The evidence of the inspection is that students are working at average standards and that the target is challenging, but realistic.
12. Standards of literacy are satisfactory overall, with many good features. Most students have good speaking and listening skills, and are able to use each subject's specialist vocabulary well, particularly so in science, geography and religious education. In mathematics, modern languages and history, however, students are not provided with enough opportunities for oral work. Reading skills are generally satisfactory and often good. Few students have such serious difficulties with reading that they cannot cope with their subjects. In most subjects, students are able to use the library and internet effectively. Standards of writing are generally satisfactory. There is good extended writing by students in higher sets in history and religious education, and by GCSE students in physical education, modern languages and geography. Most students plan, organise and express their ideas coherently and those in higher sets are able to make and take useful notes, although this skill is not sufficiently well developed in science. Standards of presentation and handwriting are at least satisfactory, often good in those

subjects such as modern languages and science, where teachers make clear their high expectations about this aspect of written work.

13. The overall standard of numeracy in the school is good. This is mainly due to the good teaching in the mathematics department. There has been a positive approach to the National Numeracy Strategy within the department, with regular use of numeracy activities at the start of lessons. Students use the activities effectively, and regular practice is increasing their confidence, for instance when using number bonds.

Sixth form

14. The average point score for students taking two or more A levels in 2001 was well above average. Boys did better than girls, though over the last three years, boys and girls have done equally well. Results have been above average in most recent years. They were well above average in 1999 and average in 2000. Within individual subjects, results in 2001 were well above average in biology, chemistry, design and technology, geography, mathematics and sports studies. Results were well below average in physics and history.
15. Students were also entered for Advanced GNVQs in business studies and ICT. Results in business studies were average and in ICT above average.
16. Students' attainment on entry to the sixth form is below the national average for sixth forms, and students achieve very well during their courses. In 2001, the progress that students made from GCSE to A level and GNVQ was greater than the average progress made by students nationally.
17. In work seen during the inspection, standards are above average overall. They are well above average in mathematics, ICT and geography. They are above average in French, art and sports studies. They are average in English, physics and business education.
18. The above average standards and very good achievement are due to the very good teaching that students receive in most subjects, the good work ethic that has been established in the sixth form and the very careful monitoring of each student's progress.
19. Students from all ethnic backgrounds and students with English as an additional language make similar progress in the sixth form.
20. A high proportion of students complete their courses, with a completion rate of 95 per cent compared with 90 per cent nationally. The only subject with a significant number of students leaving before completing their course is the Intermediate GNVQ in ICT.
21. There are no specific courses to teach all students the key skills of communication, application of number and ICT. In some subjects, students' progress is slowed by a lack of these skills. Some students of physics and sports studies, for example, have little experience in how to make notes. Some physics students also find difficulty with the mathematics and data collection that is needed in science. Year 13 business studies students are confident with writing but have found difficulty with the mathematical sections of their course. Students' ICT skills are developed well in business studies, but they have few opportunities to develop them in other subjects.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

22. Students are strongly supportive of their school and show an eagerness to take part in

lessons and activities. They participate fully in all the school has to offer and generally show a positive attitude towards their learning. There is a strong work ethic, especially in the higher-attaining groups. It is less evident in some lower-attaining groups, with occasional examples of disaffection in Years 10 and 11. Students' attitudes are good overall, and have significantly improved since the time of the last inspection. Their good attitudes are due partly to the congenial social atmosphere of the school and partly to the generally good standard of teaching.

23. There has been a similar improvement in standards of behaviour, which are also now good. Students tend to behave well even when they are not being supervised. This is the result of their appreciation of the school's code of conduct and their clear understanding of the system of rewards and sanctions, which sets guidelines for what is and what is not acceptable behaviour. Thus students are well aware of the difference between right and wrong. In some classes the behaviour of a few individuals is challenging, but this is generally managed well by teachers. The rate of exclusions is comparable with the national average for secondary schools and exclusions of students from ethnic minority groups are similar in proportion to those of other students. As students are proud of their school they treat its premises and property with respect. There is no graffiti and very little litter.
24. The school is a community at ease with itself and as a result there are good relationships both amongst students and also between them and staff. Cases of bullying, harassment or aggressive behaviour are rare and when they do occur they are dealt with effectively by the staff. There is no racial tension and there is mutual respect between students from different ethnic backgrounds. Similar respect exists between genders and this is reinforced by the school's policy of sitting boys and girls alternately in the classroom. However, the occasional sexist remark was overheard, uttered in the heat of the moment and apparently not causing offence. Students become increasingly independent learners as they progress up the school, making very good use of the high quality facilities available in the Study Support Centre and the library for both lessons and homework. They show initiative by sorting out their own problems and help each other with their learning. Year 10 and 11 students, for example, help those in Year 7 in paired reading. The school takes students' views seriously and regularly interviews them as part of its monitoring procedure. The Students' Forum is an effective body through which students can contribute to the smooth running and future development of the school. The Students' Forum was consulted, for example, before the appointment of the new catering contractor.
25. Attendance is satisfactory overall. An apparent fall in attendance last year was because students on study leave during examination periods are now recorded as authorised absence rather than as being present. However, attendance is less satisfactory in Year 11. Whereas in other year groups unauthorised absence is about half the national average, in Year 11 it is twice that figure. There is a small but significant number of disaffected students in this year group whose attendance is unsatisfactory. The school is aware of this problem and is taking appropriate action. Punctuality is generally unsatisfactory at the start of the school day. Morning registration takes place in tutor group sessions and some students arrive towards the end rather than being there at the beginning as they are supposed to be. This may be linked to the fact that the time spent in tutor periods is often not used well. However, the school has solved the problem of punctuality to lessons, which was an issue in the last inspection, by adjusting the timetable to allow transit time from one class to the next.

Sixth form

26. Students have a very strong work ethic and very positive attitudes towards the school. These qualities develop significantly as students move up the school and gain in maturity. Students' commitment significantly enhances their learning and complements the generally very good teaching. In many lessons, for example, students persistently question the teacher until they fully understand the points being made and the ethos in the classroom is more that of a university lecture than a school lesson. In many subjects, students are encouraged to become independent learners, and respond well to this.
27. Relationships amongst sixth formers are very good and they mix very well, irrespective of gender or ethnic background. Students have a very good rapport with their teachers and this further enhances their learning. During some of their free periods they help the school by undertaking a range of administrative tasks. This arrangement challenges them to manage their time efficiently and most of them rise to this challenge well, thus developing their self-motivation and independence. Many sixth form students are prefects. They exercise this responsibility well and contribute to the smooth running of the school. Sixth form students also make a valuable contribution to the whole school in extra-curricular activities, particularly music, drama and sport.
28. Attendance is generally good. However, punctuality in the mornings is unsatisfactory, which may be linked to the fact that registration time is often not used well, as is the case in the main school.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

29. Teaching is good throughout Years 7 to 11 and very good in the sixth form. During the inspection, 19 out of 20 lessons were satisfactory or better, more than seven out of ten were good or better, almost four out of ten were very good or better and more than one in 20 was excellent. The school has been affected by turnover of staff and difficulties in recruiting in some subjects, particularly science, modern languages and English. In a small number of lessons seen during the inspection, a lack of teacher experience was the cause of weaker or unsatisfactory teaching. At the same time, some of the new teachers, and especially new heads of department, are raising standards. The quality of teaching has improved very significantly since the last inspection.
30. Teachers typically have good subject knowledge and use this to plan their lessons well. Most teachers have high expectations of what students can achieve. They manage students well and establish good relationships. Lessons are usually conducted at a good pace. In many subjects, however, ICT is not used enough to support learning. Marking and assessment are generally done well, though in a few subjects greater consistency is needed. Homework is almost always set appropriately. As a result of this good teaching, most students have good attitudes to their learning and concentrate well.
31. Teaching is satisfactory in Years 7 to 11 in English, modern languages and ICT. In design and technology, it is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. It is good in Years 7 to 11 in mathematics, science, geography, history, art and physical education. It is very good in religious education and music.
32. Teachers' knowledge of their subject is in most cases strong, though a small number of lessons taught by temporary teachers are affected by a lack of specialist knowledge and teaching skill. In food, textiles and music, lessons are extremely well planned and structured to help students at all levels to do their best. Teachers of science and art also use their knowledge in careful planning of lessons. Mathematics teachers prepare

work at a level appropriate to students' ability. History teachers use their knowledge to help students understand the context of past events and geography teachers draw on their own experience of travel to enliven their teaching. In religious education, teachers inspire students through good planning and their own enthusiasm for the subject. Specialist ICT teachers know their subject well and use this to set clear learning goals and provide good individual support. English teachers have a sound knowledge of the subject matter, and some plan imaginative lessons, but weak lesson planning and lack of structure are often factors when students do not learn as well as they should.

33. Most teachers have high expectations and manage students well, establishing good relationships that support learning. These features are evident, for example, in religious education, mathematics, geography, science and drama. Music teachers also are able class managers and insist on perfection where it is humanly possible. In physical education, consistent expectations, mutual respect and shared enthusiasm improve the quality of work. In art, students develop good working relationships with their teachers and other students, and in the most successful lessons, they work together in a calm, purposeful atmosphere. History lessons are well managed but do not support students' social development sufficiently through discussion. In a small number of lessons in a few subjects, expectations are too low. This is the case in less successful design and technology lessons. In modern languages, while there is much good teaching, the lack of experience of some recently trained or untrained teachers shows in a lack of skill in classroom management.
34. Assessment and marking are generally done well. In many subjects, teachers use questioning well to probe and extend students' understanding. In art, mathematics, science, modern languages and religious education, teachers mark thoroughly and provide guidance on how to improve. Marking is supportive and constructive in geography, though the advice given is rather brief. The use of assessment to monitor students' progress is a major strength in science, and in music, students gain by evaluating their own work. In some subjects, assessment needs to be made more consistent. This is true in English, where National Curriculum levels are not used consistently, and in design and technology, where assessment is not frequent enough or shared with students sufficiently. In physical education, assessment is not yet linked to National Curriculum levels and GCSE marking, while constructive, is not consistent among teachers. ICT teachers use questions well to evaluate understanding but place too little emphasis on marking and individual target setting.

35. Homework is generally set appropriately and used to extend learning. In religious education, for example, it includes a variety of tasks and in art it is set regularly and linked to classwork. In mathematics and geography, homework is set regularly but does not always challenge the highest-attainers.
36. The many more successful lessons are conducted at a good pace. This is true in mathematics, science, drama and the best design and technology lessons. In modern languages, the more successful lessons use the foreign language almost exclusively, with a variety of rapid activities, but the unsuccessful language lessons are slow, conducted largely in English and contain too much writing. The best history lessons give enough time to reflect on new information yet expect a lot to be achieved during the lesson. A lack of pace in some English lessons results from inadequate planning, and in a few art lessons, time is not used well, with too much time spent on introductions and management.
37. A common weakness in many subjects is that ICT is not used sufficiently to support learning. It is used at a basic level in some subjects, including English, mathematics, science, design and technology, history, geography, drama and art. ICT remains underdeveloped in most of these subjects, as well as in music, religious education and modern languages. In design and technology limitations in resources restrict the range of skills covered. Students' ICT skills are not used often enough in their subjects to enable them to build up confidence and use their skills independently.
38. The teaching of literacy is satisfactory in most subjects. There has been a focus on the learning of key words, which are usually displayed in all rooms. Teachers of religious education show particular strengths in developing students' vocabulary and in teaching basic skills to younger students. Many teachers are conscientious in correcting spelling and grammatical errors, but this approach is not consistent across all departments or within departments. Teachers of modern languages are particularly effective in the attention they pay to the need for accuracy in written work and to the acquisition of vocabulary. They also provide good support in the form of writing frames for students in lower sets to enable them to develop fluency in writing.
39. There are many examples of the effective use of numeracy in other subjects. In physical education, students measure weights, heights, bone and fat, and plot their results on graphs. In geography, they use map scales, measure gradients and draw graphs. The patterns and symmetries of Islamic art are studied in religious education and timelines are used in history. Students regularly use measurement and graphs in design technology. In science, they use algebraic formulae and carry out measurements in practical lessons. Students do not rely too heavily on calculators, but use them effectively when necessary, for example in trigonometry.
40. Students' response to lessons is generally good. They concentrate well and make a good effort. In mathematics, their presentation of work is good and in science, they are enthusiastic to take part in practical work. This is also the case in most art and in the well-planned design and technology lessons. Students make decisions independently in geography, and in physical education they learn through assessing their own and others' performances. In music and drama, they work well together in groups. Attitudes are generally very positive in religious education. A minority of students in Years 10 and 11 show poor attitudes in art, physical education and design and technology.
41. In the majority of lessons, teachers are successful in meeting the needs of all students. Students with special educational needs are well supported in most lessons and are

taught very well in the special needs base. All departments have copies of students' individual education plans, though some make more use of them than others. Students with special educational needs, however, need a greater variation in the tasks set in English, geography and GCSE physical education. In some cases, they would make better progress if there were more classroom assistants available to support them, particularly in Years 10 and 11.

42. The school has recently identified its gifted and talented students, and plans for extended provision are at an early stage. In art and music, talented students are encouraged and stretched, but in English and ICT the higher attainers need better provision to reach the highest levels.
43. Students from minority ethnic backgrounds are very well integrated and achieve as well as others. Students' own cultural traditions are included in the study of religious education, physical education and dance. Teaching of students with English as an additional language (EAL) is good. Classroom teachers are aware of their needs and usually explain vocabulary effectively. The specialist EAL staff are knowledgeable and know their students well. They provide good support in classes, and this often benefits other students as well. Students' language development is supported by a computer-based individual learning system, but the EAL staff need more training in its use.
44. The quality of teaching has significantly improved since the last inspection. Teachers' expectations have been raised through a programme of monitoring and lesson observation. A policy for managing students' behaviour has been introduced and is implemented consistently. While teaching is good overall, there is a need to use the school's good procedures for professional development to enable teachers to gain a more consistent level and range of teaching skills. This is particularly the case in those departments that have had a significant turnover of staff and where there are teachers who are unqualified or inexperienced.

Sixth form

45. Teaching is very good in the sixth form. It is at least good in all the subjects inspected and is very good in mathematics, French, ICT, geography, art and sports studies. Very good teaching was also seen in music, economics and religious education, which were among the subjects sampled but not inspected in detail.
46. Sixth form teachers in all subjects typically have very good subject knowledge, which they use to plan well-structured lessons. In physics, for example, teachers use a wide range of teaching methods and students respond well. Sports studies teachers use their very good knowledge to plan stimulating lessons in which students learn rapidly. Art teachers promote their subject effectively through their expertise and enthusiasm. French teachers have an excellent command of the language and plan lively, motivating lessons. In ICT, teachers set clear objectives and provide very good guidance sheets, which enable students to plan their work and learn independently.
47. Teachers of all subjects establish good relationships with students. Business studies students, for example, feel confident that they will learn and that their contributions to lessons will be valued. In French, students are confident to take risks in finding the right word or phrase. There is mutual respect between teachers and students in mathematics, resulting in a very good working atmosphere. In ICT, good relationships lead to an ethos in which there is fruitful discussion between the teachers and the students. English students respond to their teachers' enthusiasm and are well motivated.

48. Teachers have very high expectations and in most subjects, they expect students to become independent learners. French teaching strikes a good balance between structured support and the requirement for students to think for themselves. In mathematics, students use their initiative in undertaking independent work. In business studies, students research independently using the internet and other resources. Geography lessons promote independent thinking skills through thorough questioning but, although students are encouraged to do research, opportunities are not provided to use the internet in lessons.
49. Good assessment is a significant factor in students' very good achievement. This is true in each subject and in the overview maintained by senior staff. Assessment is thorough in mathematics and students know their target grades. In geography and business studies, teachers assess learning carefully and give advice orally and through marking. English teachers mark carefully and have a clear understanding of individual strengths and weaknesses and students know what to do to improve. In sports studies, assignments are marked constructively, but notes are not always checked for quality. In art and French, the assessment and feedback given to students are of a high quality. In physics, however, the use of assessment to help students reach their targets is under-developed.
50. In some subjects, students need more support with key skills. Students of physics, for example, make frequent use of mathematical formulae, but some are unable to use calculators accurately. In French and geography, students need to analyse and interpret statistics. Year 13 business studies students have found difficulty with the mathematical sections of their course. Physics students have poor communication and debating skills and they have little experience of making notes. This is also the case for some Year 12 sports studies students. The use of ICT is under-developed in most sixth form subjects.
51. Students respond well to this very good teaching and grow in maturity. They generally enjoy the challenges they are given. They work hard in lessons and spend time on their homework. In general, Year 13 students have well-developed study skills compared to Year 12, who have been in the sixth form a relatively short time. Study skills are improving in physics now that staffing is more stable.

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

52. The school's curriculum meets the needs of students well and has improved since the last inspection. It makes a good contribution to the standards achieved and prepares students well for further education and adult life.
53. The range of subjects is appropriately broad in Years 7 to 9. Drama and PSHE are taught in addition to subjects of the National Curriculum. All students study French and in Years 8 and 9 the top sets also take German. This time is taken from ICT and, though it is made up by three ICT days, results in a lack of continuity in ICT teaching. Appropriate plans are in place for September 2002 to ensure that all students receive the same amount of ICT teaching.
54. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. All students follow a broad and balanced range of subjects, and have a wide range of options, including history, geography, religious education, art, music, drama, physical education and business studies. In design and technology, students choose either a full GCSE course or a

short course combined with a short course in ICT. All students take a short GCSE in religious education and, in addition, a full course is offered covering Islam and Christianity. This course is popular with Muslim girls.

55. Most students take double award science, and a course in three separate sciences is being phased out. A GNVQ course in leisure and tourism is offered to students who need extra support with literacy and ICT. These students take less science and are disapplied from design and technology and modern languages, though the GNVQ includes some French. Some students study French and German in Year 11 and there is an after-school session for students who wish to study a second language in Year 10.
56. The weakness in the curriculum for Years 10 and 11 is that ICT is not developed sufficiently in other subjects and elements of control technology and computer-aided design and manufacture (CAD/CAM) are not covered. Many students, therefore, do not study the full National Curriculum in ICT.
57. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities, which are particularly strong in music, drama, dance and sport. Musical activities are extensive. The choir sings at a very high standard and has a very wide repertoire, including gospel songs and Handel's 'Messiah'. Students from all years take part, sing well, and thoroughly enjoy themselves. There is also a dance band, a concert band, and a regular programme of concerts both in and out of school. Music touches everyone in the school, not just in lessons. In drama, there are many opportunities to take part in musicals and dance shows as well as national competitions and local drama festivals. Senior students run drama and dance clubs for Year 7, and there are many theatre visits.
58. The range of activities in sport is also very good. Students enjoy success at local and county levels in football, netball and basketball. Individual students have competed nationally in athletics and cross-country. They are encouraged to join local clubs and succeed in football, cricket, swimming, tennis and girls' rugby. There are trips for skiing and outdoor adventure activities.
59. Some other subject areas offer students opportunities to further their interests, though the range is not wide and there is no foreign exchange, for example. There is a homework club, a student support group and a residential trip for each year group in the summer term. Students from ethnic minority backgrounds are increasingly getting involved in extra-curricular activities. The Year 9 cricket team, for example, is made up largely of boys of Pakistani and Indian origin. Students from ethnic minority backgrounds have the opportunity to explore aspects of their own culture in dance.
60. Students' personal development is supported well in PSHE lessons, which is taught by form tutors. The programme is well planned. Citizenship, health, sex and drugs education are covered, as well as literacy, careers and study skills. Tutors generally handle sensitive topics well and provide a secure environment for students to express themselves. Students usually respond positively and maturely.
61. There is a satisfactory series of careers lessons from Year 7 in PSHE. Students have an options evening in Year 9 to discuss GCSE choices. The careers centre is attractive and well resourced. However, careers guidance is unsatisfactory. The local authority's careers adviser visits the school one morning a week. There is not sufficient time for all students to have a careers interview so these are reserved for students with special educational needs and others who request one. It is therefore possible for a student to leave school without having had a careers interview. All students have work experience in Year 10. A range of placements is provided by the local authority's careers service

but students' individual aspirations are not always met. There are not always enough teachers available for all students to be visited whilst at their placement. Work experience placements for GNVQ students have in the past been a valuable opportunity, but have recently fallen through.

62. The school has satisfactory links with the local community. The new sports centre is an excellent facility that is shared with the community. There are good sporting links with local clubs. The schools' pitches and halls are used by the public outside school hours. A local band that rehearses at the school has donated musical instruments. The Longdean School Association has established a popular scheme for the community to use the ICT centre, with teachers on hand to give instruction. Links with the local business community are less well developed. Representatives from local businesses speak to students, but there are only limited links with industry to support the vocational courses. The school intends to make business links a focus of further development.
63. The school has satisfactory links with its partner schools and colleges. The transition from primary education is smooth and this is much appreciated by parents. Students' records are transferred in good time and students have a taster day to become familiar with the school buildings and routines. However, there are not close links between subject departments and primary schools to develop continuity in teaching. Discussions are taking place with other schools and the local college to plan a consortium for educating students aged 14 to 19. This will widen students' choices and give them access to additional academic and vocational courses in the area.
64. A number of strategies are in place to promote the development of literacy. All teachers have taken part in a school training day. A literacy co-ordinator withdraws small groups of Year 7 students. Students from Years 8 and 9 with literacy weaknesses attend learning skills classes. There is a paired reading scheme in which sixth form students help younger students. Some form tutor time is supposed to be devoted to promoting literacy, but there was little evidence of this, apart from two good sessions in Year 8. The approach at present is somewhat piecemeal. Much is left to individual departments and to individual teachers' enthusiasm. The English department has still to develop and implement the National Literacy Strategy. Not all departments have literacy policies, and though there are pockets of good practice, there is not sufficient consistency. The development and implementation of a coherent policy across the school would help to make the promotion of literacy more effective.
65. Numeracy is used extensively across the school, but there is as yet no agreed policy on its use. Training is planned in the near future, which will develop a wider understanding of the responsibility of all teachers to contribute to students' numeracy. A further benefit will be greater consistency in the application of numeracy, for instance in the interpretation of data and in the use of formulae. The lack of curriculum links with primary schools means teachers have not experienced at first hand the extensive numeracy work being undertaken in primary schools and continuity between primary and secondary school is not fully developed.
66. The school is proud to be a comprehensive school and has an explicit intention to promote equal opportunities. There is very careful monitoring of the progress of every student, and the results are analysed to check whether any group of students is under-performing. There is good support for students from ethnic minorities, both in terms of their academic progress and their personal development. The school has recently identified its gifted and talented students and is in the early stages of planning additional

provision for them. Boys and girls have the same opportunities except that boys do not take dance.

67. Students with special educational needs follow the same curriculum as other students, but with some enhancements. Students with specific learning difficulties have additional individual lessons that are carefully timed so that they do not always miss the same lessons. Students with behavioural difficulties are helped by sessions with visiting specialist teachers. The Statements of Special Educational Need are properly completed, and the school provides the support that students require. Students' individual education plans are useful in helping teachers plan appropriately, and are made even more so when subject departments add subject-specific targets. This is not always done. Students with English as an additional language have full access to the curriculum. Specialist staff ensure that they develop their reading and writing skills and understand written and spoken text.
68. The school makes good provision for students' personal development, reflecting its ethos of valuing the individual. Moral and social development are well supported, and the majority of parents recognise that the school helps students to become more mature and responsible. Cultural development is promoted in many subjects, and in the wider context of school life. As in the last report, the promotion of students' spiritual development is unsatisfactory.
69. Moral education is good. The behaviour code is implemented effectively. Students are reminded about the need for mutual respect and teachers set a good example. Most assemblies serve to reinforce moral messages. The PSHE programme covers bullying, discrimination and disability. Moral issues are discussed in religious education and English literature, and are the basis of improvisations in drama. In physical education, students have to keep to rules and learn good sporting behaviour.
70. Social development is promoted in PSHE topics on friendship, relationships and citizenship. PSHE also includes 'circle time', in which students learn to listen to each other, and to speak in turn. Students take on adult responsibilities through work experience, and many show initiative in organising help for charities. Those on the Students' Forum represent their class's viewpoint. Many extra-curricular activities promote social development. Sports teams take part in local and regional competitions, drama clubs flourish and allow older students to take responsibility. Drama, music and dance performances to real audiences develop collaboration and a sense of responsibility.
71. Drama, music and dance also promote cultural development. There is music of high quality, performances of dance from many cultures and many theatre visits. Year 7 students perform at a poetry evening, while older students enter national drama competitions. The diversity of other cultures is appreciated in English literature, art and religious education. Students learn batik in design and technology and explore menus from other countries in food technology. In some subjects, such as mathematics and history, there is no planning to support cultural development and in modern languages, there are few cultural exchanges.
72. Provision for spiritual development is unsatisfactory because there is little planned provision, either in subjects or in assemblies. This was an issue in the last inspection and there has not been a satisfactory improvement. Assemblies generate a sense of social cohesion and many deliver clear moral messages, but most lack any spiritual content. In a few assemblies, there is a brief pause for reflection, occasionally a reading, but little more. The school does not meet the requirement to hold a daily act of

collective worship for all students. Religious education contributes significantly to students' spiritual development, providing much that is inspirational as well as opportunities to experience meditation. A sense of inspiration also comes from music, art and drama, and there are opportunities for reflection about non-material values when studying poetry and other texts in English. In many other subjects, such opportunities are missed. Muslim students benefit from the opportunities provided for prayer sessions during Ramadan.

Sixth form

73. The sixth form offers a broad range of AS and A-level courses, as well as advanced and intermediate vocational courses in business studies and ICT. The courses meet the aspirations of most students. The number of students who leave before completing their courses is below the national average. A-level courses in sports studies, design and technology and religious studies have been introduced since the last inspection. The success of mathematics is reflected in the fact that further mathematics also flourishes. General studies is offered as an additional optional A level. The inclusion of vocational courses has been part of the school's strategy to open the sixth form to more students and increase the staying-on rate of Year 11 students.
74. There are no specific courses in the key skills of communication, application of number and ICT, though many subjects include some skills as part of their syllabus. In several subjects, including physics, business studies and sports studies, some students are hampered by poor communication or numerical skills and would benefit from a planned approach to the development of their key skills.
75. The sixth form is popular and has responded well to local needs. Students appreciate the support given in selecting their courses and nearly all are able to follow the subjects of their choice. The school does not run courses when very few students opt for the subject, but does its best to accommodate students in complementary subjects. In one case a student made arrangements to study a course in the evenings at a local college and the school has provided additional study time to support this.
76. Timetable clashes mean that some students of physics and business studies are unable to attend all their lessons. It is also difficult for some students to attend the resit course in GCSE mathematics. There are some restrictions in the vocational business studies course. There are only limited links with businesses and currently no work experience placements. There is also no subject base where work and resources can be displayed in a subject-stimulating environment.
77. There are good opportunities for students to extend and enrich their studies. Fieldwork supports the learning of geography. Many subjects offer good study support. Revision courses in sports studies are popular and include lectures by national experts. Students have the use of the fitness suite in the new sports hall and many other sporting opportunities. There are many theatre and musical trips. There is a Young Enterprise scheme. Most students take part in community service within the school and make an impressive contribution to the life of the school. They play a leading role in the Students' Forum, help to run clubs, assist in lessons and visit primary schools to hear children read. They run a 'buddy' system to help settle Year 7 students when they first join the school. Life in the sixth form helps students to become confident and mature individuals.
78. The sixth form PSHE programme builds on the course in main school. The topics are relevant to young adults and tutors are skilled at generating, steering and managing

discussion. The resultant high level of debate contributes to students' intellectual and personal development. Most students appreciate the aims of the programme, but some feel that some of the worksheets and other materials are inappropriate for young adults and a few do not take the course seriously.

79. Personal development in the sixth form is good overall. Teachers have high expectations of students and there is a strong emphasis on achievement. There is a weakness, however, in the planned provision for students' spiritual development. The school does not fulfil the statutory requirement to provide religious education for all students nor a daily act of collective worship. This was an issue in the last inspection and while there is now an A-level course in religious studies, there has been no improvement in the provision of religious education for all. Assemblies have no spiritual dimension, although they are effective corporate occasions. In A-level English there are good opportunities for developing students' awareness of spiritual values in many texts. Other A-level subjects promoting spiritual development are theatre studies, art, and music, although the numbers of students involved are low.
80. Students' moral and social development is enhanced by positive relationships between students and their teachers. Students value the individual support they are given both in academic terms and on a personal basis. Form tutor periods, however, are not well used. Moral values are discussed and promoted as part of PSHE. Students themselves have a responsibility for promoting the school's behaviour code and moral ethos when they are involved with younger students. There are also many social occasions in the sixth form.
81. The creative subjects such as music, theatre studies and art promote very good cultural development, both within the subject and in extra-curricular activities. Students gain increased cultural awareness from the study of A-level English and recognise the extent to which their own capacity for self-expression has been developed in the course. Other opportunities are more limited. There are no cultural exchanges, for example, though GNVQ students have links with French firms and there are trips to Paris.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

82. The school provides a safe and secure environment and effectively exercises its duty of care. The health and safety issues identified in the last inspection have been satisfactorily addressed, though during the present inspection further minor problems came to light. These were reported to the senior management team who undertook to take rapid and appropriate action. For example, the toilet facilities for both staff and students are substandard and in need of remedial attention. There is no school policy on risk assessment, though this is done well in some departments and for out-of-school visits. There is an adequate number of members of staff with first aid qualifications and the matron keeps a detailed record of incidents. The school nurse makes weekly visits to the school and there is a medical room where students can go if they are feeling unwell. Fire drills take place once a term, but these are as yet not formally recorded. There are good arrangements in place for child protection. The deputy headteacher is the 'named person'. She has undergone appropriate training and has had extensive experience of dealing successfully with real cases. All staff have been fully briefed on the signs to look out for and the steps to take.
83. The support and guidance for students' academic and personal development is generally good. This is delivered mainly through the tutor system. Where possible, a student has the same tutor from Year 7 to Year 11, though this is sometimes affected by staff turnover. Where continuity is possible, a very good rapport is established. Tutor time takes place for fifteen minutes at the start of each day but this is not used as productively as it could be. Students are conscious of this and some 'vote with their feet' by arriving late. On the other hand, tutors provide good support in the weekly PSHE lessons. Students have 'student planners' which help them to manage their time, and these are valued and generally used well. The quality of the pastoral care of students with problems is excellent. It is delivered mainly by the deputy headteacher, key stage co-ordinators and heads of year, with support from the school counsellor. Extensive record keeping and good communication between staff enable support and guidance to be targeted and focused effectively.
84. The school has an effective behaviour policy. This includes rewards and sanctions that are well understood by students and applied consistently across the school. As a result, students respond well and generally behave well. The school has identified individual students who have behavioural problems and has effective procedures for dealing with them, involving the governing body and outside agencies as appropriate. The school also handles well the occasional instances of bullying or harassment. This is generally done to the satisfaction of the students involved and their parents.
85. Registration takes place at the start of both morning and afternoon sessions and registers are marked accurately. There are rigorous procedures for following up unexplained absences, including telephone calls home. Parents are expected to send a note to school after a period of absence and nearly all parents do this. Thus the school generally monitors attendance well. However, on the mornings when tutor groups have their assemblies, registers are taken by tutors in the hall whilst the assembly takes place. This practice has led to errors being made and is therefore unsatisfactory. The education welfare officer gives good support to the school in monitoring and improving attendance through her weekly visits. Poor attenders are targeted, especially in Year 11, and appropriate action, tailored to the individual, is taken. In some cases, students are given an amended timetable including, for example, extended work experience or a college placement.

86. Assessment procedures have improved significantly and are good. Frequent and standardised subject assessment plays an important part in raising standards and achievement. Attainment and progress are recorded and reported twice a year. In Years 7 to 9, except in physical education, these are based on very precise judgements of National Curriculum levels, and in Years 10 and 11 on GCSE grades. Assessments are generally secure, although in recent years National Curriculum teacher assessments in Year 9 have been inaccurate in ICT and modern languages and inconsistent in English. All students have individual subject targets. They understand the system and appreciate the help it provides. The regular and comprehensive reports provided for parents include information on achievement across a wide range of categories.
87. Assessment and monitoring systems are very well managed at senior level, with close liaison between the key stage co-ordinators, heads of year and tutors. Accumulated, up-to-date data on each student is collated in the 'data book', a well-presented and helpful document available to each teacher. Individual student target setting is informed appropriately by an accurate picture of their past and current progress, although, in Years 7 to 9, targets in English, and, in all years, targets in ICT, are not underpinned sufficiently by performance in the subject. Procedures for monitoring students' progress and taking appropriate action are very good. Each student is monitored weekly in each subject, and appropriate intervention is prompt.
88. Students with special educational needs are very well monitored and supported by the special needs department and other staff. There are good records kept, which are usually used to very good effect. The Education Centre provides a calm and safe environment for students who are withdrawn from lessons, where problems can be talked through. Students with English as an additional language are well known to the specialist staff, who provide well for their needs. There is good home-school liaison, and staff make home visits where this is needed.
89. The use of assessment data to adjust teaching to individual needs is satisfactory, though there is some variation in how well this is done in different subjects. The assessment of ICT by subject teachers in Years 7 to 9 is not checked, and GCSE science results are not analysed sufficiently. Examination results are analysed by gender and ethnicity and the key stage co-ordinators provide additional support if any group is found to be underachieving.

Sixth form

Assessment

90. The school's arrangements for assessing students' attainment and progress have improved significantly and are good, helping students to achieve very well. Assessments are regular and thorough and, in most subjects, enable students to form an accurate picture of their attainment and progress. Procedures follow the requirements of the examinations. Teachers have a good understanding of the courses they teach, and modify the course where appropriate to take account of the needs of the class.
91. Assessment and monitoring systems are very well managed at senior level. Up-to-date data on each student is available to each teacher in the 'data book'. Individual student target-setting is based on past and current progress. Procedures for monitoring progress are very good. Each student is monitored once a week in each subject, and appropriate intervention is prompt. The school justifiably feels that this process, in

which the key stage co-ordinator, heads of year and tutors liaise closely, is a significant factor in examination success.

92. Guidance given in marking is usually clear and detailed. Teachers diagnose individual needs very well and address specific weaknesses in their feedback. There is particularly good practice in science and ICT. However, there is still some inconsistency between and within departments in understanding and using assessment data to adjust the teaching appropriately for individual students. Reporting is good overall, although the school has identified the need to ensure that subject targets are consistently precise and helpful.

Advice, support and guidance

93. Students consider that before joining the sixth form they get good advice and information on subjects to enable them to make an informed choice. There is a well-planned induction week, which sets the scene for life in the sixth form and prepares students to make the best use of the many academic and social opportunities.
94. Tutors provide advice about the organisation of study and time management. Most subject teachers provide opportunities for individual help. The majority of students are appreciative of the support provided in on-going work and in preparing for examinations. Staffing problems in some subjects in the recent past have caused some students to feel deprived of such support. However, these students believe that the school supports their aspirations and now staffing problems are resolved they are more confident their needs will be met. Students willingly share their expertise and help each other in the sixth form.
95. At the end of Year 12 students receive advice from senior staff about choices of A-level courses in Year 13, and those leaving school have a careers interview. Students aiming for higher education are appreciative of the opportunities to discuss courses and destinations with subject teachers and senior staff and of the opportunities to attend university open days.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

96. Parents have a generally high opinion of the school and especially of the sixth form. They believe that the school and its reputation have improved over recent years. They say that their children are happy in school and are well cared for. Some parents have minor concerns and these are discussed elsewhere in the report in the appropriate sections. There is a termly Parents' Forum that provides a good opportunity for parents to express their views to the senior management team.
97. The steps taken by the school to keep parents informed about their children's progress are generally effective. There are four formal occasions throughout the year on which parents can meet their children's teachers. This is more than is usually the case in secondary schools and parents say they find them helpful. They include two review days, when parents and their children are involved in target setting. There is also the opportunity for informal discussions, which are arranged as and when required. The school produces a written report on each student for their parents at the end of the school year and a shorter interim report at the end of the autumn term. These are generally of high quality both in the main school and the sixth form. They highlight strengths and areas for improvement and parents find them comprehensible and informative. There is, however, some variability in quality across the subjects. The school prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents are both informative

documents that fully meet the legal requirements. They are, however, somewhat unattractive in their style of presentation. There is a very good weekly newsletter (The Longdean Link), which keeps parents informed about the life of the school.

98. The parent-teacher association (The Longdean School Association) has recently been re-formed and is fairly active. It runs a number of popular events throughout the year and makes a significant contribution to the life of the school both socially and financially. A few individual parents are involved directly in the school's work. For example, some help with the running of extra-curricular activities such as netball, and parents of students with behavioural difficulties support the school's behaviour management strategy by coming into school with their children and sitting with them in classes. Thus, overall, parents make a satisfactory contribution to the life and work of the school and to the education of their children.
99. Parents of students with special educational needs are contacted regularly, and are always invited to their children's review meetings. The school also has effective links with the parents of students with English as an additional language. A home-school support teacher provides translation into community languages if necessary.
100. Most sixth form students are very positive about, and enjoy life in, the sixth form. They are satisfied that their subject choices have been met and that they will receive support if problems should arise. They are secure in the knowledge that their concerns, opinions and suggestions will be taken seriously and they are appreciative of the responsibilities given to them on a personal level for their own work and within the school. Students acknowledge the relevance of the topics covered by the PHSE programme, but find the course materials, especially the work sheets, insufficiently challenging.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

101. The leadership and management of the headteacher and senior management team are good and are key factors in the good improvement the school has made since the last inspection. The headteacher sets a very clear educational direction and communicates this well through school policies and through his personal interaction with staff, students, parents and governors. He knows the students well. He is well supported by the senior management team. Standards of achievement, behaviour and teaching have been raised by establishing clear expectations of performance, by monitoring students' progress and the quality of teaching, and by taking firm action where necessary.
102. The governing body is well informed and is very active in setting the school's strategic direction and in providing support for improvements. Governors fulfil almost all their statutory duties and take steps to evaluate the quality of their own work. They know the strengths and weaknesses of the school well. Through their committees, the governors guide and monitor many areas of the school's work. They have given particularly good support in making improvements to the school's buildings and facilities. The premises committee is responsible for health and safety and has attended to the issues in the last report. There is, however, no risk assessment policy and as a result there is some inconsistency in practice across the school. Governors are aware that staffing is currently a critical factor and play a full part in making appointments. The curriculum committee receives reports on the school's targets and examination results, though the way the information is presented is complex and not easily understood. The policy committee is involved in preparing the school development plan, but the full governing body does not discuss this in any detail. There are recent plans for governors to

enhance their knowledge of the school through linking governors with departments and receiving regular reports on departmental reviews and performance management.

103. There is a very thorough programme for monitoring the quality of teaching and the work of subject departments. Each head of department is linked with one member of the senior management team. On a regular, planned programme, they observe teaching in the department, review students' work and conduct student interviews. Where necessary, certain departments have undergone fuller reviews, sometimes using LEA advisory staff, and a programme has recently been drawn up for the regular review of all departments. These processes have made significant improvements to the consistency of teaching quality and implementation of school policies.
104. The headteacher has a clear understanding that in order to raise standards further it is necessary to bring standards in all subjects up to those of the best. In the departments that are well led and where teaching is good, students achieve very well, but there is considerable variation in the standards reached in different subjects. The difficulty of recruiting appropriately qualified staff in some subjects is one factor of central importance. Ensuring that all subjects are well managed is the other. The monitoring procedures, together with the appointment of new heads of department in art, modern languages, design and technology and physical education, are proving effective in improving consistency.
105. Leadership and management are at least satisfactory in all subjects, though there are significant variations. Management is satisfactory in English, history, design and technology and ICT. It is good in science, modern languages, geography, art and physical education. It is very good in mathematics and music and excellent in religious education. While the management of English is satisfactory, there are some critical improvements needed to raise standards. In the sixth form, the management arrangements for the vocational subjects are unclear and restrict developments in that area.
106. Very good use is made of assessment data to monitor students' progress and set school targets. Much data is available and it is analysed well by the senior management team to give them a good knowledge of strengths and weaknesses in the school curriculum and of the progress of groups of students. The progress of students from ethnic minority backgrounds, for example, is monitored to check on any under-performance. Each year, examination results are analysed carefully, compared with other schools nationally, and an assessment made of the value added by the school. This analysis is very useful, but the way it is presented to staff and governors varies each year and is too complex to be easily understood. Because of this, not all governors or heads of department have a clear picture of where the school stands and what needs to be improved.
107. The school development plan contains appropriate priorities and is well constructed. There are clear deadlines and responsibilities, arrangements for review and links with budget planning. The school development plan is drafted by the headteacher and senior management team and finalised after consultation with the staff and the governors' policy committee.
108. Many heads of department create their own departmental development plans, but this is not required, as the work of departments is guided by the monitoring programme. In a similar way, examination targets for individual students and departments are set by the senior management team rather than arrived at in negotiation with heads of department. This approach has been appropriate and effective in establishing expectations and

consistency of practice. It does not, however, empower the middle managers to plan their own developments and set their own targets. The senior management team needs to find ways of encouraging greater input into school planning from the heads of department.

109. The heads of year provide students with strong pastoral support. There are also two key stage co-ordinators – one for Years 7 to 9 and one for Years 10 to 13 – who are responsible for monitoring students' progress and taking action where necessary. The work of the key stage co-ordinators is very effective in promoting good progress, by ensuring staff, parents and the students themselves know how well they are doing and what needs to be improved. It is indicative of the importance the school places on this process that the key stage co-ordinators are members of the senior management team.
110. There are good systems for passing on information about students with special educational needs. There is a need, however, to ensure that all communications go through the special educational needs co-ordinator, in order to keep track of all the help made available to the students. The Education Centre, where valuable work is done with students who do not find school life very easy, is soon to move next to the special needs teaching room. This is a sensible move, which will give the department extra coherence and improve communication. The staff who support students with English as an additional language are well managed as members of the special educational needs team.
111. The school has an average number of classroom assistants to support students with special educational needs. However, this is not sufficient as there is an above average number of students with special educational needs. Students would make better progress, particularly in Years 10 and 11, with more classroom support. Classroom assistants are trained regularly and make a significant contribution to students' learning.
112. The school is efficiently administered by the office staff, who are represented on the senior management team by the office manager and the resources manager. The school spends a relatively high amount on office staff, as it is a school priority to give teachers administrative support in record keeping and the production of teaching materials. This service is efficient and well organised. The technical support staff in science support teachers well and, in ICT, good support from the technician has a positive impact on students' learning.
113. Financial resources are very well managed and used effectively to support school improvements. The resources manager has an exceptional grasp of the implications of financial decisions, makes forward projections over several years and provides the senior management team and governors with very good information on which to make decisions. There are very good links between planning and finance, and the governor committees responsible for finance, personnel and curriculum work closely together. There is a carry-forward in the budget of some three per cent but, given current uncertainties over changes to sixth form funding and the school's responsibility for managing a large and ageing building, this is appropriate. The school makes very good use of 'best value' principles in, for example, recent projects to improve catering and develop the Study Support Centre. The school's expenditure per student is about average and the school gives good value for money.
114. The match between the qualifications and experience of staff and the subjects they teach is satisfactory overall. In many subjects it is good, but the school has had serious difficulties in recruiting and retaining teachers in some subjects. There have been particular difficulties in science, with considerable turnover and four vacancies currently

filled by temporary teachers. There are two unqualified, temporary teachers in English. There have been several changes of staff over recent years in modern languages and one teacher is currently on the graduate-training programme.

115. The school is thorough and creative in its efforts to recruit and retain high quality staff and has been successful in filling a number of vacancies. For the last two years it has recruited unqualified graduates and provided training through the graduate-training programme. This scheme has been run successfully. There are also good arrangements for the induction of new and newly qualified staff, who are well informed and receive good support.
116. Performance management of staff is well established and linked to the procedures for monitoring teaching. Professional development is well organised and staff are well supported. They are well informed through the policies in the staff handbook, which clearly set out the school's expectations. The school has the Investors in People award. There is a need for some teachers to develop a wider range of teaching skills. This is particularly the case where teachers are unqualified or are teaching outside their main subject. In a number of subjects, teachers would benefit from opportunities to watch each other teach. In some cases, teachers need further training in the use of ICT in teaching.
117. The overall quality of the school buildings is satisfactory. Parents commented on the poor state of the building and it is true that parts of it are not a pleasant working environment. However, since the last inspection many issues have been addressed and the school operates a thorough five-year repair and development plan, in which the available funding is used to best effect to improve conditions for teaching and learning.
118. Strategic use has been made of the school's resources and additional funding to make several important and impressive developments. A new sports hall opened in September 2001, with a fitness centre, dance studio and changing rooms. Physical education also has very good external facilities in the Astro turf and floodlit hard courts. Governors and staff took the initiative to convert the old gym into a Study Support Centre, which is a well-equipped study area appreciated by upper school students. The Study Support Centre and Information Services Centre both contain books and computers and are attractive and well-staffed areas where students can study in and out of school hours.
119. Accommodation is very good in religious education and physical education, and good in mathematics, drama, ICT and special educational needs. Shortcomings exist in the art accommodation, though this area is about to be refurbished. Several science laboratories have been refurbished, though work is needed on the remaining ones. In music, there is a lack of space and insufficient soundproofing for the practice rooms. Accommodation is adequate for most departments, though the décor is shabby in some areas, including English. Good levels of display to celebrate students' work and achievements create a stimulating learning environment in many departments.
120. Resources are adequate to meet the needs of the curriculum overall and are good in drama, physical education, modern languages, geography, religious education and in both the Study Support Centre and Information Services Centre. The book stock is satisfactory and books are used well in many subjects. However, in ICT there are few class sets of books, particularly for GCSE courses. The school has sufficient computers overall, but a lack in some subject areas hinders the use of ICT to support learning. In design and technology, there is a lack of resources needed to study systems and control, and computer-aided manufacture. Science resources are barely

adequate in both quality and quantity. The Education Centre has been recently established to support students who are withdrawn from lessons, and is currently very under-resourced.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

121. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good and are a significant factor in students' very good achievement. The sixth form is jointly managed by the head of sixth form, who is responsible for students' pastoral care, and the key stage 4/5 co-ordinator, who is responsible for curriculum development and monitoring students' progress. The key stage co-ordinator is also a member of the senior management team, thus providing a link between sixth form and whole-school developments.
122. The leaders of the sixth form have been successful in establishing a good work ethic, with students developing a good attitude to their work and making a good contribution to the life of the whole school.
123. The strategic direction of the sixth form is a high priority for the governing body, particularly the curriculum and finance committees. The governors set a target to recruit 60 per cent of Year 11 students to the sixth form and have adjusted the curriculum accordingly, with an appropriate balance between academic and vocational courses. The governing body is also involved in elections for head boy and head girl, and in mock interviews.
124. Most sixth form subjects are managed appropriately by the relevant head of department. There is a lack of clarity, however, in the arrangements for the management of vocational education. Responsibilities for ICT, business education and vocational education are combined within a single department. This causes some difficulties in establishing clear lines of responsibility and inhibits development.

Resources

125. The sixth form is cost effective. During the current year the expenditure on the sixth form is £40,000 less than its income, but the balance of expenditure between the sixth form and main school varies each year according to student numbers and is appropriate over a period of time. It is monitored carefully by the resources manager and reported to governors. The school is planning carefully the implications of an imminent change in the way sixth form courses are funded.
126. The match of teachers' qualifications and experience to the subjects they teach is good overall. There have been difficulties in science staffing, with vacancies and several changes of staff.
127. Most accommodation and resources in the sixth form are generally adequate. Students benefit from the new Study Support Centre, which is a very pleasant facility where they can use computers and do private study. They find their common room quite comfortable, though a little small. There are excellent sporting facilities, though the A-level sports studies course would benefit from having a theory classroom. The art rooms are about to be refurbished. The business studies department is currently scattered around the school, without a base to store resources or create a sense of coherence for the subject. Some of the science laboratories need refurbishing. Departments have built up resources for new courses, though religious education lacks

a computer to use for research. Resources are inadequate in music, where staff have to take sixth-formers to the Hertfordshire recording studio. Sixth form students are pleased with the accommodation and resources, which were a contributory factor in several students joining the sixth form from other schools.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

128. In order to raise standards further, the governors and senior management team should:

- (1) Raise standards of attainment in all subjects to those of the best by:
 - using the monitoring procedures and subject reviews to enhance skills in subject leadership;*
 - ensuring heads of department understand the analysis of examination results;
 - involving heads of department more actively in target setting and planning.
(Paragraphs 5, 104, 105, 106, 108)
- (2) Give all teachers the opportunity to develop a full range of teaching skills by:
 - ensuring weaknesses identified in monitoring lead to staff development;
 - providing more opportunities for teachers to observe each other teach.
(Paragraphs 44, 116)

- (3) Improve opportunities for learning ICT by:
- ensuring all students in Years 7 to 9 have sufficient skills lessons;*
 - covering the full National Curriculum in Years 10 and 11;
 - making full use of ICT in teaching other subjects.
(Paragraphs 37, 53, 56)
- (4) Improve the provision for spiritual development by:
- planning opportunities for spiritual development in subjects;
 - implementing the statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship.
(Paragraph 72)
- (5) Improve the start to the school day by:
- making more productive use of registration time;
 - improving punctuality in the mornings.
(Paragraphs 25, 83)

Sixth form

- (1) Provide students with the key skills they need to support their studies, including:
- oral and written communication;
 - application of number;
 - information and communication technology.
(Paragraphs 21, 50, 74)
- (2) Improve the start to the school day by:
- making more productive use of registration time;
 - improving punctuality in the mornings.
(Paragraphs 28, 80)
- (3) Ensure all students receive their statutory entitlement to religious education.
(Paragraph 79)
- (4) Clarify the arrangements for managing vocational education.
(Paragraph 124, 273)

In addition to the above issues for action, the school should consider

- improving provision for literacy by developing a school policy and improving curriculum links with primary schools;
(Paragraphs 38, 63, 64)
- ensuring that gifted and talented students are fully challenged;*
- providing more classroom support for students with special educational needs in Years 10 and 11;
(Paragraphs 7, 41, 111)

- reviewing the arrangements for careers guidance to ensure all students have an interview before they leave school;
(Paragraph 61)
- ensuring there is a policy for risk assessment.
(Paragraphs 82, 102)

**These issues are already included in the school's planning.*

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	154
	Sixth form	62
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		81

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 – 11							
Number	8	45	53	38	9	1	0
Percentage	5	29	34	25	6	1	0
Sixth form							
Number	5	23	24	9	1	0	0
Percentage	8	37	39	15	2	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Years 7 – 11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1053	164
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	105	

Special educational needs	Years 7 – 11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	19	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	314	1

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	129

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	56
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	49

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	9.4
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.6
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001	96	114	210

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	54	75	68
	Girls	82	86	77
	Total	136	161	145
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	65 (61)	77 (67)	69 (63)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	30 (31)	45 (45)	31 (32)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	61	63	72
	Girls	97	82	88
	Total	158	145	160
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	75 (60)	69 (64)	76 (58)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	37 (28)	38 (41)	34 (31)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	2001	84	97	181

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	23	71	80
	Girls	48	90	96
	Total	71	161	176
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	39 (49)	89 (92)	97 (96)
	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	35.4 (40.2)
	National	39.0 (38.4)

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
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	2001	47	27	74

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	47	27	74
	Average point score per candidate	16.6 (15.9)	17.9 (14.6)	17.0 (15.3)
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9 (17.1)	18.0 (18.0)	17.5 (17.6)

		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	33	20	53	14	7	21
	Average point score per candidate	19.8	18.7	19.4	9.0	15.4	11.1
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.9	17.4	9.8	11.4	10.6

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	16	100
	National		76

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	8
Black – African heritage	6
Black – other	1
Indian	13
Pakistani	93
Bangladeshi	2
Chinese	2
White	1073
Any other minority ethnic group	19

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani	4	
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	70	4
Other minority ethnic groups	6	

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	70.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.3

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	19
Total aggregate hours worked per week	427

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	75
---	----

Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13

Key Stage 3	24.2
Key Stage 4	22.6

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

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

	£
Total income	3,361,412
Total expenditure	3,353,802
Expenditure per pupil	2,774
Balance brought forward from previous year	120,651
Balance carried forward to next year	128,261

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	27.6
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	27.6

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1.6
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	3.0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1217
Number of questionnaires returned	181

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	35	56	6	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	40	49	10	1	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	25	56	10	1	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	19	52	19	8	2
The teaching is good.	19	66	8	2	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	24	50	21	3	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	44	48	4	2	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	56	41	2	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	22	54	19	2	3
The school is well led and managed.	35	52	4	1	8
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	32	55	10	1	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	40	44	7	1	8

Other issues raised by parents

Parents were generally very supportive of the school and felt it had improved in recent years. Several felt that too much homework is set, while others felt that homework is inconsistent and not properly monitored. A few parents felt that students are not trained to plan their work well enough. A small number of parents believe that behaviour disrupts some lessons. They are concerned over recent turnover of staff, especially in science, but also in modern languages. Some believe that the school buildings do not provide an appropriate environment.

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

ENGLISH

129. Overall, the quality of provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Students make satisfactory progress.
- They have positive attitudes and behave well in most lessons.
- Teachers know their students well.
- There are good relationships in most classes and teachers manage their students well.

Areas for improvement

- Too much planning is left to individual teachers and students do not have a consistent learning experience.
- Some lessons are not well planned, so that time is not used productively and there is a loss of pace.
- There is no departmental plan to develop literacy skills.
- The National Curriculum levels of attainment are not used consistently in Years 7 to 9.
- There is no systematic provision for gifted and talented students.

130. Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were average and in line with those in similar schools. Results have been improving over the last three years. However, a smaller proportion of students reached the highest levels than is the case nationally. Girls did better than boys by a similar margin to the national one. Standards are similar to those in science but below mathematics.

131. GCSE results have been average in recent years, though in 2001 there was a decline and results were below average. Results in GCSE English literature declined more sharply, from well above average in 2000 to below average in 2001. Boys' results were in 2001 significantly below those of girls in both subjects, and both boys and girls did less well than in their other subjects. Staff changes and recruitment difficulties over the last two years partly account for the fall in standards.

132. In the work seen during the inspection, standards in Years 7 to 9 are average. Speaking and listening skills are satisfactory. Students usually listen attentively to their teachers, though they have few opportunities for extended oral work. In some classes, particularly in Year 9, boys' contributions predominate in oral work; girls are more likely to take a back seat. Reading comprehension is generally satisfactory, though many students read without expression or clarity and do not have enough opportunities to develop this skill. There is some lively narrative writing from students in higher sets, but those in lower sets rarely develop their ideas in detail and in some cases spelling, handwriting and presentation are poor. The range of writing is limited. Too much is based on the class readers, and there is very little analytical, discursive or persuasive writing. Overall, students' achievements in Years 7 to 9 are satisfactory. In top sets, students make good progress in producing extended writing, in choosing vocabulary carefully, and in using quotations as illustrative evidence when writing about books. Many make good progress because they have good self-motivation. Students in some lower sets have made insufficient progress because of staff changes, which has resulted in some work being unfinished or unmarked.

133. In work seen, standards by Year 11 are average. They are higher than the most recent examination results because staffing is now more stable and the current students' prior attainment was higher. Most students in Years 10 and 11 are confident speakers and are developing sound listening skills. Many in higher sets show a sensitive response to poetry. Weaker students have more limited comprehension and a more limited response; they have difficulties in dealing with abstract ideas and in identifying layers of meaning in poetry. Most students in higher sets are able to write accurately and fluently in a range of forms, sometimes at considerable length. They often write engaging narratives. Students in lower sets write on a simple level about texts studied, but their style is over-colloquial and they rarely develop ideas in detail. Students' achievements in Years 10 and 11 are satisfactory overall. Many students make good progress as a result of sound teaching and consistent effort. However, some students in higher sets would achieve more if they were more active in their learning. They behave well in class, listen attentively to their teachers, but rarely generate their own questions or challenge ideas. There are some students of all abilities who gain insight and understanding during lessons, but find it difficult to recall previous learning. In some sets, particularly those of lower and average attainment, students have not made enough progress because they have not kept up with coursework.
134. Students with special educational needs generally make satisfactory progress through extra attention from teachers and well-structured tasks that help with understanding. They work slowly but improve their writing through re-drafting. In some very low sets, students need better resources and work that is more appropriate to their needs. Students whose first language is not English make good progress, particularly with the help of support staff. There is no significant difference between the progress made by students of different ethnic backgrounds.
135. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, with some good and a few very good features. Most teachers have a sound knowledge of their subject. As a result, many students are well prepared for examinations, although a rigorous approach does not start early enough. Some teachers have developed imaginative ways of helping their students to understand more difficult texts. In one Year 10 class studying 'Romeo and Juliet', students worked in groups to produce a modern day portrait of Queen Mab. Their acute lively suggestions, based on the text, showed a good understanding of the original. The firm classroom management of most, but not all teachers, creates a calm environment for learning, and good relationships in the classroom promote positive attitudes in most students. Most work is marked thoroughly, although there is not enough consistency in the use of National Curriculum levels in Years 7 to 9. Teachers' judgements are not standardised sufficiently, particularly at the end of Year 9. When students do not learn as well as they should, it is frequently because teachers' planning is weak. Time is not always used productively and there is a loss of pace in lessons as a result. There needs to be more emphasis on learning: teachers rarely start lessons by outlining what is to be learned or give an effective summary to consolidate learning at the end. Unsuccessful teaching methods and uncertainty about how to meet the needs of students in very low sets were some of the features of the very few unsatisfactory lessons observed.
136. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. A greater focus is now given to developing extended writing and on improving students' speaking and listening skills. Students are now grouped by attainment. These measures have had some effect in raising standards. Other initiatives have only just started and it is too early to judge their effectiveness. Management overall is satisfactory in that administrative procedures are generally sound, teaching is monitored and there is an ethos of collaboration within the department. There are, however, a number of

weaknesses in management and leadership that must be addressed in order to raise standards further. The department has been slow to move forward in response to changes within the school and nationally. Up to now the curriculum has been narrowly based on literature and there is no departmental plan to develop literacy skills, particularly in Years 7 to 9. Too much is left to individual teachers and this creates difficulties for new and inexperienced teachers. The departmental guidance to support teachers' planning is not thorough enough to provide a consistent experience for all students. Work has started on reviewing this to bring it into line with the National Literacy Strategy, and there is an urgent need for this work to be completed and implemented. There is no systematic provision for gifted or talented students, or any policy for increasing the proportion of pupils gaining the highest levels at the end of Year 9, and top grades at GCSE. Monitoring in the department should be extended to cover the standardisation of assessments at the end of Year 9, and should also focus on the development of teaching, in particular the aspects of teaching and learning already identified as needing improvement.

DRAMA

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

Strengths

- GCSE results are above average.
- Students enjoy drama and it is a popular GCSE choice.
- Good and frequently very good teaching enable students to make good progress.
- Drama makes a significant contribution to students' personal development.

Areas for improvement

- There is an overload of paperwork in the GCSE practical lessons.

138. Standards are broadly average by the end of Year 9, and students achieve well in relation to their attainment on entry to the school. GCSE results have fluctuated since 1999, but are consistently above average. Results in 2001 were the highest for three years, with girls doing particularly well. Both boys and girls did better than in their other subjects. Achievement by the end of Year 11 is good.

139. By the end of Year 9, students have a satisfactory range of drama skills and are able to plan improvisations and create convincing characters. They make good progress. They have a sound understanding of dramatic conventions and show good collaborative skills, gaining from the opportunities to discuss and develop their ideas together. Students with special educational needs make good progress, helped by the encouragement and stimulus that group work provides.

140. Students in GCSE classes rise to the demands of more challenging work. Clear progress is made between Year 10 and Year 11, where standards are above average. Students make clever use of dramatic techniques in their improvisations and are able to evaluate their own and other's work. This is seen in the discerning comments they make as an attentive audience to other groups' performances, and in the detailed coursework essays that many produce. Students with special educational needs make good progress, particularly when they are given extra support to help with written work.

141. Teaching is good overall and much is very good. Lessons are well managed and conducted at a brisk pace. Teachers are skilled in developing students' confidence and building on their strengths and ideas. Teachers have good subject knowledge and a

great deal of experience. Their background skills are such that dance and music are an integral part of many lessons. Teachers communicate well with students, who respond positively and learn quickly. Students enjoy drama, numbers at GCSE have risen, and there is a clear sense of commitment in the examination classes. Recent refurbishment of the drama studios has enhanced students' serious and purposeful attitudes to the subject. The introduction of new GCSE courses has meant an increase in the amount of writing expected from students. The result of this is that there is too much paperwork in some of the practical lessons. Teachers are aware of the problem and recognise they will have to alter lesson and course plans to accommodate it.

142. Extra-curricular activities are a strong feature in the work of the department. There are many opportunities for students of all ages to perform to real audiences. Students take part in national competitions, musical and dance shows and contribute to local drama festivals. Drama and dance clubs are run for Year 7 by senior students, and there are many opportunities for theatre visits. Drama makes a valuable contribution to students' personal development, and to the social and cultural life of the school.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Standards are above average across the age range 11 to 16.
- Students achieve very well in Years 7 to 9.
- Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good.
- Teaching overall is good, with a number of very good features.
- Students' progress is monitored through regular and thorough assessment of their work.
- The head of department provides clear educational direction.

Areas for improvement

- Students have too few opportunities to use computers and modern technology.
- The monitoring of teaching does not focus enough on students' learning and on developing teaching skills.
- There is no whole school policy for developing numeracy in all subjects.

144. Attainment in mathematics on entry to the school is now average, but was below average when students in Years 10 and 11 joined the school. Results in the Year 9 National Curriculum tests in 2001 were above average, and well above those of similar schools. Teachers' assessments confirm these results, which represent very good achievement by students during Years 7 to 9. There is no significant difference between the standards of boys and girls. Standards are above those in science and English. There has been an upward trend in results in the last three years, and the targets for 2002 are even higher.

145. In the GCSE examinations taken in 2001, the proportion of students gaining grades in the range A*-C was broadly average. The proportion gaining a grade in the range A*-G was also average. The results represent satisfactory progress overall when compared with the results the students gained in Year 9. However, there was some underachievement by boys who performed poorly compared with girls. Students performed better in mathematics than in their other subjects, including science and English. Results overall in 2001 were not as good as those in 2000. They are predicted to be back to their previous level in 2002, and students are on target to achieve this.

146. In work seen during the inspection, standards in Years 7 to 9 are above average and in line with recent test results. Students achieve very well. There is a good balance across the whole range of the National Curriculum, which ensures that students learn a wide range of skills. From the beginning of Year 7, students are placed in sets by ability; all classes are provided with work at the appropriate level. Students are therefore challenged, they enjoy the work, and in most lessons, extension work is provided for those who finish the allotted tasks. In Year 7, higher-attaining students discuss how to predict the gradient from the equation for a straight-line graph. They also learn about the intercepts on the two axes; a high proportion of the class is working at National Curriculum Levels 5 and 6. Lower-attaining students consolidate basic work such as number bonds before moving on to more demanding topics. Their level of understanding is increased by teaching methods that require them to think about their work.
147. Standards in work seen in Years 10 and 11 are above average. They are higher than the 2001 examination results because the current students' prior attainment was higher. Students' achieve well in relation to their test results at the end of Year 9. Higher-attaining students learn how to add two vectors by drawing diagrams, and how to check their results arithmetically. Lower-attaining students learn how to analyse, sort, interpret and present data, for instance by constructing pie charts. They have some difficulty, however, in using estimation to check the accuracy of their calculations. Students from ethnic minorities are very well integrated into classes, and also learn well. The minority who require language support benefit from the joint planning which takes place between their mathematics teacher and the language assistant.
148. There has been a positive response by teachers in the mathematics department to the National Literacy Strategy. Key words are displayed in most mathematics rooms, and those used in the lesson are often written clearly on the board. Students have the opportunity to express themselves in their own words when writing up investigations. Practice is not consistent across the department, however, and students are rarely offered the chance to pronounce new words, or to express their understanding of the meaning of mathematical concepts in writing. The standard of numeracy in the school is good, and improved by the regular practice which students enjoy in their mathematics lessons. There is, however, no school policy for numeracy to clarify the shared responsibility of all subjects and encourage consistency of practice. The use of ICT within mathematics has not increased sufficiently since the last inspection. The new head of department is aware of the need to ensure that all teachers within the department provide appropriate opportunities for their students to use computers and modern technology more frequently in their lessons.
149. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good throughout Years 7 to 11, with many very good features. There is a high proportion of very good lessons, particularly by the specialist mathematics teachers. Teachers have a very good knowledge of their subject and provide work at the correct level so that all students can learn. They manage students skilfully, with a very high expectation that students will work hard and improve. Teachers encourage students by marking their work thoroughly, and providing them with guidance about how to improve. Homework is set regularly, but does not always contain questions that challenge the highest attainers in the class. Very effective teaching occurs in all year groups. In a Year 9 lesson, for instance, students recalled the meaning of different types of average during a rapid start to the lesson and then displayed data about car sales in a scatter diagram. They clearly understood the concept of correlation, and were able to analyse information from their graphs about the depreciation in value of second-hand cars. In a Year 11 lesson, students worked hard on an investigation into how the area enclosed by a fence depends on the shape of the

land. After some initial calculations, they worked methodically and made predictions about the outcome. Their attitude to work was excellent, and they concentrated well to the end of the lesson. Students with special educational needs are well known to their teachers. They make good progress as a result of high expectations that they will work hard and improve their standards.

150. In addition to the thorough and experienced teaching, other factors contribute to the success of the mathematics department. The curriculum is well planned, and kept under review to accommodate examination requirements. Individual lessons have clear objectives, they start promptly, and work continues right up to the bell. Furthermore, students expect to work in their mathematics lessons, and have a very positive attitude to the subject. Relationships between teachers and students, and among students themselves, demonstrate mutual respect. Students develop very good habits of presentation of their work from Year 7 onwards; this includes showing the methods by which they obtain their answers.
151. The head of department provides very good leadership, with a clear vision for the future; he leads by example in his relationships with colleagues and students. The department has been very successful for a number of years, but he is aware of the need to continue to innovate in order to keep up with changes in national practice. There is a realistic development plan, linked to school priorities, though no details of the cost of implementation. The department has been involved in the introduction of performance management, but there are not enough opportunities for teachers to observe other lessons or share good practice in order to improve teaching skills still further. Teachers are experienced, mostly well qualified, and committed to their subject. The use of display is very effective. The range of books available in the school library, however, is poor.
152. Since the last inspection, the department has made good progress. Standards have risen and in Year 9 they are now consistently above average. The National Numeracy Strategy has been introduced, and is having an impact on students' mastery and enjoyment of mathematics. Textbooks are now available to all students. The most significant improvement has been in the quality of teaching. At the time of the last inspection there was a significant proportion of unsatisfactory teaching. While there are still some weaknesses, mostly among the non-specialists, teaching is now good overall, with better identification and provision for individual students, including those with special educational needs and the higher attainers. There has been insufficient training and development in the use of computers to enhance students' understanding, and this remains a priority for all teachers within the department.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Attainment is in line with the national average in Year 9.
- Teaching and the planning of lessons are good overall, with some excellent practice.
- Students work well together and attitudes to science are positive.
- Teachers have good knowledge of science and are enthusiastic about it.
- The assessment procedures are very good.

Areas for improvement

- There is the potential to raise standards further, especially in GCSE.
- ICT is not used enough in lessons and investigations.
- Additional materials for gifted and talented children are needed.
- Monitoring of teaching needs is not used enough to develop skills and share good practice.

154. Standards in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were average and close to the average for similar schools. Standards have been improving since 1999 and there is no significant difference between the results of boys and girls. Standards in science are similar to English but lower than mathematics.

155. In work seen, standards in Years 7 to 9 are similar to the test results and students' achievement is good. Year 7 students show a good knowledge and understanding of the arrangement of metals and non-metals in the Periodic Table. In Year 8, lower-attaining students correctly identify the parts and processes of digestion and can talk confidently about the changes in their bodies as they grow up. Others, in Year 9, have a reasonable understanding about how the fittest plants and animals adapt to survive in adverse conditions. Lower-attaining students are supported well by teachers and achieve about the same as others in the class, and there is no difference in the attainment of boys and girls or students from minority ethnic backgrounds.

156. GCSE results have been average in recent years, though in 2001 there was a decline and results were below average. Girls did much better than boys in 2001, though in other recent years there has been no significant gender difference. In comparison with their other subjects, students achieved similar results in English but did better in mathematics.

157. In work seen in Years 10 and 11, standards are average and are better than the 2001 examination results. This is partly because current students have higher prior attainment and partly because teaching is now better, as the staffing situation is more stable. Students are achieving well in relation to their attainment at the end of Year 9. Year 10 students successfully extend their knowledge and understanding about the practical aspects of heat energy in chemical reactions. Others, in Year 11, make very good progress in their work on rates of reaction. They confidently handle the data gathered in earlier practical work and show how experimental techniques can be improved and errors reduced. Lower-attaining students understand the relationship between the area of a parachute and its speed of descent. Students with English as an additional language are well supported by classroom assistants. Students' enthusiasm helps them to make good progress. In practical work especially, they apply themselves well and report results thoughtfully and accurately, effectively deepening their

understanding of the principles and processes in science. The science department is on line to meet its targets for National Curriculum and GCSE results.

158. Teaching is generally good and some is very good or excellent. The specialist teachers have a very good knowledge of science, and use this well. They prepare lessons conscientiously. In most lessons, the aims are made clear to students, and this contributes to their understanding and the success of the lesson. A range of teaching methods is used. Whole class questioning is used effectively by most teachers and the pace of lessons is generally good. As a result of this good practice, many students are challenged and confident and they show clear gains in knowledge, understanding and skills.
159. Assessment is regular and carefully recorded. A full record of previous results, marking, tests and investigations is used to place students in groups, to set targets, to report on progress and to inform teachers' work and students' learning. This is a major strength. Teachers mark students' books and other work well, often using praise and giving supportive and informative comment. The quality of students' work on display throughout the science laboratories is good.
160. Students are enthusiastic about their work in science, behaviour in lessons is good and attitudes largely positive. Expectations are generally high and relationships are very good. Students take pride in their work and books are well looked after. Most are keen, willing and attentive, and approach work with a sense of enjoyment. This was notably so in Year 8 lessons on energy for life and in the work of Year 10 students on hormones and their effects. Students enjoy practical work and investigations in science; they stay on task, work collaboratively and with good concentration. Written work is of a reasonable standard, with some good examples of creative, imaginative and extended writing.
161. A new head of department has been appointed since the previous inspection. He is experienced, has a clear vision and provides good leadership. In the past there has been a high turnover of staff, and some poor teaching. Staffing is now more stable, particularly in physics, and teaching is much improved. There is still, however, significant staff absence through illness, resulting in disrupted teaching for some students. Teaching is monitored regularly, but the outcomes are not used sufficiently to share good practice and develop teaching skills. The department has made other changes that are improving standards. The documents that support teachers' planning have been updated and are of good quality. New textbooks and resources have been purchased. Some materials to challenge gifted and talented students have been prepared, though more are needed. There are study support sessions for students preparing for examinations. Several laboratories have been refurbished, though further improvement in accommodation and services is still required. Teachers are good role models and encourage interest in science through their own specialist knowledge and enthusiasm. Additional activities, such as clubs, trips and visits, assist the move towards a more positive and exciting image.
162. The department is well organised. There are three qualified and experienced technicians who successfully support the teachers and are familiar with safe working practices. Teachers and technicians are developing ICT skills for administration and lesson preparation, but ICT is not sufficiently available for students in lessons. For example, there are not enough opportunities to collect data electronically and use computers to analyse and present the results.

ART AND DESIGN

163. Overall, the quality of provision in art and design is **satisfactory, but with considerable capacity to improve.**

Strengths

- Students in all age groups, including those with special needs, achieve well.
- Teaching and learning are good overall, with many very good and some excellent features.
- The majority of students enjoy the subject and work with enthusiasm.
- Standards have been raised through the appointment of new staff and changes to the curriculum.

Areas for improvement

- There is potential to raise GCSE standards further.
- A few students in Years 10 and 11 show little commitment and have poor personal study skills.
- The quality of teaching is not consistent.
- The accommodation is poor, but is about to be refurbished.

164. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 show that standards were average in 2001 and were higher than in the previous year. Girls did better than boys, but there was no difference in the relative attainment of students from different backgrounds. Inspection evidence confirms these standards, with some potential to raise achievement further in some of the mixed ability groups. Students achieve well in relation to their attainment on entry to the school. Following the school's identification of gifted and talented students, the department is encouraging more students to aim for the highest level. Students with special educational needs and English as an additional language make good progress and enjoy the creative and visual aspects of the subject.

165. GCSE results were slightly below average in 2001, and girls did much better than boys. Results have nevertheless improved over the last three years. Standards in work seen show that the improvement is continuing and standards are now average, with less difference between the attainment of boys and girls. Students achieve well in Years 10 and 11.

166. Improvements have been made to the art curriculum, and there is a rich, well-planned programme of tasks in Years 7 to 9. Students are developing a good understanding of the main art elements of line, tone pattern, shape texture, and colour. Practical activities, in a wide range of media, are well integrated into the work, as well as the styles of major artists, the art of other countries, and art movements past and present. Year 8 students, for example, study Islamic art. They consider how religious beliefs are expressed in repeated patterns to form meaningful images. Students create patterns of their own using hexagonal shapes. These show a clear understanding of the use of contrasting, yet related, shapes and symmetry to form balanced compositions. Other groups make striking repeated patterns after studying the complexities of Roman mosaic. Year 9 classes study negative and positive shapes, having made careful observational drawings of everyday objects, and use this to create abstract paintings. Sculptured abstract heads made by Year 8 students in card relief, in the style of Picasso and Gabo, are particularly good, and show an understanding of Cubist techniques.

167. In Years 10 and 11, work is based on observational drawing, personal exploration of media, the students' own ideas and the work of major artists. Sketchbooks and design

sheets are used to record exploratory work on themes and processes. Year 10 students draw shells and other natural forms, and develop their work in different media, such as glue, tissue paper, sand and string to show the veins and surface texture of a shell. Their work is rich in colour and pattern. In Year 11, students develop their knowledge of art elements and skills in their work on a set theme. Their best work is strikingly expressive, imaginative, and original. Weaker work shows less personal initiative, relies too heavily on second-hand imagery, and is not backed up by sufficient research and investigation of materials and processes.

168. Most students enjoy the subject. They have positive attitudes and behave well. On the whole, students work hard and are highly productive in their coursework. Some, however, do not make the best use of the opportunities that the department offers, and a minority, mainly in Years 10 and 11 show little commitment. They are insufficiently motivated to strive for the higher grades; their personal study skills are poor, and often-incomplete work indicates underachievement.
169. Students work well together in mixed ability groupings, sharing ideas and interests. They form good working relationships with their teachers and peers. In the most successful lessons, boys and girls, and those from different backgrounds, work together in a calm purposeful atmosphere.
170. Teaching is good overall, with many very good features. It is never less than satisfactory. Teachers have very good command of their subject, and communicate their knowledge well. Planning is a strength, and students now make better progress as they go up the school, following changes in teaching plans and methods. Revised plans cover the National Curriculum and successfully integrate basic skills and work in context. Homework is set regularly and marked with constructive comments that help students to improve their work. In the best lessons, teaching methods effectively promote a high quality of learning. Lesson aims are clear and students' interest is held by stimulating visual material and inspiring demonstrations. Question and answer sessions develop students' knowledge and help the teacher to gauge their understanding. In the less successful lessons, the short lesson time is not used so well, introductions are sometimes too long, understanding is not always checked, and time is wasted on the management of students and resources. Following staff changes, the department is working towards achieving greater consistency of approach.
171. Good improvements have been made since the last inspection, and there is considerable capacity to improve further. Standards in Years 7 to 9 have improved. Sketchbooks are now widely used, knowledge of artists' work is developing well, and students use the styles and techniques of major artists in their own work. Attitudes are at least satisfactory in the majority of lessons, and the quality of teaching has improved. Assessment is now effectively related to the National Curriculum and ICT is being used successfully for research and design. Students have their own resource centre, where they have access to a fine collection of books, reference materials, and the internet. The accommodation is about to be refurbished.
172. The subject area is enthusiastically led and well managed. Teamwork is developing and there is a strong commitment to raising standards. Development plans are innovative and ambitious, and include provision for ceramics and other three-dimensional work; further development of computer-aided design; and improvements to assessment and target setting.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Teaching in textiles and food is very good and sometimes excellent.
- A wide range of experiences is offered.
- Recent improvements in staffing have given a clearer direction to developments.
- There is good provision for equal opportunities and multicultural aspects of the subject.

Areas for improvement

- The quality of teaching is inconsistent across the different areas of the subject.
- The section of the National Curriculum on systems and control is not fully covered in all areas.
- Assessment is not often enough shared with students to help them improve their work.

174. All students in Years 7 to 11 take design and technology, with the exception of those who follow the leisure and tourism GNVQ in Years 10 and 11. The courses include food technology, graphics, resistant materials and textiles.

175. Standards at the end of Year 9 are average, both in work seen and in teachers' assessments. Boys' attainment is less far behind girls' than is the case nationally. Students achieve well in relation to their attainment on entry to the school. Students with special educational needs and English as an additional language make good progress and enjoy the creative and practical aspects of the subject.

176. GCSE results were below average in 2001 and showed a decline from the previous year. Good results in food technology and textiles were outweighed by very poor results in graphics and resistant materials. Boys did significantly worse than girls. In work seen, standards are showing some improvement, though they are still below average. The difference between boys' and girls' attainment is narrowing. Students' achievement is satisfactory in relation to their attainment at the end of Year 9. The improvement in standards is partly due to the prompt action of the newly-appointed head of department in making changes to resistant materials and graphics.

177. In Years 7 to 9, students develop an understanding of the design process in all areas of the subject. Poor past provision for graphics and resistant materials has resulted in less productivity and weaker coverage of the National Curriculum in these areas. However, Year 7 students work accurately with hand tools and appreciate the importance of careful planning, measuring and marking out. Their understanding of metals is developed through observation and experience of different materials. There is some very good work in textiles and food technology. In textiles for example, Year 8 students analyse the specification for a design-and-make backpack project. They draw their own school bag, annotate their sketch neatly and identify strengths and weaknesses in the design. Their work shows good skill in observation, as well as a knowledge of construction methods and the properties of materials. Students evaluate their work well in class discussions.

178. In Years 10 and 11, students make good progress in textiles and food technology. Year 10 food students understand how chilled and frozen sauces can be modified to achieve good texture using different starches. In graphic products, students have not attained the same depth of understanding. Their work is insufficiently related to the design process, and specific commercial applications and constraints. In resistant materials, students make slow progress designing a time plan for their design-and-make project.

Many show poor application to the task and their graphical presentation skills are below average. There are, therefore, strengths and weaknesses across the department in provision and standards, though there are signs of improvement.

179. Students' approach to design and technology is satisfactory overall, but as with attainment there is a wide variation in attitudes. When lessons are well planned, tasks made interesting and classes well managed, students show very positive attitudes and behave well. In a minority of lessons, some students are insufficiently motivated, have low expectations of their own capabilities, and do not always behave well or work safely.
180. Teaching is satisfactory overall, though its quality varies. Over a third is very good, and there is some excellent teaching. Courses in food technology and textiles are extremely well planned and structured to help students of all levels to do their best. In these lessons teachers communicate their knowledge of the subject well, set achievable targets, with extension work for the more able and appropriate work for those with special educational needs and English as an additional language. In the best lessons, time and resources are used extremely effectively. In these lessons, the pace is brisk, literacy and numeracy are well integrated, and question and answer sessions are used effectively to reinforce learning and provide on-going assessment.
181. The quality of teaching is too inconsistent across the different areas of the subject, especially in Years 10 and 11. In a small proportion of less successful lessons, teachers' expectations of students' conduct and standards of work are too low. Assessment is not used sufficiently on a day-to-day basis, or shared with students to help them improve their work.
182. Since the last inspection there has been some improvement in standards, accommodation and resources, but improvement is unsatisfactory overall as some significant deficiencies remain. The section of the National Curriculum on systems and control is not fully covered all areas. The quality of teaching has improved, but inconsistencies continue to have an adverse effect on standards. The geographically separated workshops and food rooms are a constraint on the development of teamwork. There have been improvements to the facilities for ICT and computer-aided design, but not for systems and control, or computer-aided manufacture.
183. There is capacity to improve. The recently appointed head of department is working hard to tackle the areas of concern. Other new staff are bringing new ideas and contributing well. Development plans identify important areas for improvement. They are: standards and teaching in resistant materials and graphics; the accommodation and health and safety measures; timetable arrangements; the quality of resources; assessment procedures and target setting. Priority must be given to ensuring that teaching and learning are consistently good in all areas of the department's work.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good.
- There are good opportunities for independent learning.
- The department is well managed.
- There are good relationships between students and teachers.

Areas for improvement

- Students do not have enough opportunities to use ICT to do research or analyse data.
- The work in some classes does not take enough account of students' special educational needs.

185. Standards in teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 are above average and this is confirmed in the work seen. Girls do better than boys, but all achieve well in relation to their attainment on entry. GCSE results in 2001 were below average, with no difference between the results of girls or boys. In work seen, standards at the end of Year 11 are average and students achieve well in relation to their attainment at the end of Year 9. The difference between the work seen and the GCSE results is largely due to the current students having higher prior attainment, but there is a trend of improvement in the subject in all years. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress and students with English as their second language make good progress. The subject is a popular choice at age 14.
186. The improvement in standards by the end of Year 9 is seen in students' work and their responses in lessons. Most students are successful in providing facts, but less so in explaining them. Their ability to explain is improving, however, through the guidance they are given. They generally give correct but brief answers to questions in lessons, though they extend these when encouraged to do so. They work together very well and show consideration for the views and values of other students. All students enjoy good relationships with their teachers and this helps to create a positive learning environment. Most students by the end of Year 8 have a good grasp of physical processes and their impact on human life. They use geographical terms with confidence. Higher-attaining students make rapid progress in acquiring knowledge and can apply this, for example, in evaluating the reasons that some places attract tourists. They are also confident in their use of geographical skills, especially in map work. The progress of students with special needs is only satisfactory because in classes where there is a broad range of ability, the written materials do not always meet their individual literacy needs. Boys and girls work to a similar standard, though some girls are rather passive. Students do not use ICT very often in their work.
187. By the end of Year 11, students are adept in extracting information from secondary sources. They use data, for example to analyse the causes and effects of flooding and assess the effectiveness of coastal protection schemes. Students are by this stage consolidating their knowledge and understanding and refining their skills. Their fieldwork skills develop well in coursework. Students make good use of ICT in the presentation of their coursework, but do not use it enough to analyse the data they collect. Students work together very well and are generous in sharing ideas. Girls are less passive than in Years 7 to 9 and there is no significant difference between the work of girls and boys, though girls' presentation is better. Written work is good and while the quality and quantity vary, all students make a serious effort to improve. Higher-attaining students in Year 11 successfully compile case studies, but need to extend some of their written answers. The work of lower-attaining students is affected by their weak literacy skills, although they receive considerable help on this from their teachers.
188. Teaching is generally good and is sometimes very good. All teachers have good subject knowledge and use their own travel experiences to complement the work done in class. 'Sir's skiing holiday' amused a Year 8 class and gave an insight into snow-covered slopes, the tree line and a vista of the Alps as seen from a plane. Teachers take opportunities to link geography with other subjects. Lessons are well planned, contain a variety of activities, and develop a range of skills. They consolidate previous learning and extend understanding. Teachers have high expectations of students. They

develop students' independent decision making by getting them to think about and discuss geographical issues. Students do not have enough access to ICT in lessons to gather and analyse data, although they are encouraged to use it for homework. Teachers make effective use of ICT in preparing materials for lessons. The work set in some classes does not take enough account of some students' special educational needs. This affects the quality of their work. Marking is both supportive and constructive. Homework is set regularly but it is often not particularly challenging.

189. There has been a good improvement since the last inspection. The department continues to be well led and managed. Teachers work as a team and all have a measure of responsibility within the department. The head of department analyses examination data to identify areas of weakness and improve them. Work is regularly assessed in relation to National Curriculum levels, but teachers need examples of work at different levels to make their assessment more consistent. Teachers are very familiar with standards at GCSE and students know from their target reviews how much progress they are making. There is insufficient use of ICT within the department for teaching and administration. This issue from the last inspection has not been addressed. The department has sufficient textbooks, maps and atlases. Classrooms are just adequate for the size of some classes.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Teachers have good subject knowledge.
- The Year 9 curriculum is being developed creatively.

Areas for improvement

- The range of tasks in some lessons is too narrow.
- The curriculum needs to include more opportunities for the development of literacy and numeracy and for students' social development.

191. The GCSE pass rate at A*-G has been average since 1999. The pass rate at A*-C in 2001 was below average, and results have been similar in the last three years. The standards of work seen in Year 11 are average, and higher than recent GCSE results, mainly because students' prior attainment is higher, but partly also because teaching is improving. Students' achievement in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory in relation to their attainment at the end of Year 9. Higher-attaining students can use historical evidence to explore the experiences of women settlers on the plains of America and to reach sound conclusions about the issues that they faced. Lower-attaining students are able to understand the causes of conflict between European settlers and North American Indians but, despite good teaching, they need more support to extend their learning.
192. Standards are above average at the end of Year 9 and students achieve well. By Year 9, they are able to use their historical skills to analyse a propaganda poster from World War I and their knowledge of the war to assess the evidence for its likely effect upon recruitment to the army. Higher-attaining students in Year 9 produce good standards of extended written work, for example on the slave trade. Their continued progress should contribute to a higher pass rate at GCSE in the near future.
193. Teaching is good overall in all years. Teachers have good subject knowledge. This was seen particularly in a Year 11 lesson where an outline of the development of

photography in 19th century America helped students to understand the context of visual evidence about European settlers. In another lesson, a Year 10 class studying the history of medicine gained from a lively and detailed description of the discovery of penicillin and of contemporary diseases. Year 8 students grasped the problems faced by both sides in English Civil War from an analysis of the tactics and weaponry used in the early 1640s. The best lessons have a pace which allows students time to reflect upon new information and historical evidence, but set a challenging expectation of what it is possible for them to learn within an hour. Students are given some opportunities to develop their learning through research, for example in the Year 9 project on slavery, and in a scripted drama on recruitment in 1914. However, most lessons need a wider range of approaches to learning and more explicit aims, so that students know what they are expected to achieve. In particular, oral work is generally limited to the teacher's use of question and answer to check understanding, and does not usually attempt to engage students' opinions about the historical issues involved. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, but would benefit from more classroom support, particularly on their GCSE course. Overall, students have very good behaviour and attitudes to the subject in all years.

194. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There are good documents to support teachers' planning, with particularly creative developments in Year 9. Assessment procedures make satisfactory use of school data to set GCSE targets and Year 11 tests are thoroughly analysed. Assessment procedures in Years 7 to 9 are developing well, particularly in Year 9. There is a satisfactory contribution to literacy and numeracy development, when for example key vocabulary about World War I is taught in Year 9, but these aspects need to be planned more clearly into the curriculum. Departmental planning should build upon the good practice of those staff who use ICT to design research tasks, as in the use of the internet by Year 8 students to answer a question about a Tudor monarch. There is a satisfactory contribution to social and cultural development and a good contribution to spiritual and moral development, but all these areas need a sharper focus in departmental planning. This is particularly true of students' social and discussion skills.

195. Improvement since the last inspection is good overall. Standards at the end of Year 9 have risen and most students' work is presented well. Marking shows an accurate understanding of the National Curriculum levels. Standards could be further raised with higher expectations of the pace of learning and level of students' achievement.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

196. Overall, the quality of provision in information and communication technology is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Students' attainment is in line with national expectations.
- Relationships between teachers and students are good.
- The new computer network is a good learning resource for all students.
- Curricular planning ensures that students cover a good range of skills in ICT lessons.

Areas for improvement

- Some students in Years 7 to 9 do not have regular ICT lessons.
- Students are not confident in using their ICT skills independently and do not use ICT enough in other subjects.
- There is not enough coverage of control technology or computer-aided manufacture.

- More tasks are needed to challenge students who are gifted and talented, and support those with special educational needs.

197. Most students in Years 7 to 9 have a specialist ICT lesson each week, but those who take German as well as French gain their skills during specialist ICT days when they are withdrawn from their normal lessons. Students cover a good range of basic ICT skills in specialist lessons and make some use of ICT in other subjects, though this needs further development. The teachers' National Curriculum assessments at the end of Year 9 were above average in 2001, but these did not match the standards of work seen during the inspection, which are broadly average, with girls outperforming boys. In Year 7, students produce multi-media presentations and, by the end of Year 9, all students, including those with special needs, are competent in using desktop publishing, the internet, spreadsheets, databases and a range of electronic resources such as scanners and digital cameras. Their work shows a satisfactory understanding of the software. Higher-attaining students work quickly and master the basic skills with ease. However, the highest attainers do not receive sufficiently challenging work to move them further forward. Students' achievement overall is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. They do not, however, have enough opportunities to practise and apply their skills.
198. In Years 10 and 11, some students follow a GCSE full course in information studies and others take a GCSE short course in information technology. The policy of the school is to enter students for the GCSE courses after one year of study. Those who do not enter a GCSE course complete a basic skills course in ICT. Results in 2001 were well above average in information studies, but well below average in the information technology short course. Students' achievement is satisfactory overall in Years 10 and 11, in relation to their prior attainment at the end of Year 9.
199. Students following the GCSE short and full courses research and present their work to a satisfactory level. In coursework they use a good range of ICT skills, but in the short course they have insufficient time to complete coursework to a high enough standard. All students learn to process and present data using databases, desktop publishing and spreadsheets. They develop their numeracy when using spreadsheets and are able to select the appropriate formulae to do calculations. They gather information from a range of sources, using scanners, digital cameras and the internet, and present this in their coursework. There is not enough emphasis on the analysis of situations and on designing systems to improve the management of organisations using ICT. In class, students explain their work well using a good range of technical vocabulary.
200. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Teachers generally plan well, set clear learning goals, and provide a good structure to their lessons. Specialist teachers have a good knowledge of the subject and give students good individual support. Teachers use questions well to direct discussions and evaluate students' understanding. They encourage students to use accurate technical vocabulary and develop their literacy skills by using books, CD ROMs and the internet for research. However, departmental documents do not provide enough guidance for teachers in planning work that is suited to the individual needs of students. This limits the progress of gifted and talented students and of some students who have special educational needs. Teachers have good relationships with students and include them effectively in learning activities. However, teachers place insufficient emphasis on marking and on setting targets to help students to improve their skills further.
201. The use of ICT in other subjects is in need of further development. It is used at a basic level in some subjects. In design and technology, students use desktop publishing and spreadsheets. However, because of limited resources, they do not get any experience

of control technology or computer-aided manufacture. In mathematics, students use spreadsheets and geometry software in Years 7 to 9, but make little use of ICT in Years 10 and 11. In science, students collect experimental data electronically and then process and present it using spreadsheets. This is being gradually increased for all year groups, though some teachers need further training. Students also use word processing to present their work. In English, they draft and re-draft their work and use desktop publishing to produce leaflets, newsletters and some homework. ICT is used in drama to produce set diagrams and publicity materials. In history, students use ICT for research and to present their work. Geography students, word process their homework, but do not use ICT in lessons or to analyse data. ICT is not used in music or religious education and remains underdeveloped in the majority of subjects. ICT skills are not used often enough in other subjects to build students' confidence in working independently. There is much more potential for ICT to raise the level of students' work in other subjects.

202. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school has recognised that there is too much variation in the arrangements for teaching ICT, and that all students need regular lessons. There are plans to introduce a specialist lesson for all students in Years 7 to 9 in September 2002. This will continue into Years 10 and 11, where all students will follow a GCSE short course in information technology. Monitoring of teaching and learning is done on a regular basis. However, teachers have too few opportunities to observe each other's work and to share the most effective techniques. As a result of limited time and resources, there is insufficient coverage of the National Curriculum for ICT, particularly those aspects relating to control technology and the use of computer-aided design and computer-aided manufacture. The school now has an above average number of computers per student. Good support from the technician has a very positive impact on learning, and he is beginning to contribute well to the development of ICT skills of staff in other subjects. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. The provision of computer resources has been improved and standards of achievement, teaching and learning have been maintained at a satisfactory level.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Students attain average standards at GCSE and achieve well overall. Their attitude is good and they behave well.
- Much teaching is very good and some is outstanding.
- Teachers ensure that standards of writing are above average. They mark students' work well and check their progress regularly. Students have a good understanding of how well they are doing.
- The department has done well to stabilise after many changes of staff.

Areas for improvement

- Standards of speaking are below average in each year.
- The quality of teaching in French is too variable. Recently trained or untrained teachers have little experience of planning or managing activities that require students to practise speaking.
- Too much lesson time is used speaking, hearing and writing unnecessary English.
- Students are not challenged enough to work from memory.

204. There has in recent years been a succession of staff changes. This instability has affected the continuity of learning and attitudes of some French students in Years 9 to 11. In addition, some planned changes in assessment and the curriculum were delayed, and for two years German was not offered as a second language at GCSE. However, from the beginning of this academic year, the number of students taking German has doubled to include over half of Year 8, and class sizes in Years 10 and 11 are now viable. The head of department and nearly all colleagues are new to the school; some of the teachers have little experience.

205. At the end of Year 9, standards are about average. However, National Curriculum teacher assessments in French, the first modern language, have been misleadingly high for two years, with nearly all students assessed at or above the expected level. Samples of these students' subsequent work in Years 10 and 11 indicate that their actual standards in 2000 and 2001 were at least one level below their assessment.

206. The school enters most students for French at GCSE. The A*-C success rate is average, slightly lower in 2001 than in 2000, but the trend over four years is upward and above the national trend. These results are similar to results in other subjects and show that, in relation to their overall attainment on their entry to the school, most students achieve well. Girls' standards are much higher than boys; most recently, the gap between them was greater than that nationally and is now significant. In 2000, almost all students attained at least grade G, better than in similar schools, but in 2001 a significant number were ungraded.

207. Current overall standards in French in Year 9 are in line with those expected for the students' age, but there is variation between skills. The focus on writing since the last inspection has paid dividends. Most students are on course for the expected National Curriculum Level 5 by the end of the year, some higher attainers above this, because writing is so strong. Exercise books show ample evidence of the development of writing through repeated practice of patterns, of accurate application of grammar rules in sentences, and, in the best work, of prior learning being reapplied. Most students can

now write a paragraph on their family, interests and school. The more gifted can do this with minimal support and are beginning to use a range of tenses. Because work habits are generally good, students remember vocabulary and phrase when they hear or read new language, and so their standards of understanding tape and text are as expected. The more gifted can make deductions. Speaking, however, is weak. Few students speak willingly or confidently or pronounce correctly. Most have memorised little and have a very limited range of structures and phrases on which to call. More seriously, most Year 9 students have still to appreciate the importance of the spoken language as the fundamental skill for further learning. Only where students have been trained to understand the spoken language routinely in class, as happens in German, are standards of listening and speaking high enough. In French, many in even the top sets are unsure when challenged to think for themselves.

208. The picture is very similar in the current Year 11. Overall standards are average. Although in both French and German there are fewer higher-attaining students clearly in the Higher Tier than in previous years, most students, as before, are at grades C/D, in line with the school's predictions. Writing is a consistent strength. The more gifted use a full range of tenses, and can write extensively, accurately adapting model essays, accounts and letters, linking ideas and adding reasons and opinions with some flair. The quality of writing is best demonstrated in the good work of some lower-attaining students, who unusually include past tenses and negatives in their coursework pieces. As in Year 9, the standard of writing compensates for the weakness in speaking. Where students speak with any accuracy and confidence it is usually based on what they have written down. Few students speak naturally or from memory, and pronunciation is often very poor, affected by reading text. Most are self-conscious, and seek to avoid challenge.
209. Although students seriously underachieve in speaking in all years, in relation to their relative attainment on entry to the school, their overall achievement is satisfactory in Year 9 and good in Year 11. The highest attainers do not speak well enough but compensate to a degree in the richness and accuracy of their writing. Students with special educational needs achieve well in Years 7 to 9 where they receive specific support with writing frames and gapped text, and appropriate questioning in the lower sets. In Year 10 and 11, the GNVQ course enables them to achieve short-term goals in realistic activities, performing listening and reading tasks in an authentic context. Students in the early stages of learning English as an additional language work hard, learn to write accurately and understand how to apply rules. Boys learn with less determination and take less care than girls during Years 10 and 11: this level of underachievement remains a concern.
210. Teaching is broadly satisfactory: good in German, but too variable, from excellent to poor, in French. In nearly half the lessons observed teaching was at least good, but there were serious weaknesses in a quarter. The main reason is the inexperience of recently trained or untrained teachers who have little or no experience of planning or managing activities which require students to practise speaking, and few effective strategies to manage misbehaviour resulting from boredom. In some other cases, teachers use written tasks as a control strategy, because they do not have the confidence to allow students to practise their speaking between themselves. Where teaching was unsatisfactory, or satisfactory with weaknesses, lessons were conducted in English, even in top sets in Years 9 and 10, methods were didactic and students passive and often restless; there was no expectation that students communicated in French; and too much time was taken up in unnecessary copying of English meanings of sentences. Teaching and learning such as this is clearly the department's most

pressing concern because students in these classes do not have access to the very worthwhile learning experiences enjoyed by most other students.

211. In every other respect the department's work is marked by a very good approach to inclusion. Teachers ensure that all students have opportunities to participate, tailor questions and tasks to their level of understanding, and support individual students very well in their marking and assessment. In the best lessons, for example in a top French set in Year 8, expectations of students' listening and participation, in the spoken language, were very high, the teacher spoke French almost exclusively, the pace was breathless and a range of materials and resources supported activities in which students used skills in combination and built up their learning in small, achievable steps. In these lessons, no English was written down, and homework was integral to the continuity of learning. Maximum use was made of lesson time to practise listening and speaking. Most German and many French lessons have similar features. For example, in a very good Year 7 French lesson, using the present tense for household chores, students' listening and speaking standards were high because they were taught to associate the sounds of separate syllables and combinations of syllables with different mimes and gestures, and enjoyed the very demanding and disciplined drilling of new phrases. In a Year 9 German lesson, there was a strong emphasis on the spoken language throughout, and students made good progress in learning to place the verb correctly in explaining why certain foods were healthy or not.
212. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory, for which, in view of the instability, the department deserves much credit. Overall standards have improved because teaching and student attitudes are much better. In particular, assessment is now more regular and standardised, and marking is a strength. Nevertheless, improvements in writing have been at the expense of speaking, teaching is too inconsistent, and the long-established German exchange has been discontinued.
213. The head of department shows good leadership qualities, and has identified the most pressing issues. Updated departmental documents, including improved planning of ICT, are under way but need to be completed; long-term arrangements for German should be agreed; foreign links need rebuilding. As a matter of urgency, the school now needs to ensure that existing outstanding practice is shared amongst colleagues. The inexperienced teachers show a genuine commitment to improve but do not understand how. The range of methods needs to be broadened so that teaching and learning through the spoken language become the accepted norm. In particular, more memorised learning should be expected from all students.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Teachers are committed to their students and to reaching the highest possible standards.
- Students are very motivated by teachers' demand for enjoyment and hard work.
- The peripatetic tutors play a vital role in instrumental and vocal development.
- Extensive extra-curricular activities make an excellent contribution to the subject's high standards, and to the musical life of the school.
- Sixth form students are a great strength and often help in lessons with younger students, where their knowledge and enthusiasm shine.

Areas for improvement

- ICT is not used in Years 7 to 9 because of a lack of equipment.
- The accommodation is cramped and the practice rooms are insufficiently soundproofed.

215. The school's provision for music is one of its great strengths.

216. Standards at the end of Year 9 are about average. This represents very good achievement, as students enter school with, generally, a very limited amount of knowledge and skill, and well below average attainment. GCSE results are consistently above average and have improved over the last two years. The standard of work seen at the end of Year 11 is also above average and students achieve very well in Years 10 and 11.

217. Students in Year 7 systematically build up their instrumental skills and composing ability, using keyboards and their own instruments, and develop their knowledge of music theory. They understand the principle of ternary form, and are currently engaged on writing the middle section for this straightforward structure. By the end of Year 9, students can compose in a variety of genres. They have a solid grounding in a wide range of styles and origins of music. They are currently using their own analysis of a piece of Celtic rock (an award-winning composition, written by a Year 12 student when he was in Year 10) as the inspiration for a piece of their own. The structure they use is simple, but all students understand the essential elements of the style, and all compositions carry the hallmarks of minor key and rhythmic insistence. There is a lack of computers in the department, so that the elements of ICT now required by the National Curriculum cannot be provided as part of the lower school course.

218. In Years 10 and 11, students work hard on their compositions, their performances and their knowledge of theory and music history. They work from the perspective that, if they want to compose or play music, they need to know how others have approached it before, and the range of styles available from which they can select. This has the major bonus of integrating all aspects of their course, and means that all students are clear about the characteristics of, for instance, rock, ragtime, or concerto form. In a revision lesson, students revised the characteristics of classical, romantic and 20th century western composition. In their mock exams, they had not done well on this question, but with a little reminder, and a great deal of concentration, they all made significant progress. They learn the principles of performance, and have a very clear idea how to present themselves to an examiner in the best possible light. This is not regarded as a substitute for hard work and good instrumental or vocal performance, but simply as training in the sense of occasion and audience which the subject demands. All the

GCSE students have instrumental or singing lessons, and almost all are confident and accomplished players.

219. Students consistently benefit from very good teaching. There is very good planning, both for lessons and for the extra-curricular music. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and very high expectations of students' enjoyment and success. They are totally committed to their students, to music, and to the development and maintenance of the highest possible standards. They have very good assessment and self-evaluation procedures, which strengthen students' knowledge and determination. They are also able class managers, and make it possible for students of all abilities to make the best of what they know. They insist on perfection where it is humanly possible, and, as a result, students use every scrap of their knowledge as a basis on which to build the next set of skills. The demand for enjoyment and hard work is a great strength of the department. The peripatetic tutors play a vital role in supporting the instrumental and vocal development of the students, and they also play or sing in concerts with their students. This is very effective in raising the standards of performance.
220. Students enjoy their lessons, and younger ones are very often significantly early for them. Students learn rapidly and thoroughly, and work usually in groups of three or four, using each other's knowledge as well as that of the teachers. They behave very well, and are generous to each other when they work together. They listen carefully to their teachers and to each other's ideas, and derive significant benefit from the Year 12 and 13 students who sometimes work with them in lessons.
221. The extensive extra-curricular activities make a very strong contribution to the subject's high standards, and to the musical life of the school. The choir exists in various forms, and sings at a very high standard indeed. It has a very wide repertoire, and was heard during the inspection to sing gospel songs and to sight read a chorus from Handel's Messiah. Students from all years take part, sing well, and thoroughly enjoy themselves. They respond very positively to the constant demand for perfection, and do their level best to supply it. Similarly, the core of instrumentalists plays as a dance band and a concert band, and their repertoire is extensive. There is a regular programme of concerts both in and out of school; students went during the inspection to the West End to see South Pacific, and were humming the tunes the following day. All this means that the music of the school touches everyone, not just those in music lessons.
222. The department has made significant improvements since the last inspection. Standards have improved, the quality of teaching, learning and behaviour are all at a high level and the atmosphere in the department is of busy professional people going about their business. There is a helpful departmental handbook and very good procedures for showing students where they have got to, and what they need to do next. There is also a very useful revision book, which has been produced specifically to cover all the examination techniques and past questions.
223. However, the subject can still be improved. The curriculum for Years 7 to 9 is restricted by a lack of computers and software. The accommodation is unsatisfactory. There is a grave lack of storage, the teaching space is small, and the practice rooms are insufficiently soundproofed.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Teaching has improved.
- Students achieve well.
- There is good provision for extra-curricular activities.
- There are excellent new sports facilities.
- The new structure of departmental management is raising standards.

Areas for improvement

- Assessment procedures are not yet linked to the National Curriculum levels.
- The range of teaching approaches for lower-attaining GCSE students is too narrow.
- A minority of students, especially in GCSE lessons, have poor attitudes.

225. Standards at the end of Year 9 are average in terms of students' skill levels and their understanding of physical education concepts. This is an improvement since the last inspection and students achieve well in relation to their attainment on entry to the school. Particular strengths are students' skills in games such as netball and football. They use advanced tactics and pass with control and accuracy. Their ability to analyse their own and each other's performances contributes to the improvement of their skills and is particularly strong in gymnastics and dance. A good example was seen in a dance lesson where a student was unable to take part physically and acted as a coach. Her observations led to immediate improvement in the students' choreography and quality of moves. Students understand the importance of exercise for a healthy lifestyle and are beginning to know the names of muscles. Students with special educational needs are integrated well into lessons, with tasks and equipment altered to meet their needs if required. The needs of students with hearing and sight difficulties are considered. Cricket is a strength of the school and many boys of Pakistani and Indian background have advanced batting and bowling skills. There are a few students who are working below expectation. They have limited ball skills and poor flexibility and body awareness in gymnastics.

226. Standards at the end of Year 11 are in line with national expectations and most students achieve well. A significant minority, show increasingly refined techniques in their chosen activities and their performance is consistent and effective. Many of the girls have advanced netball skills. They effectively use a variety of tactics, for example quickly changing from defensive to attacking play, and a few have exceptional ball-handling skills. The boys improve their football skills at a similar rate. They have good vision on and off the ball and effectively use change of pace to outwit their opponent. A minority of girls, have poor attitudes towards the subject and persistently do not participate. The achievement of these students is less than it should be.

227. GCSE physical education is offered as an optional subject. Results are normally above average, though in 2001 they were below average, in line with the school trend. Students achieve well, often gaining higher grades than in their other subjects.

228. Students currently studying GCSE are average in their practical work and theoretical work. Their games skills are advanced and they accurately analyse each other's performance, using technical vocabulary. The boys have a good range of shots in badminton and a few are able to outwit their opponents with speed and guile. The girls' techniques are not so well developed and many play shots with a square stance. Again, poor attitudes of a few and a reluctance to practise in order to refine their skills lead to below-average performance. Some of the boys have detrimental stereotypical attitudes to girls' participation in sport. A significant minority are above average in their theory. They have a good depth of knowledge and are able to link theoretical aspects to practical work. A good example of this was seen in a lesson about 'somatotyping'. Students accurately measured their own body components and linked the calculations

to practical performance. They use technical vocabulary confidently when writing but not always when speaking. This is because teaching strategies have not yet been developed to ensure that all students are required to answer questions in lessons. A minority are below average. They have insufficient depth of knowledge and are not confident in the use of technical language. Their long-term recall of facts is below average, especially under test conditions. Overall, students achieve well relative to their ability.

229. The quality of teaching and its impact on students' learning is good. There is now only a small element of unsatisfactory teaching. This is an improvement since the last inspection when a third of lessons were unsatisfactory. Teachers always let the students know what they will be expected to do by the end of the lesson. They almost always expect high standards and continually encourage students to strive for better performance. Teachers use a variety of methods in developing planning, evaluating and practical skills. Question and answer sessions are used effectively to assess knowledge and provoke thought. Tasks nearly always progress logically and with sufficient time to consolidate skills before transferring to the next stage. In one rare lesson where this was not the case, students became bored and lost motivation. Assessment procedures are not yet linked to the new National Curriculum levels. Students are, therefore, unaware of how well they achieve in relation to national standards.
230. Marking of GCSE theoretical work is constructive, but not always done consistently by different teachers. Homework assignments are linked well to lessons and help students to consolidate their knowledge. Notes are checked to pick up on areas of incompleteness and weakness. The syllabus is taught at a good pace but is often pitched at too high a level for lower-attaining students and students with special educational needs. Students who are unable to take part physically in practical lessons are not involved enough in lessons. There are lost opportunities for them to develop their analytical and coaching skills.
231. The mutual respect and shared enthusiasm shown by teachers and students make a considerable impact on the quality of work. This is particularly evident in the popular extra-curricular programme, where students enjoy team and individual success in local, county and national competitions in sports such as football, cricket, cross country, athletics and netball. A recent dance production, co-ordinated by the drama department, showed work that was above average. The dances were imaginative and showed good technique in complex moves and rhythms, reflecting the cultures of different countries and eras.
232. There has been good progress since the last inspection. Students achieve well at GCSE and standards have risen in Years 7 to 9. The gymnastic programme has been improved. The addition of an excellent sports hall and all-weather pitch is also raising standards. The head of department is very recently appointed but already has a shrewd grasp of strengths and areas for development. Monitoring of teaching has begun but is at an early stage of development. There are plans to revise the core curriculum in Years 10 and 11, which will result in more efficient use of the facilities and yet still use local community sport centres. Boys do not have the opportunity to study dance in the core programme in Years 7 to 9. Closer links with primary schools would help to improve the continuity in teaching and expectations of standards.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- There is excellent leadership of the department.
- The quality of teaching and learning is very good.
- GCSE examination results are well above average.
- Religious education contributes significantly to students' personal development and to literacy.
- Teachers have a commitment to very high achievement for all students.

Areas for improvement

- Existing teaching plans need to be extended to include homework, assessment tasks, and opportunities for personal development.
- The curriculum should be extended through the use of visitors, music and ICT.
- More students would benefit from entering the full GCSE examination.

234. Standards have improved considerably since the last inspection, and continue to rise. By the end of Year 9, students reach above average standards, which represent very good achievement in relation to their below-average attainment on entry to the school. The curriculum is based closely on the Hertfordshire Agreed Syllabus, which advocates a multi-faith approach to religious education. From the beginning, students are expected to use correct terminology. Written and oral work demonstrate a depth of knowledge and understanding. Students in Year 7, for example, gave clear explanations of symbols used in Christianity and everyday life. A high-attaining student spoke of Jesus as 'the Light of the world'. In work on rites of passage in Year 9, all students can explain the Jewish birth ceremony of Brit Milah (circumcision). Higher-attaining students have a better understanding of the roots of this ceremony and make the connection with the Covenant between God and Abraham. By the end of Year 9, students have a firm foundation of Christianity and Islam on which to base their GCSE examination work.

235. Year 11 students reach well above average standards in both short and full GCSE examinations. All students follow the GCSE short course and a growing number opt for the full GCSE course on contemporary moral issues. Standards were consistently high in 2000 and 2001 and represent very good achievement. Students generally do better in religious education than in most of their other subjects. There is no marked difference between boys' and girls' attainment.

236. Work in Years 10 and 11 is challenging and student motivation is high. In considering different types of suffering, a low-attaining group could all distinguish between man-made and natural suffering. In a Year 10 lesson on euthanasia, the meaning of 'dying with dignity' was explained clearly by a higher-attaining student. What was particularly impressive was that all students could give relevant quotations from the Qur'an and the Bible, such as 'Life is a gift from Allah' and 'the Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away'. By the end of the lesson, however, several lower-attaining students were still unable to recall the meaning of 'passive euthanasia', although it had been explained. Students in Year 11 illustrate facts with impressive supporting references from both the Bible and the Qur'an. Presentation of written work is usually excellent, with students showing pride in their classwork and homework.

237. Students of all levels of attainment make very good progress, as do students from different ethnic backgrounds and those with English as an additional language. However, poor writing skills hamper some low-attaining students, who would benefit from in-class support. Although gifted and talented students make good progress, they need to be identified in every class and challenged further. Attitudes to religious

education are generally very positive. Students know that each one of them is valued and consequently they in turn value their achievements in the subject.

238. The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall in all years. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed, which is an improvement on the last inspection. Three-quarters of lessons seen were good or better with over half very good or excellent. The particular strengths are the excellent relationships between teachers and students and teachers' enthusiasm for their subject, which inspires high achievement. The very good teaching is rooted in good planning, which ensures that the most important features are learned and consolidated. Brisk presentation and careful timing within lessons keep students focused. Teachers' questions are probing and enable students to arrive at the correct answer. A lower-attaining boy was helped to make the connection between his name, Adam, and the Old Testament. As a result of teachers' high expectations, students pursue fundamental religious and philosophical questions with sustained vigour. Teachers improve students' literacy skills in every lesson, giving many opportunities to read aloud in class and always ensuring that key words are understood. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge; praise is always given when deserved and there is a good variety of teaching methods, including group work. The regular use of plenary sessions to summarise what has been learned reinforces learning. Homework is always set and involves a variety of tasks that extend classwork. Marking is regular and thorough and follows the school's system. Students are aware of their school target levels and religious education teachers encourage students to aim for one grade higher. There is no use of ICT within lessons, so students have little opportunity to appreciate its potential for religious education. However, the department has identified this as an area of development. Some students choose to present their homework using ICT. Numeracy skills are supported in some lessons when looking up Bible references.
239. Religious education makes a very good contribution to students' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Meditation and reflection are used well as opportunities for students' spiritual development. A Year 11 student described spirituality as 'The part of us you cannot see physically – expressed in art, music, poems and love for one another'. Lessons include the understanding and skills needed to become responsible members of society. Many opportunities to consider moral issues arise. There is appreciation of students' own and other cultural traditions, such as Easter and Christmas for Christians and Ramadan for Muslims. An appreciation of the diversity and richness of other cultures is a prominent feature of examination work.
240. Very good class management ensures that attitudes and behaviour are often exemplary. Students show considerable respect for their teachers and one another, attempt classwork tasks conscientiously and are fully involved in class discussions. They work well on collaborative tasks and high standards of teaching counteract the limited curriculum time in Years 7, 8 and 9: half that given to other humanities subjects.
241. There have been many improvements since the last inspection including the formation of a stable department with very good accommodation that creates an inviting, purposeful learning environment. Good visual displays help to celebrate students' work and achievements. Teaching has improved and there is now a good collection of resources and artefacts. There were inconsistencies in assessment procedures at the last inspection. This has been rectified by the introduction of standardised termly and yearly tests, with separate examination papers for low-attaining students. Assessments are evaluated and monitored by the head of department. The emphasis on high quality literary work has led to a much higher standard of written work. The rising standards in

Years 10 and 11 are due to the introduction of the GCSE short course, which gives more purpose to the subject. The choice of GCSE course is well matched to students' needs and prior knowledge of Islam and Christianity. Listening skills are much improved and unsatisfactory behaviour has been eliminated. The ethos of the department supports and encourages all students and reflects the school's aims and values.

242. Excellent management and leadership are contributing to rising standards in GCSE. Many very effective new initiatives have been implemented to raise attainment, leading to consistently good teaching. Consideration is being given to the possibility of entering more students for the full GCSE examination. The departmental development plan for 2001-2003 shows appropriate priorities for development in the subject, including giving students planned opportunity for ICT, widening teaching methods to include music and visitors, the introduction and use of levels of assessment and more effective liaison with primary schools. There is a shared commitment to further improvement of the subject and the capacity to succeed is high. This is a first-class department.

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

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

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

GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	1	100	62	100	15	4.0	1.5
Music	2	100	84	0	29	2.5	2.4

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	36	100	87	61	43	7.7	5.8
Chemistry	9	100	90	67	43	7.8	5.9
Biology	13	92	88	31	34	6.0	5.3
Physics	6	83	88	17	40	3.3	5.7
Design and technology	6	100	91	50	30	7.3	5.4
Economics	11	100	89	27	36	6.6	5.5
Business AVCE	9	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	11.3	10.5
ICT AVCE	12	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	11.0	10.0
Sports Studies	8	100	92	50	25	7.3	5.1
Art and design	3	100	96	67	46	6.7	6.6
Music	1	100	93	0	35	2.0	5.7
Geography	15	100	92	53	38	6.8	5.7
History	7	71	88	0	35	2.6	5.5
Religious studies	6	83	92	33	38	4.7	5.8
English literature	15	100	95	20	37	5.5	5.9
Communication studies	10	100	93	20	31	5.2	5.5

Intermediate vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		Average point distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Business	1	100	n/a	0	n/a	0	n/a
Information technology	14	100	n/a	79	n/a	0	n/a
Leisure and tourism	2	100	n/a	100	n/a	0	n/a

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

245. The focus was on mathematics and physics, but biology and chemistry were also sampled. In biology, examination results were well above average in 2001. One lesson was seen, which was very good. Explanations were clear and students were fully engaged, responding well to thorough questioning. Chemistry results were also well above average in 2001. One revision lesson was seen, which was good. It was well structured and students were confident and learning well.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- A-level results in mathematics and further mathematics are well above average.
- Teaching is very good: teachers have very good knowledge of their subject.
- Relationships between teachers and students are very good.
- Students' work is regularly marked in order to monitor their progress.
- Students are very appreciative of the quality of the AS and A-level courses.

Areas for improvement

- There is no provision for key skills.
- Not all students who need to do so can attend the GCSE lessons.
- The quality of a minority of students' folders is unsatisfactory.

247. The A-level results in mathematics and further mathematics in 2001 were both well above the national averages. A high proportion of students gained A grades. In relation to their GCSE grades, students performed well. Results have been consistently good in the last three years.

248. In the new AS examination, results were satisfactory, but with a higher than expected number of students failing to obtain a pass grade. This resulted in an unusually high proportion of students leaving the course. The students who repeated the GCSE course achieved a very good pass rate.

249. The standard of work of current students is also well above average and students achieve very well. A high proportion of students are on course to gain their target grade. Their achievement is due to the high quality of the teaching, the regular monitoring of their work, and their mature attitude to studying. In a Year 13 lesson, students beginning their revision of trigonometric equations had difficulty in recalling accurately the equations. Once these had been established, they quickly developed confidence in applying them to solve problems. In a further mathematics lesson, students were introduced to matrices and their uses. They concentrated well, learned quickly, and were very involved in their work.
250. Students in Year 12 enjoy the new challenge posed by A-level work, and their achievements are above the level expected. In one lesson, they derived from first principles the formula for the sum of the terms of an arithmetic progression; this is a difficult exercise and they responded well. In another lesson, students also concentrated well when tackling problems on permutations. The work was carefully structured so that they gradually increased their aptitude and confidence.
251. Teaching is very good overall, and varies from good to excellent. There are excellent features in a high proportion of lessons. The best features of the teaching are the teachers' thorough knowledge and understanding of their subject, the detailed planning of the course and of individual lessons, and the mutual respect between teachers and students. The result is a very good working atmosphere in all lessons. In a GCSE lesson, students recalled the use of trigonometry in right-angled triangles to calculate the length of a side. There was a wide range of ability, but the teacher's persistence ensured that the majority of the class learnt how to identify the correct ratio, and how to rearrange the equation in order to complete the calculation.
252. The assessment of students' work and standards is thorough and regular, so that teachers are very aware of the progress of individual students. Any basic errors are quickly corrected; as a result, students learn well and make rapid progress in their understanding of concepts. They also learn well because they have a very positive attitude to their work, and enjoy the challenges it provides. They work well together during discussion time.
253. There is very good leadership and management of the courses in mathematics. Teachers of both the A-level and GCSE courses are experienced and committed. Work is set regularly for students to undertake independently, and this encourages them to use their initiative. Teaching plans for the A-level courses are kept under close review, and the work is arranged so that teachers teach to their strengths. Good quality textbooks supplement the teaching, but little use is made of ICT. Students know their target grades, and their work is regularly assessed to ensure they are progressing at the rate expected.
254. The high standards in the sixth form reported in the last inspection have been further improved. Achievement is now very good in the A-level courses, and good in the GCSE course. The number of female students taking A-level mathematics has increased in Year 12, and they have a very committed approach to their work. Standards are improving as a result.
255. Numeracy skills are used in the sixth form in a number of departments across the school. For example, in modern foreign languages, students interpret statistics in order to draw conclusions about social issues such as immigration. There is also much use of statistics in geography during the analysis of field data. Scientific subjects make

frequent use of formulae, but in physics some students are unable to use calculators accurately. The GCSE course in mathematics does not prepare students thoroughly for the requirements of these and other A-level courses, and this highlights the need for a course in the sixth form in key skills in the use of number.

Physics

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

Strengths

- Leadership and management of the subject are good.
- Students are managed well and assessment is positive and supportive.
- Teachers' specialist knowledge is very good.
- Students' attitudes are positive: they are interested and concentrate well.

Areas for improvement

- Standards in A-level examinations have been below average.
- The accommodation and resources are inadequate.
- A few students have poor communication and discussion skills.
- The use of ICT in physics is poor.

257. Students' examination success in post-16 physics has been well below average for a number of years. Until the present groups, the number of girls doing physics has been very low, with only one in the past four years. A-level results improved slightly in 2001, but remained well below average. The proportion of successful candidates in AS level in 2001 was below average and below many students' expectations. However, the drop out rate is relatively low. Only one student left at the end of the AS examinations and five continued into the A-level course in the present Year 13.

258. Standards of work seen are about average, and students are now achieving well. Standards are better than the recent examination results because previous teacher shortages and rapid turnover have been solved and teaching is now improved. For a few students in Year 13, their earlier experience of physics has been poor and some concepts are not firmly established. Even with improved teaching, some have difficulty in coping with the content and concepts of A-level physics. For these students in particular, their key skills are insufficiently developed and their experience of making and taking notes is minimal. Communication skills are poor, they have little experience of cogent discussion and debate and there is a lack of spontaneity in their response in lessons. For some there is insufficient understanding and experience of mathematics in science and of data collection and manipulation. Those students also doing A-level biology and chemistry experience less difficulty.

259. Teaching is good overall and occasionally very good. Teachers are experienced and have good subject knowledge. They prepare lessons well and use a wide range of teaching methods. Teachers use time and resources effectively and have very good relationships with the students. Their expectations are high, and students try hard to meet these. Students are attentive and work productively in lessons. In Year 13, there is a general air of increasing maturity, responsibility and self-assessment, and students are quick to benefit and make satisfactory progress. With generally higher grades on entry, and the stability of specialist teachers, students in Year 12 demonstrate that their study skills are better developed and their confidence is increasing. For these students, skills include those of practical investigation, the competent handling of apparatus and equipment, confidence in written work and being able to follow detailed instructions.

Teachers mark regularly and give students advice on how to improve their work. As a result, students' efforts have improved.

260. Students' learning is impeded, however, by previous gaps in their teaching and is satisfactory overall. Students take a keen interest in practical and demonstration lessons. They understand basic facts, such as spectral radiation, but their understanding of fundamental concepts related to absorption and emission spectra is weak. For some Year 12 students, there is insufficient depth to their understanding of earlier theory of the behaviour of light in different media. Students in Year 12 are only a little way into the course, yet most are successful in taking a greater responsibility for their own learning. A few, however, have difficulty in taking useful notes for personal study and organising their written work.
261. Leadership and management of the subject are now good and there is a clearer direction to the department's development. Whilst teaching has been improved, other aspects have not yet received enough attention. Regular assessment, recording and reporting are carried out, but the use of assessments to help students to reach achievable targets is under-developed. There is poor use of ICT. Students use word processing and simple interrogation of the internet for information to support project work, but there is little serious use of ICT. In addition to these features, the poor standards of accommodation and resources fail to offer the challenging and stimulating environment required to promote appropriate levels of personal development and increasing responsibility.
262. With good teaching and technician support, the organisation and management of physics at AS and A level are now effective and supportive. In spite of poor earlier experience for some, students are reasonably confident in explaining a range of concepts to non-specialists and interested adults.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

263. Design and technology product design is studied at AS and A level. The course covers elements of engineering and manufacture. The course was sampled.

Design and Technology

264. Results in A-level product design have been good. AS and A-level results were well above average in 2001 and students did well in relation to their GCSE results. Two lessons were seen. One was satisfactory and one was good. In the good lesson, the teacher's extensive subject knowledge helped students to learn about changes in design, to evaluate commercial electrical appliances, and to use a common software application as a design tool for making quick design sketches. This appropriately motivated students to extend their research and design skills.

BUSINESS

265. Business studies was the focus, but economics was also sampled. In economics, examination results were above average in 2001. Two lessons were seen, which were both very good. Teaching was very clear and thorough and students were responding well and growing in confidence. Students were given very good support to ensure that their understanding was complete.

Business Studies

266. Overall, the quality of provision for business studies is **satisfactory**

Strengths

- Good teaching and learning lead to students achieving well.
- Standards are above average in the current Year 12 AVCE group.
- Students are confident and mature, particularly in Year 12, and have good independent learning skills.

Areas for improvement

- The management arrangements for business studies and vocational education are unclear.
- The accommodation for vocational business studies is unsuitable.

267. The school offers an Intermediate GNVQ course for Year 12 and an Advanced Vocational Certificate (AVCE) in Years 12 and 13. Some students have taken GCSE business studies but others have no prior experience of the subject. Few students enter the courses from outside the school.

268. Recent years' GNVQ results have varied in relation to the national average. In 2001, results were average overall. In 2000 they were very high. Girls' results in both years were much better than boys'. Most girls scored very highly compared with the national average and there were many more girls in both years. The department's good tracking of 'value added' for these students shows them achieving very well indeed compared with their underlying attainment, often exceeding their target grades.

269. Attainment in current groups varies between the year groups. Standards in the Year 13 AVCE class are broadly average. Some students discuss concepts and ideas with ease. In a revision lesson on workforce motivation, for example, some students, especially boys, could discuss the ideas fluently using appropriate vocabulary, with good reference to theorists such as Maslow and Herzberg. Others, particularly girls, were reticent orally, but expressed themselves more confidently in writing. Year 13 students have found their course difficult, particularly the finance elements, and the department has now restructured the course to ease this situation for subsequent years. Weaknesses in the mathematical aspects are exacerbated by sixth formers having no key skills teaching in the application of number. Several students who need to resit GCSE mathematics have clashes with their business studies timetable and are unable to attend both lessons. Students are stronger in coursework than in examinations. Coursework is often strong, linking theory and business practice well. Students in Year 13 are achieving well in relation to their targets.

270. The much larger AVCE group in Year 12 has made a good start to their course and their attainment is above average. As in previous years, there are more girls than boys, with girls' attainment boosting the overall standards of the group. All these students are achieving well, often very well, in comparison with their targets and predictions. In a lesson on marketing projects using ICT, students had a good understanding of the basic theory and were applying their knowledge with confidence to their individual projects. Their use of the internet is good and their ICT skills are well up to the increasingly rigorous demands of the course. In a lesson about 'e-marketing', most showed a good level of understanding of theories and principles and responded well to a question and answer review session.

271. The Year 12 Intermediate GNVQ group is also achieving well. Attainment in this group covers a very wide spread, with all students, including some with special educational needs, learning well, contributing successfully to discussions and using ICT effectively.

The range of attainment reflects the national average for this course. In their current projects about how businesses work, students have chosen different companies and organisations as examples, and are successfully applying the theory they have learned. Most can discuss these applications sensibly, using appropriate vocabulary and language.

272. Teaching is good. Teachers are experienced and have good subject knowledge. They establish good relationships with their students. This enables students to feel confident that they will learn well and that contributions they make to lessons will be valued. Teachers expect students to be independent learners and to do research using a variety of sources, including the internet. Students mostly rise to these expectations well. They are confident to ask when they require help and teachers patiently and rigorously explain concepts or vocabulary until students understand. Teachers check on learning through well-targeted question and answer sessions. Teachers are very sensitive to their students' needs, sometimes restructuring lessons to accommodate their requirements, especially towards examination times. Assessment is good, with teachers giving advice both orally and through marking. Students appreciate their good relationships with teachers and most speak highly of the teaching in the subject. Most, especially those in Year 12, recognise their progress and value the achievements they are making, attributing these in large part to their teachers. Although Year 13 are achieving well, they do not recognise their progress clearly, having found the demands of the course greater than they expected.
273. The school does not have a separate business studies department. The subject is incorporated in a faculty that includes ICT, all the vocational courses, business studies and economics. Since the sixth form business studies courses are all vocational courses, the management of the subject is complex and lines of communication unclear. The subject has no distinctive voice in the school, although vocational courses have received support from the senior management team. A key issue for the subject is its current accommodation, which is unsatisfactory. Although some of the newer teaching spaces are of good quality, with good access to ICT facilities, business studies has no central base, which is a major disadvantage for students and teachers. Teachers cannot develop a business-related environment with displays and resources. Vocational students often require individual discussions, which are very difficult to organise with no office space. There are currently no work placements, and a relatively restricted range of outside business and organisational contacts.
274. The last inspection report did not include a section on business studies, but inspection evidence shows that the subject, as part of the vocational provision in the school, has improved significantly since 1997.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

275. The school offers Intermediate and Advanced GNVQ courses in information and communication technology. Both these courses were inspected.

Information and Communication Technology

276. Overall, the quality of provision in information and communication technology is **very good**.

Strengths

- Standards are well above average.
- There are very good relationships between staff and students, and a good learning ethos.
- Teachers provide good guidance and support, and students show a very good level of independence in their work.

Areas for improvement

- Students are not sufficiently familiar with the examination coursework marking criteria.

277. Results on the Advanced and Intermediate GNVQ courses in 2001 were above average. Students start these courses with a variety of backgrounds in ICT: a GCSE short course in information technology, a full course in information studies or no GCSE course. The GNVQ courses are now well established and standards are improving.
278. Students' achievements are very good in relation to their average standards on entering the courses. Some have lacked the foundation needed for the Advanced course and teachers have had to cover basic knowledge as well as the more advanced skills.
279. Standards in work seen are well above average. Students speak confidently about their work, show a good level of knowledge and understand the flexibility and limitations of the software they use. They have a good command of subject terminology and apply this confidently when describing modern technological processes and practices. Students have good numerical skills and apply them when using spreadsheets and processing data.
280. Relationships between teachers and students are very good, and create a very good learning ethos in which there is a constant exchange of discussion between the teacher and the students.
281. Teaching is very good and one excellent lesson was seen. Specialist teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject and their planning, preparation and organisation are very good. As a result, knowledge is covered in depth and students benefit from discussion of their strategies to solve problems. Lessons have a clear purpose and teachers provide very good guidance sheets and resources to support coursework. In a Year 13 lesson on databases, for example, the teacher provided very good guidance resources and worked through these with the whole group. Students understood the work well and were then able to set up their own database tables, plan their own work and work independently. They valued the style of teaching and felt it supported them well. Students are not sufficiently aware, however, of how the marks are allocated for different sections of the examination coursework.
282. The use of ICT by students of other sixth form subjects is inconsistent. Students use word processing to present their work and many make good use of the internet to research information. Business studies students use ICT effectively and their skills are well up to the demands of the course. However, ICT skills are not explicitly identified in other subjects and its use is underdeveloped, particularly in mathematics, science and geography.
283. Management of the sixth form ICT course is good. The GNVQ courses are well established, they are popular and standards are improving. Teaching and learning are very good and are regularly monitored. This results in good improvement since the last inspection.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

284. The inspection focused on sports studies AS and A level. There is also a course in recreational physical education, which is available to all students, but this did not take place during the inspection because many students were engaged in examinations.

Sports studies

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

Strengths

- Standards at A level are consistently above average.
- Students' achievements are very good.
- Teaching is very good.

Areas for improvement

- The courses are not very suitable for current Year 12 students.
- There are no opportunities for students to gain vocational qualifications in the core programme.

286. A-level results in 2001 were above average and students generally achieved higher grades than in their other subjects. The standard of work seen in Year 13 is also above average and students achieve very well in relation to their attainment on joining the course. A particular strength is their ability to link personal performance with theoretical aspects. They use technical vocabulary accurately and have an excellent grasp of principles, which they interpret in relation to their chosen activities. Many are confident in their use of number, particularly in the physiology module. They understand and apply physiological formulae and can relate them to performance. They are confident in oral presentations. They do research using a variety of sources, including the internet, library and CD ROMs. Some students are less good at defining and searching for the information they need. They use video effectively to record performance and analyse skills.

287. Students in Year 12 are below the expected level for the AS-level course. The main reason that standards are lower is that these students have limited background knowledge from GCSE. Their achievement is satisfactory relative to their GCSE theory grade. In the modules covered so far, students' writing shows a lack of depth of knowledge. The exception to this is their AS-level coursework on physical exercise programmes. This includes detailed work, with accurate use of technical vocabulary and a satisfactory grasp of principles, interpreted in relation to their chosen activities. However, in discussion, their consolidation of this knowledge is limited. The standard of note-taking varies. The highest-attaining students are capable of independent research whilst others have notes that are sometimes incomplete, poorly organised and occasionally missing. Most Year 12 students do not have good skills in independent study.

288. The quality of teaching is very good overall, with some excellent features. This results in very good learning in Year 13, but because of the poorer background of students in Year 12, their learning is less assured. The most effective teaching sets very high expectations and includes a good range of tasks that stimulate a variety of responses from the students. Teachers make links between different sections of the course to give students a better understanding of the main concepts. Teachers have a very good knowledge of their subject and create stimulating lessons that fire students' interest. In

a lesson on physiology, for example, a very good demonstration, with links made to practical performance and current affairs, resulted in the students making rapid gains in their understanding of the body's energy sources. The teachers are experimenting with different strategies to improve the learning of the lower-attaining students in Year 12. The most effective lesson occurred when the teacher began with a lively task that required the students to think for themselves and then to discuss their findings. This resulted in a better understanding of the definition of sport, provoking thought and an ability to relate theory to practice. Marking of homework assignments is constructive, but notes are not always checked for completeness or quality.

289. The students in Year 13 respond well to all aspects of examination work. Those in Year 12 try hard but are not totally suited to the requirements of this course. Teachers and students share a mutual respect that creates a supportive learning environment. Students work well in small groups and teams. Teachers expect a high level of independence from the students, which mostly results in a mature and diligent response. Students are appreciative of the support given to them and feel that their work improves through constructive criticism.
290. There is a programme of sport for all students in the sixth form, but this had been suspended during the inspection for examination study leave. Many students use the new fitness suite in their own time, showing a good approach to exercise for a healthy lifestyle. The school's programme of community service gives students the opportunity to help in lessons and to organise extra-curricular sporting clubs. There are currently no opportunities for the students to gain vocational qualifications.
291. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection. The A-level course has been introduced and results have been consistently above average, with students often achieving better grades than in their other subjects. All courses are well managed and there is a team determination to continue to improve standards and teaching. A careful analysis of students' results has led to changes in teaching techniques. The new sports facilities are having a positive impact on the students' work. The department still requires a theory classroom for the display of work and resources in order to create a stimulating environment. The school has a very good range of extra-curricular activities and revision courses that contribute effectively to students' skills and social experiences. Further links with universities would provide the students with the opportunity to use physiological testing facilities to enhance their learning.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

292. The focus was on art, but theatre studies and music were also sampled. Theatre studies has been introduced this year as an AS-level course. One lesson was seen, which was good. Students have made good progress from GCSE. They have gained knowledge and understanding of sophisticated dramatic techniques, helped by good teaching and their own enthusiasm and commitment.
293. Three lessons were seen in music, and all were very good. Teaching is very well informed and enthusiastic, and standards are well above average in performance and composition. Students have a very clear grasp of harmonic rules and techniques. They are accomplished players and singers and are very serious about their music. Students often help in lessons with younger students, where their knowledge and enthusiasm shine.

Art

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

Strengths

- Standards are improving.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- The courses are appropriate, well planned and structured.

Areas for improvement

- A few students need better skills in independent study.
- The accommodation for sixth form art is in need of improvement.

295. Results in the AS and A-level examinations in 2001 were above average. There were only three students on each course, but the course is now becoming more popular and there will be nine students taking AS level in 2002.

296. The quality of current work on both courses is above average and reflects good achievement by the students since Year 11. Students work in a wide range of media and scale in both two- and three-dimensions, showing a fluent ability to review and refine their work as it progresses. All work is linked to contextual studies and students on both courses talk about their work with knowledge and enthusiasm, referring to the styles and techniques of artists they have studied. Year 12 students, for example, investigate the work of the Expressionists, exploring their themes, colour palette, and composition, and paint high quality studies, annotating these with their own evaluations. Year 13 students carry the process further, looking at the use of colour harmonies in Impressionist works and making comparisons with the Expressionist and Cubist movements. Students understand the symbolic and psychological effects of colour. Their sketchbooks include studies of the work of Munch, with notes on his use of complementary colours to express discord. Most students progress well, supported by their teachers' guidance and high expectations, but a minority of students in Year 12 do not have good independent learning and study skills.

297. The quality of teaching is very good. Teachers have considerable experience and expertise, and enthusiastically promote their subject. The review and development of content and teaching methods have led to higher standards. Courses are well planned to cover all the necessary examination requirements, and challenging work and targets are set that extend students' visual awareness. However, there are some minor inconsistencies in the delivery of the subject by the three teachers. Assessment of students' work and the feedback they are given are of a high quality. Teachers have a good understanding of individual and group needs and willingly arrange visits to art galleries and extra evening classes.

298. At the time of the last inspection, standards were below average, and students were finding it difficult to progress from Year 11 work. Improvement since then has been good, with considerable capacity to develop student numbers and standards further.

299. The quality of leadership and management are good. Direction of the subject is clear and development plans are exciting and forward-looking. The department's priorities are to raise standards, and further develop the sixth form art accommodation into a stimulating and effective learning centre.

HUMANITIES

300. The focus was on geography, but history and religious studies were also sampled. In history, A-level results were well below average in 2001, but AS-level results were in line

with students' predicted grades and indicate a better pass rate in 2002. A sample of Year 13 work showed that they understand the issues faced by Elizabeth I and can satisfactorily analyse sixteenth century documentary evidence. Sixth form courses are well established and resourced.

301. In religious studies, examination results were below average in 2000 and 2001, but students did well in relation to their GCSE results. Two lessons were observed, which were both very good. Teachers are enthusiastic and have excellent subject knowledge. Work is stimulating and very well planned. As a result, students are learning very well and standards are rising.

Geography

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

Strengths

- Standards are well above average.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- There are very positive relationships between teachers and students.
- The subject is well led and the course well organised.

Areas for improvement

- Students do not each have a textbook for their personal use.
- ICT is not used in teaching or for the preparation and analysis of fieldwork.

303. Standards in AS and A-level examinations in 2001 were well above average. Boys did better than girls, especially at the highest grades. Standards have been consistently high in recent years and the work of current students is also well above average. Students achieve very well in relation to their GCSE results. Students from minority ethnic backgrounds and lower-attaining students also achieve very well at both AS and A level.

304. Year 12 students on the AS course already show significant increases in their knowledge and understanding compared with GCSE. They use maps to identify types of settlement and patterns of development within urban areas. They confidently discuss the contributory factors that lead to settlements and use technical vocabulary to describe the differences in flood hydrographs and how these are influenced by land use. Their study skills enable them to plan and write extended essays. These skills are well developed by Year 13 and students' essays show evidence of good planning. They use their geographical skills and a variety of resources to produce thoughtful and well-illustrated work. They compile case studies and develop their analytical skills in evaluating the links between trade and industry and the factors that have led to industrial locations. They extend their technical vocabulary in addressing the problems of atmospheric pollution and the management of waste.

305. Teaching is very good. Teachers have good subject knowledge. Lessons are well planned and make good use of time. Teaching methods are sound. Teachers use questioning well to probe students' understanding and promote thinking skills. They insist upon full explanations and make use of students' answers to broaden the discussion. Lessons are calm and purposeful and the pace is sufficiently brisk to engage students all of the time. Opportunities are provided for independent learning in lessons and students can work alone or with others. Teachers spend time on consolidating skills. They know their students well and are aware of their strengths and

weaknesses. They provide guidance for students on how to organise their time and good advice on how to improve their work. Although teachers encourage students to do research on the internet, ICT it is not used in lessons or in the analysis of field data.

306. Students are keen to make progress and achieve good results. They work hard in lessons and their written work indicates they spend time on their homework. They enjoy good relationships with their teachers and are confident in answering and asking questions. The oral explanations of Year 12 students do not always match the quality of their written work, but most Year 13 students are more confident and provide fuller explanations. Students appreciate and use opportunities to manage their own learning. They listen well, make good use of advice and guidance and help one another. They have total confidence in the expertise of their teachers.
307. The subject is very well managed. The course is planned to give continuity from AS to A level. Teachers are deployed to make the best use of their expertise. Each teacher specialises in one aspect of the course, which creates continuity for the students and gives the teacher a better overview of each student's progress. Progress is monitored well and students are set targets. The department has sufficient resources and students have access to reference materials, but they are not provided with a textbook for their own personal use. The department does not use ICT for teaching purposes or for the preparation and analysis of fieldwork.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

308. The focus was on English literature and French.

English Literature

309. Overall, the quality of provision in English literature is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- A-level results have been generally in line with national averages over the last four years.
- Teachers' good subject knowledge develops students' understanding of literature well.
- There are positive relationships between teachers and students.
- Students receive a great deal of individual support from teachers.

Areas for improvement

- Results in the AS-level examination did not come up to expectations.
- Many students lack the confidence to argue their point of view in discussion.
- Teaching plans for AS level need to be written.
- Monitoring of teaching needs to be developed.

310. Results in A-level English literature were average in 2001. There have been some fluctuations over time: they were above average in 1999 and below average in 2000. Usually there are more female than male students taking A-level literature; overall, the performance of male students is better. In the first AS-level examinations in 2001, many students did not perform as well as expected compared with their GCSE results. This is partly because they had not built up good essay-writing skills. Despite this setback and the fact that morale was seriously affected by the poor results, seven out of nine students have stayed on to continue the course to A level.

311. Standards in Year 13 seen during the inspection are average, better than the AS-level results would indicate. Students' achievement is good in relation to their attainment at GCSE. In a very good lesson on the poetry of Philip Larkin, students were able to identify his major concerns as a poet, quoting examples from the text. As a result of their teacher's skilled questioning, they showed sound general understanding of themes and individual poems, as well as a good overall knowledge of the text. Most students show good recall of texts they have studied and are able to make sound literary comparisons. Most are capable of a genuine personal response to literature, but in some cases their written expression lacks clarity and the essays of weaker students do not always deal with topics in sufficient depth.

312. Students in Year 12 are making satisfactory progress. They are acquiring the skills of literary comparison and critical analysis, but need to develop their ideas in much more depth in their essays. Many have found the transition from GCSE difficult and have taken some time to get used to the more challenging demands of AS-level work. Some are still struggling to understand literary concepts they should have learned securely at GCSE. More able students show increased confidence in the use of technical terminology and are beginning to comment with insight on the effectiveness of writers' use of language and style, and the relationship between language and meaning. Some good essays on poetry show an improvement in students' capacity to explore ideas and suggest their own interpretations. Weaker students find it difficult to write essays in an appropriate formal style. In class discussions, many students of all abilities are reticent and over-dependent on the teacher. They lack the confidence to express their ideas, to challenge others and to argue their point of view: more emphasis on these skills is needed.

313. Teaching is good overall. Students gain sound insights into literature and the examination requirements as a result of their teachers' good subject knowledge and considerable experience of teaching at this level. Students respond to their teachers' enthusiasm, and are well motivated and hard working. Good relationships create an environment in which all want to do well. Teachers have a clear understanding of individual students' strengths and weaknesses, and provide a great deal of individual support. Students feel that this is a major factor in promoting their progress. Good learning was seen in a Year 12 lesson on 'The Handmaid's Tale' as a result of the teacher's skilful questioning. Students were asked to articulate what they knew about the text, and were enabled to make links with past reading experiences. The teacher introduced at the same time a range of new vocabulary, but did not do enough to ensure that students' knowledge was secure. Teachers mark carefully, and students know what to do to improve. Students receive a great deal of information and insight during the course of most lessons, but most teachers do not summarise at the end of lessons and miss opportunities to consolidate learning.
314. There is no separate teaching of key skills, many of which are incorporated into the A-level course. Students are given opportunities to develop research skills. They research their own topic, prepare their material and make a presentation to the class. They make relatively little use of the school library, which has only limited provision of texts suitable for this level of study, but all use the internet. They appreciate the facilities provided by the school for private study, and feel it is a good working environment. Their capacity for independent study has improved as they have recognised the need to become more disciplined in managing their time. They also recognise the value of studying English in terms of improving their communication skills and in encouraging personal development through self-expression.
315. Management is satisfactory, but there are certain improvements that are needed in order to help raise standards, particularly on the AS-level course. There are at present no departmental documents to support teachers' planning for this course; these need to be carefully written in order to ensure that students develop essay-writing skills as quickly as possible. They should also contain measures to enrich students' vocabulary and widen their reading experiences. Lesson planning in some cases needs to improve, and monitoring needs to be strengthened to include the monitoring of teaching.

French

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

Strengths

- Standards are above average in Year 13. Students make very good progress and achieve very well.
- Students are highly motivated and enjoy responding to challenge. Through the contributions they make to lessons they enrich each other's learning.
- Teaching is very good. Teachers are excellent linguists and plan well-structured lessons with a range of stimulating activities. Students are very appreciative of the help they receive.
- Marking and assessment of work are good; students are well informed of their standards.

Areas for improvement

- Standards vary from year to year, and are below average in Year 12.
- Given the Year 12 students' attainment at GCSE, their achievement is satisfactory, but a lack of commitment and ambition limits their progress.

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students have little or no first-hand experience of France. The school has no formal links with the country. |
|--|

317. A-level results vary from year to year. Since the last inspection results from very small entries have been above average, but in 2000 were well below average from a group of six. Following changes of staff, there were no entries in 2001. A class of eight students produced average AS-level results in 2001, with half at grade B or C. From this class, two students, previously with A* or A at GCSE, obtained B and C grades and now form the A-level class in Year 13. They continue to make very good progress and achieve very well. However, none of the three students in the current Year 12 AS-level group gained an A grade at GCSE. Their progress is very slow in comparison.
318. Standards in the current Year 13 are above average for the A-level course. Essays are rich in ideas and expression and are clearly constructed. Earlier work from Year 12 shows how over the year students learnt to assimilate specific topic vocabulary and phrases and to organise their ideas coherently and logically. They can now confidently present both sides of an issue, and express a personal view on increasingly complex social and moral subjects, for example in pieces on nuclear energy, the Euro and immigration. There are still occasional slips in basic agreements and verb forms, and expression is safe rather than adventurous, but their work is individually researched and shows an increasing awareness of style and register.
319. The content of essays is good because the students transfer to their writing the wealth of language they hear and speak in lessons. They are not yet fluent or totally confident, but they can paraphrase and improvise effectively. They hear the language spoken at authentic pace on tape or by the teachers and are encouraged to improvise their own replies, gradually gaining more confidence and independence as they learn from each other. Year 12 students are more hesitant in comparison, struggling to explain what they hear or read, lacking both ideas and the vocabulary and phrase to express them. Views sometimes appear superficial because students lack the more complex language to substantiate an opinion or add further detail.
320. A Year 13 lesson on the issue of the Channel Tunnel asylum seekers exemplified the students' very good progress. Within the lesson, students absorbed new vocabulary from very demanding press extracts, and, in subsequent discussion in preparation for an essay, were able to analyse the problems by classifying causes, consequences and possible solutions. In Year 12, the AS-level class was observed making reasonable progress from modest GCSE results, but struggling to make the transition to more analytical and discursive work.
321. Teaching in Year 13 is very good: lively, motivating and effective because it is based on excellent command of the language and planning of tasks. Teachers use the spoken language to set appropriately high expectations in all skills. They reinforce known work, and explore and extend the language that students can use for themselves. They use tape and text, often from the internet, on a wide variety of social, political and moral subjects, to provide a suitably demanding context for new vocabulary and ideas, and prepare support materials that help students access complex texts and produce their own spoken and written summaries. Constructive relationships contribute to an atmosphere in which students feel they can take risks in finding the right word or phrase. This teaching strikes the right balance between closely structured support and high-level challenge, where students are required to think for themselves. Marking and assessment are thorough, with full diagnostic comment, and students are well informed of their standards and how to improve. Students speak warmly of the enthusiasm which teachers convey, and with gratitude for their support. Some teaching in Year 12,

although competent, is less effective where the teacher lacks the experience to make speaking tasks more accessible.

322. In Year 13, therefore, learning is also very good. Teachers challenge and prompt; students respond thoughtfully and carefully and maturely, with painstaking application. They contribute significantly to their own progress, organising their files methodically, researching thoroughly and writing extensively. In class, their well-developed learning skills and high level of motivation help sustain the challenging pace of teaching and so maximise the use of time. They apply vocabulary specific to the topic in increasingly confident paraphrase, as in a Year 13 French lesson where they learnt to explain the meaning of a statistical analysis of the extent of immigration in France. In Year 12, learning is satisfactory because teaching ensures effectively that, in lessons at least, students practise the language, and improve their understanding of authentic French. It is not better than this, however, because the students' learning skills are undeveloped and their attitude towards independent study and completion of tasks is immature. Their files are disorganised, and they lack urgency and a sense of commitment.
323. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Standards are higher, although not yet consistently so, and teaching is better. However, in the meantime both the provision of German and links with Europe have weakened. The school does not have formal links with France and students have little or no first-hand experience of the country. Year 13 students compensate to a degree through French radio, videos and the internet, but in Year 12 students show little awareness or appreciation of the country or culture.
324. The new head of department shows good leadership qualities, and has identified how provision can be improved. Departmental documents to support teachers' planning need to be updated and completed, and foreign links need rebuilding so that opportunities for studying or working in France are made available as part of the course. In the longer term, the school needs to consider how to broaden the base of German study in Years 7 to 11 so that the post-16 curriculum can be enriched with a second language.