

INSPECTION REPORT

WADEBRIDGE SCHOOL

Wadebridge, Cornwall

LEA area: Cornwall

Unique reference number: 112048

Headteacher: Dr S Thornton

Reporting inspector: Tom Ferris
4344

Dates of inspection: 8 – 12 October 2001

Inspection number: 191930

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 to 19

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Gonvena Hill
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Appropriate authority: Governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs Pauline White

Date of previous inspection: November 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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4344	T Ferris	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it? How high are the standards – the school's results and pupils' achievements? How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
13895	A Smith	Lay inspector		How high are the 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?
4345	R Tong	Team inspector	English (Sixth Form)	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
27719	P Metcalf	Team inspector	Mathematics (including Sixth Form)	
11481	L Lindsay-Clift	Team inspector	Science; Biology (Sixth Form); Equal opportunities	
19278	R Allan	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
15306	S Bugg	Team inspector	Art	
8530	J Adams	Team inspector	Design and technology	
17618	M Hillary	Team inspector	Geography (including Sixth Form)	
17732	D Martin	Team inspector	History (including Sixth Form)	
16765	M Higgins	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages; French (Sixth Form)	
13007	J Forster	Team inspector	Music	
1085	J Laver	Team inspector	Physical education	

16546	G Langtree	Team inspector	Religious education (including Sixth Form)	
27380	K Stevenson	Team inspector	Special educational needs; English as an additional language	
12590	J Tirrell	Team inspector	Business (Sixth Form); Health and Social Care (Sixth Form)	
7808	J Blanchard	Team inspector	English	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Wadebridge School is a comprehensive school for pupils aged 11 to 18. It is of above average size: there are 1159 pupils on roll, 563 boys and 596 girls. The Sixth Form, with 151 students, is of average size. The pupils are predominantly white; less than one per cent come from minority ethnic backgrounds. There are no pupils for whom English is an additional language. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. Thirteen per cent of the pupils have been identified as having special educational needs, which is below average. The main needs catered for are specific learning difficulties (dyslexia) and moderate learning difficulties (reading, writing, spelling). Three per cent of the pupils have statements of special educational need, which is above average. The attainment of the pupils when they enter the school is above average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Wadebridge School is a good school. Standards in English, mathematics and science in the national tests taken at the age of 14 are above average. Standards in GCSE are also above average. Results in the Sixth Form were below average in 2000 but show considerable improvement in 2001. The vast majority of the pupils make good progress, achieving well as the result of good teaching. The quality of leadership and management shown by the headteacher, senior managers and many subject and other managers is good. The school's actions to ensure that all groups of pupils get a good deal at school are sound. Income and expenditure are slightly above average for schools of its type. It provides sound value for money. The Sixth Form is cost-effective.

What the school does well

- The pupils achieve high standards in business studies and in design and technology.
- Good teaching ensures that the vast majority of the pupils achieve well.
- Relationships between the teaching staff and the pupils are very good.
- The very good quality of care and guidance helps the pupils to perform well.
- The provision for personal, social and health education, including careers, is better than found in most schools.
- The pupils' personal development is very good.

What could be improved

- Many pupils are not achieving as much as they should be in modern foreign languages.
- In information and communication technology (ICT), more opportunities should be provided for the pupils to (a) use computers to measure, record and to control events and (b) to apply their skills in their other subjects.
- Homework is not always set consistently in Years 7 to 9.
- The curriculum in the Sixth Form could be extended to provide better provision for students interested in vocational courses and for lower attaining students.

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 November 1996. It has made satisfactory progress since then. The above average results in the national tests at the age of 14 and in GCSE have been maintained. The trend in the school's results has been in line with the national improvement. The teaching is much improved. The proportion of satisfactory or better lessons has gone up from 85 to 96 per cent; and of good or better teaching from 46 to 67 per cent. The school has

also been successful in setting up its new Sixth Form, in which results are now good. Of the weaknesses identified in the last inspection the school has made good progress in improving standards in art and in its procedures for monitoring and supporting the teaching. It has made progress but could improve further in the other areas, e.g. the quality of reports to parents, subject development plans and provision for the pupils' spiritual development. In ICT, there has been good progress in improving equipment; provision in Year 10 is better though not all aspects of the subject are well covered.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	All schools			Similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	B	C	B	D
A-levels/AS-levels	N/A	D	*	

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

** At the time of publication of this report, the national statistics for A- and AS-level were not available. A comparison of the school's results could not therefore be made. However, the school's results improved considerably, compared to 2000.*

At the age of 14, the pupils' results in the national tests in 2001 were above average, as they had been in the three previous years. In English, the results in 2001 were well above average. The science results show considerable improvement from the previous year when they were only in line with the average. When compared to schools with similar pupils (based on eligibility for free school meals), the overall results have been below average. The trend in the results at age 14 is in line with the national improvement. Most pupils achieve well. Evidence from the inspection mirrors this above average performance.

In GCSE in 2001 the school's results were above average. This has been the pattern in most previous years though the results dipped in 2000 to broadly average. The school has successfully retrieved this situation, particularly through the improvement in the results in double award science. Overall, the results represent good achievement on the part of most pupils, largely due to good teaching and good preparation for the examinations. The best results, all well above average, were in business studies, drama and in design and technology. The performance of boys has improved. Although girls do better, the gap is now less than the national difference. As at age 14, the trend in the school's results is in line with the national improvement. The school did not meet its overambitious targets for 2000. It did meet its more realistic targets for 2001 and is in line to do so again in 2002.

The first set of Sixth Form results, in 2000, were below average though the students did achieve well above average results in business studies at advanced level. In 2001, the results show a significant improvement over 2000. The students achieved particularly well in business studies and in biology. They did not perform well in German, given their GCSE results. These overall improving standards were reflected in the work seen during the

inspection. Most Sixth Form students are now achieving well. Most have good levels of competence in communication skills and satisfactory competence in numeracy and in ICT.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Most are enthusiastic and keen to learn. Very good in the Sixth Form.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good, both in lessons and around the school.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Many respond very positively to the opportunities to take responsibility and initiative.
Attendance	Satisfactory. There is very little truancy.

Most of the pupils work very well together in lessons and in other aspects of life in school. Many are active in raising money for a wide range of charities. In the Sixth Form most lessons are characterised by very good motivation, sustained concentration and a determination to develop new skills and to understand new ideas. In Years 10 and 11, a very small minority of pupils are at times inattentive and do not behave as well as they should.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

Most of the teaching has a positive impact on the pupils' learning. In the vast majority of lessons, the teachers show good knowledge and understanding of their subject. They plan well, manage the pupils well, establishing good working relationships with them. This ensures that they work at a good pace, concentrate well and show a clear interest in their work. This is particularly so in Years 10 and 11, and even more so in the Sixth Form. The very best lessons are characterised by brisk pace, often getting off to a cracking start, and by challenging questioning that extends the pupils' thinking. In the small number of less than satisfactory lessons, the key features are too easy activities that do not stretch the pupils and very slow pace of learning.

The teaching of English, mathematics and science is good. The skills of literacy are generally well taught; those of numeracy are satisfactorily taught. The teaching is very good in business studies in Years 10 to 13 and in design and technology in Years 10 and 11. It is less than satisfactory in modern languages in Years 10 and 11. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs, particularly those with reading, writing and numeracy difficulties, is satisfactory. The school has made considerable effort to improve the teaching of boys. As a result, the gap between the attainment of boys and girls has narrowed.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good in Years 7 to 9 where it builds well on the pupils' work in primary school. Satisfactory in Years 10 and 11 and in the Sixth Form.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory. Most make at least sound progress. Better use could be made of assessment.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Satisfactory provision for spiritual and cultural development. Good provision for social and moral development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very well. Very good procedures to monitor and promote good behaviour. The strong pastoral system supports the pupils' academic and personal development well.

The school works well with parents, the vast majority of whom have a positive view of the school.

Particular strengths in the school's curriculum include the quality and range of opportunities in English, mathematics, science, business studies, drama, design and technology, geography and religious education; the very good provision of careers education and guidance; the good range of extra-curricular activities particularly, but not only, in sport and music. Provision for religious education in the Sixth Form does not meet statutory requirements and an aspect of ICT is not sufficiently taught in Years 10 and 11.

Guidance for Sixth Form students in applying for places in higher education is a strength.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher and senior staff work well together and provide clear overall direction which is well focused on improving teaching and standards and on maintaining very good relationships.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors have a good awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They have been actively involved in procedures to improve GCSE results. Although they have ensured that most statutory requirements are met, there are several important gaps, e.g. the lack of religious education in the Sixth Form.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. Effective action to redress the dip in GCSE results after 2000. Self-evaluation does, however, not take sufficiently into account the above average attainment of the pupils when they enter the school.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The budget is well planned over and beyond the current year. Money for special educational needs and for staff training is well used.

The school has an adequate number of teachers and non-teaching staff. Resources and accommodation are also adequate.

Overall, there is a strong commitment to improvement. Senior managers have intervened effectively to ensure rapid improvement in standards in science. They have also influenced the improvement in German at GCSE though there is still some way to go. A particular strength is the high level of consistency in the work of the heads of year and the heads of upper and lower school. This has a very positive impact on the quality of relationships in the school. Subject leadership is very good in business studies, design and technology, health and social care and in English. There are, however, weaknesses in the leadership and management of modern foreign languages. Well-targeted training has had a positive impact on the quality of teaching. The principles of “best value” are applied satisfactorily.

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 progress being made by their children. • The teaching. • Their children like coming to school. • They feel comfortable in contacting the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homework. • Behaviour. • Reports. • The closeness of the working relationship between the school and parents.

The inspectors agree with the parents’ positive views. In respect of homework, the inspectors found that the concerns of parents were justified in Years 7 to 9. Here some teachers do not always set homework according to the published timetable and some homework is of the “finishing off” kind which does not stretch the more able or those who work more quickly. Reports on the pupils’ progress do not always indicate clearly strengths and weaknesses or how particular National Curriculum levels should be interpreted. In respect of behaviour, the inspectors found that the vast majority of the pupils behave well though occasionally a few do not. Although parents at the pre-inspection meeting were pleased with the working relationships with parents and the school, a minority of those responding to the questionnaire did not agree with the statement. The inspectors found no compelling evidence that the school does not work well with parents.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The Sixth Form opened in 1998. Student numbers are increasing and the Sixth Form is now about average in size, with 151 students on roll. There are 86 in Year 12, closely balanced between boys and girls, and 65 (23 boys and 42 girls) in Year 13. The difference in the numbers of boys and girls is larger than the difference nationally. There are very few students from minority ethnic backgrounds and none whose first language is not English. There is a broad range of Advanced Subsidiary (AS) and Advanced (A) level courses on offer, with a small number of Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) and General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) courses. There are no shared courses with other institutions. Most students are from Wadebridge School, with about 43 per cent of Year 11 staying on. A few students join from other schools. The majority of those on Advanced level courses have five or more A* - C grades at GCSE, those taking AVCE have four or more higher grades and those taking Intermediate GNVQ four or more A* - D grades.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The Sixth Form offers a good education for the students undertaking the courses on offer and provides satisfactory value for money. Results in 2000 were below the national average. However, the results showed a significant improvement in 2001. The teaching is very good overall and as a result students are achieving increasingly well and reaching standards which are above average. The Sixth Form is well led and managed. The students' own views of the Sixth Form are very positive.

Strengths

- The teaching is very good.
- There is very good provision for business and biology.
- Students are very positive about life in the Sixth Form and have a strong commitment to their work.
- Relationships between students and between students and staff are very good.
- There is very good personal support for students and guidance about their next steps in education or training.

What could be improved

- The Sixth Form curriculum could be extended to make better provision for students interested in vocational courses and for lower attaining students.
- Reports to parents.
- Religious education should be provided for all students.

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	Satisfactory. A-level results in 2000 were below the national average, although there was improvement in 2001. Most students reach the levels that would be expected from their GCSE results. The teaching is now good.
Biology	Very good. A-level results in 2000 were above average. They were equally good in 2001. The majority of students achieve higher grades than expected from their GCSE results. The standards in Year 13 are well above average. The teaching is good and at times very good.
Business studies	Very good. A-level results in 2000 were well above average. The standards achieved by students currently taking the course are also well above average. The teaching is very good.
Health and social care	Good. Results in Advanced GNVQ are well above the national average and the standards attained by students currently following the range of courses are also above average. The teaching is good.
Geography	Good. Results in 2000 were average. In 2000 and 2001 they were better than would be expected from students' GCSE attainment. Current standards are above average as a result of good teaching.
History	Good. Results in 2000 were well below average but improved considerably in 2001. The students' current standards are average, but good when compared with their GCSE starting points. The teaching is good.
Religious education	Good. Results in 2000 were above average and in line with standards expected given the students' GCSE results. Current standards are above average. The teaching is good.
English	Good. Although the results in 2000 were well below average, they improved considerably in 2001. Students achieved satisfactory A-level and good AS results compared with their GCSE results. The teaching is good.
French	Satisfactory. Numbers taking the subject are small, but the students' performance has been below what would be expected from their GCSE performance. However, the teaching is now good and the current students are learning well.

Work was also sampled in physics, chemistry, art, music, drama, PE, leisure, German, design and technology, ICT key skills and tutor based guidance. There was very good teaching in music, with attainment well above average. The teaching was good in German, in tutor based guidance, key skills, PE and art. There is a good range of Sixth Form leisure activities, which are expertly taught and generate a good response from the students.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Good. Students are well supported by their tutors and their teachers. Guidance about future courses, career opportunities and university applications is particularly strong.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the Sixth Form	The Sixth Form is well led and managed in most respects. The head of Sixth Form gives a strong lead and establishes a very positive ethos among staff and students. Students' views are sought regularly and their suggestions acted on, but Sixth Form teaching and overall performance are not rigorously monitored. There is equality of opportunity for those currently in the Sixth Form, but not for lower attaining pupils in Year 11 who may wish to stay on.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the Sixth Form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They are given helpful advice about which courses to take. • The school helps them to settle into Sixth Form life and work. • They are challenged to do their best in all their subjects. • The teachers are accessible and help them with their work. • They feel that they are treated as responsible young adults in the school. • They enjoy Sixth Form life and the good relationships. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accommodation and resources for private study.

The inspection team found that there was good evidence for the positive comments made by sixth formers. Advice and support are good; the teaching is very good overall with good levels of challenge and support for the students' learning. There are very good relationships and a very positive atmosphere in the Sixth Form; students are given responsibility and respond well. Private study arrangements are adequate and the school has plans to extend the current provision.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. The pupils' attainment when they arrive in the school in Year 7 is above average. This is based on their results in the national tests at the age of eleven, in which the pattern over the last few years has been above average results in English and science and average results in mathematics. The analysis of the cognitive ability tests taken by the pupils in Year 7, tests which aim to measure potential, show a more average picture.

2. At the age of 14, i.e. by the end of Year 9, the pupils' performance in the national tests has been above average in most recent years. This was so in mathematics and science and in all three subjects together in 2001; in English the results were well above average. This represents significant improvement over 2000 in science when the results were in line with the average. The achievement of the pupils who sat the tests in 2000 was good in English and mathematics and sound in science, even though the overall results were below the average of schools with similar intakes of pupils nationally. Good teaching and good leadership were the significant factors in the good performance in English and mathematics in relation to their previous attainment. The overall improvement in 2001 is likely to bring the trend in the school's results back in line with the national trend of improvement. Up to 2000, boys performed considerably better than girls in science, and girls considerably better than boys in English. This is still the case in English, though the gap is narrowing. In science in 2001 there was no significant difference in the results of boys and girls.

3. In the GCSE examinations in 2001, the school's results as measured by the pupils' average points score [the best indicator of overall performance] were above average. This was also the case in respect of the proportion of pupils [59 per cent] achieving five or more higher grades [A*-C]. The proportion achieving five or more grades at A*-G was in line with the average. This is largely because of the school's practice of entering a number of pupils likely to get low GCSE grades for the Certificate of Achievement in one or more subjects, in which most do well. The proportion achieving at least one pass was average. These results represent good achievement on the part of most pupils, due to good teaching and good preparation for the exams, including additional revision classes.

4. The 2001 results are considerably better than those achieved in 2000 in which the average points score was only average compared to all schools nationally and below average compared to schools with similar intakes. The main reason for the disappointing results in 2000 was the underperformance of many pupils in double award science and in German.

5. In the three years up to 2000 the girls performed considerably better than the boys at GCSE, the gap being greater than the national gap. In 2001, although the girls still performed better, the gap is likely to be considerably less than the national gap. The overall trend in the school's GCSE results is in line with the national trend. The school did not meet its overambitious targets for 2000. It did meet its more realistic targets for 2001 and is in line to do so again in 2002.

6. In English, the attainment of the oldest pupils in each key stage [i.e. those currently in Years 9 and 11] is above average and their achievement good. This is particularly evident in their positive response to the good level of challenge in the teaching. Many pupils speak clearly and confidently, and use a good range of vocabulary in their speech and writing. Many read for pleasure and read aloud with expression, though some find reading difficult. Many of the older pupils use grammatical and literary terms effectively in their own talking and writing.

As they go through the school, most successfully extend their range of types and styles of writing.

7. In mathematics, the attainment of the oldest pupils currently in Year 9 is above average and their achievement good. They make good progress in Years 7 to 9. Their number work is a strength. Their ability to use and apply mathematics is a relative weakness in all years. The attainment of the pupils currently in Year 11 is above average and their achievement sound. Many can handle simultaneous and quadratic equations and use trigonometry confidently. In science, the pupils' attainment is equally above average at the same points. This also represents good achievement, due largely to improvements in the teaching and in the overall management of the subject. By Year 9 the majority of the pupils have a good knowledge of scientific facts. The more able have a good understanding of concepts. In Years 10 and 11 most pupils add to their knowledge and understanding.

8. By the age of 14, standards are above average and the pupils' achievement good in design and technology, geography and religious education, largely as a result of good teaching. Standards are average in history, music and physical education. The pupils' progress in these three subjects is nevertheless judged to be good, given below average attainment when they arrive in the school. Conversely, standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are above average on entry. Their above average attainment at the age of 14 is therefore judged to be sound. Standards are broadly average and the pupils' achievement sound in art, history and in modern foreign languages.

9. By the age of 16, the pupils achieve well above average standards in design and technology and in business studies. In both subjects this is a direct result of very good teaching and leadership. Standards are above average and the pupils' achievement good in art, geography and in religious education. In French and German, although there are notable exceptions, too many pupils are not achieving as well as they should be. This is largely the result of weaknesses in the teaching and in leadership of the subject.

10. Standards across the curriculum in numeracy are sound and in literacy they are good. Those who experience literacy difficulties make sound progress overall with their reading and spelling, but there are considerable variations in their performance. For a minority of pupils progress is unsatisfactory, though most pupils improve their skills significantly. Pupils following the additional reading programme in Year 7 usually improve their reading ages, most by significant amounts, and their progress is often good.

11. The pupils with special educational needs (SEN) make sound progress overall. In some subjects, for example in English, design and technology, information and communication technology (ICT), religious education and physical education, they make better progress than expected. Their progress is generally better in Years 10 and 11, and here they do particularly well in history and mathematics.

12. Given their learning difficulties the pupils with SEN achieve a satisfactory standard in the Year 9 national tests, and usually obtain good grades in examination courses.

13. The school has no pupils who are in the early stages of learning English as an additional language. The school has not identified specific pupils as being gifted or talented. However, the most able pupils perform well, except in modern foreign languages, and talented pupils perform well in music and sport.

Sixth Form

14. The first set of Sixth Form results was achieved in 2000 and these were below average overall for students taking two or more A-Levels when compared with the national average points score. However, some subjects performed well. Results in business studies were well above the national average and in biology and religious education results were above average. Results in English, history and mathematics were below average. Given their GCSE results and attainment at the start of Sixth Form courses, students achieved well in business studies A-level, GNVQ business and health and social care. Their achievement was below the level expected in English, history, French, German, religious education and mathematics.

15. The 2001 results show a significant improvement in the average points score, with particular improvement in English and history. Results also improved in mathematics. Students achieved well from their GCSE starting points in business studies, biology, history, design and technology, physics, religious education and GNVQ business. Results were generally in line with what would be expected in English and religious education, but students performed less well than expected in chemistry, and significantly less well in German.

16. In the AS-level examination at the end of Year 12, students achieved well overall, reaching levels in line with or above those expected from their GCSE results in all subjects except history and chemistry. In English, sport studies, biology, art and geography, students reached higher levels than expected.

17. These good and improving standards were reflected in the work seen and lessons observed during the inspection. The standards attained by students in Year 13 currently are well above average in biology and business A-level, and above average in geography, history, RE, and English A-level, and in the health and social care courses. Standards are in line with the average in mathematics and in French. Very good teaching and teachers' growing understanding of the demands of Sixth Form work are resulting in increasingly good levels of achievement. Students in Year 12 rapidly adjust to the demands of the AS-level courses and make good progress as a result of good and often very good teaching in most of their subjects. Similarly, those embarking on A2-level courses achieve well from the start of the course, responding to high expectations of the teachers. Achievement is particularly good in business, with students making rapid progress as a result of very skilled and demanding teaching. Students develop good levels of skill in fieldwork in biology and geography, and show good research skills in English, religious education, French, geography and health and social care.

18. Although key skills are not yet assessed, students have good levels of competence in communication skills which support their effective progress in a range of subjects, and make a particularly significant contribution to work in religious education, biology and business. Students write fluently and accurately, marshal their thoughts into an effective argument both orally and in writing, and use a range of written material to select and use information in many of their subjects. Skills in numeracy and ICT are adequate to enable students to cope with the demands of their courses and to support their learning. For example, number skills enable students in business education to work out basic ratios, percentages and costing calculations. In other subjects they are able to make good use of hand drawn and computer generated graphs and interpret data logging traces. In many of their subjects, students use the Internet to research topics and use ICT skills to organise and present their work.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

19. The pupils' attitudes to learning are good and at times very good. This standard has been maintained since the last inspection. Where teaching is good or better this also has a positive impact on pupils' progress and makes an important contribution to the standards they achieve. The majority of the pupils work enthusiastically, rise to challenges and co-operate well with each other and other adults in the classroom. Many demonstrate high levels of concentration and motivation for the work they are doing. However, there is a small minority of mainly older pupils in Years 10 and 11 who find it difficult to concentrate, are inattentive, and who mar lessons by inappropriate behaviour. The few instances of disruption within lessons are most noticeable where there are weaknesses in the teaching.

20. The school is an orderly and well-mannered community in which the vast majority of pupils display good standards of behaviour both in lessons and around the school. They are courteous and willing to help visitors to the school. There was no evidence of bullying, racism or sexism during the inspection and the reasons for exclusions are appropriate. The number of fixed and permanent exclusions is similar to that found in other comparable schools. The reasons for exclusions, e.g. unacceptable behaviour, occasional aggression towards other pupils, are appropriate.

21. Relationships are very good and contribute greatly to the friendly and open ethos of the school. This is better than reported at the time of the last inspection. The vast majority of the pupils are open and friendly and there is an atmosphere of mutual respect between students, the teaching staff, including the learning support assistants and visitors. They show respect for one another's views, beliefs and culture and are caring towards each other. Most are keen to work collaboratively together both in the classroom and in other aspects of school life. They co-operate well with one another and are frequently supportive of one another's efforts.

22. Many respond very positively to the opportunities to take initiative and responsibility. The teachers foster the development of the students' personal and social skills, and pupils are given opportunities to reflect on the impact of their behaviour and actions in personal and social education lessons, religious education and tutor time. Many pupils are actively involved in school life as class monitors, members of the school council and in Year 11, as prefects. Many are active in fundraising for charities such as UNICEF, RSPCA, and the Air Ambulance and participate in extra-curricular activities such as subject clubs, dance club for Year 7 students, Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme in the Upper school, and a wide variety of sporting events.

23. Attendance is satisfactory and close to the national average. There is very little truancy: unauthorised absence is well below the national average. Most students are punctual in arriving at school and settle to lessons promptly. This is the same as reported at the time of the last inspection and although there are very good and reliable procedures in use for maintaining and improving the level of attendance the amount of authorised and unauthorised absence remains unchanged from year to year.

Sixth form

24. The students' attitudes to learning and life in the Sixth Form are very good. They are keen to take responsibility for, and participate, in activities both in lessons and around the school. They demonstrate a clear determination to understand the new and very challenging concepts presented to them and to work hard. Many lessons during the inspection were characterised by very positive displays of motivation, sustained concentration and by a genuine will to persevere in developing new skills and to understand fresh ideas.

25. The behaviour of the students is very good and the majority display a very mature approach to self-discipline with the occasional outburst of high spirits. There is a very good atmosphere and female and male students mix together in very friendly comradeship. There are no incidences of exclusion or evidence of bullying. As a mark of the maturity of students, it was noted during the inspection that in discussions they are relaxed but purposeful. They are willing to talk, unprompted, about the subjects they are studying, giving the impression that they are studying out of genuine interest rather than just for the sake of achieving qualifications.

26. The personal development of the students is very good. They are eager to learn about effective study skills and to put what they have learnt into practice. The majority take advantage of the many opportunities offered by the school to broaden and deepen their personal development. As a result, most are developing a mature approach to their personal and study skills. For example, they participate in activities that encourage personal development such as public speaking and adventure training through the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. The vast majority of students are rapidly developing the attitudes, skills and capacity to work independently that will enable them to become effective life-long learners.

27. The students' relationships with staff, between themselves and with the rest of the school are very positive. They are harmonious and constructive, and students show a high level of respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others. They have a strong perception of their role as members of the school and as citizens. For example most students support a class in the lower school for an hour once every other week. Sixth Form students organised the rest of the school in a whole variety of activities for Red Nose day and students run the school council. Following voluntary training in counselling skills, some students in Year 13 now give time during the lunch breaks to provide a drop-in facility, 'Just Chat', for younger students in the school. The majority of students also take part in the many sporting activities available.

28. No judgement could be made about attendance in the Sixth Form as insufficient evidence was available at the time of inspection. At present, the systems for maintaining a general record of attendance are unreliable, but the school is now tackling this appropriately. However, individual student attendance is carefully monitored and during inspection students were seen to be eager to attend tutorials and all lessons relevant to their subject areas.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

29. The teaching is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, good in Years 10 and 11, and very good in the Sixth Form. Of the lessons seen during the inspection, 96 per cent were judged to be satisfactory or better; 66 per cent to be good or better; and 22 per cent to be very good or better. Three per cent of all lessons seen were judged to be outstanding and four per cent to be less than satisfactory. The teaching has improved since the time of the last inspection when 85 per cent of lessons were judged to be satisfactory and 46 per cent to be good or better.

30. The teaching is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 (Key Stage 3). The totals were as follows: 94 per cent satisfactory or better; 55 per cent good or better; 13 per cent very good or better. Within this key stage, the teaching is strongest in Year 7 and weakest, though still satisfactory, in Year 8. The strongest subjects in these years, i.e. those in which most of the teaching is good, are English, mathematics, science, design and technology, geography, music, physical education and religious education. The teaching in all other subjects is satisfactory, though there are relatively more weaknesses in modern foreign languages.

31. The teaching is good in Years 10 and 11. The totals were 96 per cent satisfactory or better; 67 per cent good or better; 23 per cent very good or better. Overall, the teachers' expectations are higher in these two years and they use a greater range and variety of activities and make better use of assessment. As a result, the pupils often work at a faster pace and have a greater awareness of how well they are doing. In design and technology and in business studies, the teaching is very good. It is good in English, mathematics, science, art, geography, history, music, physical education and religious education. It is unsatisfactory in modern foreign languages (see below).

32. Almost all the teaching has a positive impact on the pupils' learning. In the vast majority of lessons, the teachers demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of their subject, they plan well, they manage the pupils well and establish good working relationships with them. This ensures that the pupils work at a good pace, concentrate well and show a clear interest in their work. In most lessons, particularly in Years 10 and 11, their acquisition of new knowledge and skills is good. The teaching of literacy skills across subjects is good; for numeracy skills it is sound. The teaching of ICT across the curriculum is not consistent – it still depends too much on the expertise and interest of individual teachers. Specific strengths in subjects include:

- the pace of lessons in English;
- the use of thought-provoking “starters” and puzzles in mathematics (for example, “if a is 1p, and b is 2p, what animal/s cost £1?”);
- the teachers' questioning skills in science, history, physical education and religious education;
- the organisation of fieldwork in geography;
- the quality of feedback and guidance on how to improve in design and technology.

33. Most of the less than satisfactory teaching seen was in modern foreign languages. The weaknesses, evident in all years but more so in Years 10 and 11, include expectations that are too low, insufficient opportunities for the pupils to practise their speaking other than in very predictable dialogues, and a lack of clarity about the purpose of the lesson. As a result, too many pupils make less progress than they should (see paragraph below). In some modern foreign language lessons, however, the teaching is very good. In these there is a high level of challenge; the teachers help and expect the pupils to work much more from memory; they use imaginative resources and keep all the pupils fully involved through the lesson.

34. In the very best teaching [i.e. in approximately one lesson in five], the key features are:

- very clear objectives for the lesson, shared with the pupils;
- brisk pace, with lessons often getting off to a cracking start;
- very good explanations and demonstrations;
- friendly, relaxed relationships within a strong work ethic;
- challenging questioning that moves on the pupils' thinking;
- very good handling of sensitive issues;
- very good ongoing assessment of the pupils' understanding.

35. For example, in a very good design and technology lesson in Year 7, taught to less able pupils, including many with poor literacy skills, very good questioning, reinforcement of key points, and ongoing assessment of the pupils' understanding led to well above average understanding of safety and hygiene issues in food preparation. In an outstanding English lesson in Year 9, the teacher's very effective involvement of all the pupils, including those initially reluctant to contribute, led to very good sharing of ideas and to very good gains in understanding and using techniques of persuasion in the context of making a speech. And in a very good religious education lesson in Year 11, the teacher's energetic introduction

immediately focused the pupils' attention. Very good questioning and ongoing assessment ensured very good gains in the pupils' understanding of special rules in the Torah and stimulated very good links with the pupils' own ideas of special rules and with Christian belief.

36. In the small number of unsatisfactory lessons, key features included: fuzzy objectives; low-level activities that do not challenge the pupils; pace that was too slow. For example, in a Year 9 lesson in German, the teacher's expectations were too low. As a result the pupils were content to answer, if at all, in single words. The weak link between the objectives of the lesson and the actual activities and the lack of variety in what the pupils were asked to do led to only very minimal learning.

37. A significant proportion of parents expressed some concern at the quantity and quality of homework set. Inspectors found their concerns to be justified in respect of Years 7 to 9. Some teachers do not always set homework according to the agreed timetable. And there are rather too many occasions when homework is of the "finish off" variety which does not stretch the more able and those who work more quickly. The quality and quantity of homework set in Years 10 and 11 are generally good.

38. The teaching of the pupils with special educational needs (SEN), particularly those with reading, writing and numeracy difficulties, is satisfactory overall. At times, these pupils are taught well. When they are, they learn well and make good progress. In the most effective teaching the teachers plan carefully, use a variety of teaching approaches and provide individual support at appropriate times. For example, in a mathematics lesson, the teacher started the lesson with a whole-class activity in which pupils had to remember work from a previous topic and respond to quickfire questions. This was followed up by a reminder of the last lesson in which the names of different kinds of angles had been learned. Pupils had to stand and move their arms around to show the different angles and this helped them to consolidate their learning. After a further whole class session in which they had to identify errors in measuring angles, they worked individually on estimating and measuring angles while the teacher and a learning support assistant (LSA) moved quickly around to check on their work. The high pace and variety of the lesson ensured that pupils were continually engaged. The individual support enabled all pupils to improve their understanding. In the very few occasions where the teaching was unsatisfactory, the teacher's expectations were too low, and there was not enough challenge for the pupils.

39. In the few individual and small group lessons observed the teaching was variable. In the best example, an LSA used a commercial scheme as a basis for the lesson but made sure that there was a range of activities and opportunities in the lesson for the pupil to learn. The teaching was unsuccessful when the scheme was followed without this variety. In the Reading Catch-up programme the teaching was usually satisfactory although opportunities were missed to extend the pupils' use of different approaches to reading. In these lessons there was an overemphasis on word-level work (phonics), and insufficient attention paid to sentence and text level work (reading for meaning).

40. Learning support assistants (LSAs) provide very good in-class support for the pupils with special education needs. They know the pupils' needs well and are able to ensure that they are able to be successful in the lesson. In one very good example, the LSA supported a pupil with some physical disabilities in a design and technology lesson. Because of the help provided by the LSA and by the teacher, who worked well as a team, the pupil was able to cut wood to make a housing joint and to take part in the same activity as the rest of the class. The LSA was sensitive to the pupil's needs, and made sure that she only helped the pupil when absolutely necessary, so that he could remain as independent as possible. The pupil was therefore fully included in the group. Individual Education Plans (IEPs) provide good support for teachers and LSAs in planning their work and teaching. They have clear targets,

relevant to the individual pupil's current ability, and appropriate strategies for the teacher and LSAs to use.

Sixth form

41. Teaching in the Sixth Form is very good overall. It has a very positive impact on the students' learning. It is very good in business studies, while it is good and at times very good in all the other subjects inspected. During the period of inspection, there was no unsatisfactory teaching in the lessons observed and in 30 per cent of the lessons seen teaching was very good and even outstanding. As a result, the students become fully involved in the subjects they study, work hard and make good progress.

42. The teachers know and love their subject and their enthusiasm inspires students to extend themselves intellectually to get to grips with difficult concepts. For example, in a biology lesson the students were discussing abiotic factors affecting population and responded well to the teacher's demand for explanations, confidently recalling facts from previous lessons and asking their own questions of the teacher to take the issue further.

43. The teachers plan work effectively and organise lessons and activities, bridging the gap between GCSE and Sixth Form courses, so that students build on work they have already covered and extend their understanding. They provide good opportunities for fieldwork in biology and geography, for example, and for practical projects in design and technology. They set stimulating research topics and motivating tasks so that students make good use of private study time, develop their skills of working independently and learn to think for themselves. In English, students studied a section of the novel *Paddy Clark Ha Ha Ha* and prepared to take on roles as characters from the book for an analytical class discussion. Development of urban environments was a geography topic which students researched and then gave mature and confident presentations to the class, discussing more as geographers than as A-level students.

44. In all these and other lessons the relationships between teachers and students and between the students themselves were very good. The teachers generate a very positive and stimulating ethos, in which students have the confidence to join in discussions and sustain their interest and involvement. It also means that students are motivated to respond to challenging questions and are prepared to work at a good pace and good intellectual level. In a business studies lesson, involving intensive and probing questioning, the students responded confidently, exemplifying their answers and developing a very good understanding of the theory of break-even analysis. In a religious education lesson, the students discussed complex ethical theories, consulting reference books and presenting their findings to the class.

45. Teachers know their students well and are able to pitch the work at an appropriate level. The most able students are challenged, while those who are less strong or who have a special educational need are well supported with good feedback about their work and advice on how to improve. The teachers often work with students individually to achieve this, as in a very effective music lesson where students at very different levels of attainment were using the software package "Sibelius" to inspire their own compositions.

46. The teachers give students a wide range of opportunities to develop their key skills, for example undertaking research using the Internet in English, note-making and essay writing in religious education and history, and analysing graphs and making calculations in science and in geography. As a result, the students have good communication skills that support their learning in a range of subjects, and adequate numeracy skills. The ICT lessons

are well matched to students' needs and effectively equip the students to use ICT in their other subjects.

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

47. The school offers a satisfactory range of worthwhile opportunities for learning. All pupils have the chance to follow courses, which are appropriate for them, and to benefit from the opportunities which the school provides up to age 16.

48. In Years 7 to 9, the curriculum is good. It is well organised and builds effectively on the work pupils have covered in Key Stage 2. It meets the statutory requirements and provides pupils with a good range of experience and opportunities to learn and make progress.

49. In Years 10 and 11, most of the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education continue to offer a good range of opportunities for learning. The school also introduces a number of optional subjects and alternative courses for lower attaining pupils and those who would benefit from more vocational and work related learning. This gives pupils a good breadth of subjects and a range of choice. Pupils taking the initial award courses, for example, in road safety or in text processing, respond very well to the relevance of these areas to their future careers. Some pupils do not take a course in a modern foreign language and instead undertake an intensive literacy course. However, this support course is not carefully enough designed to meet the needs of all those involved.

50. There are two main weaknesses in the Key Stage 4 curriculum. Firstly, statutory requirements in ICT are not fully met because not all pupils have the opportunity to study the control and measurement strand of the ICT curriculum. Secondly, there is no coherent plan for 14 to 19 education, so the alternative courses provided in Key Stage 4 do not necessarily link to post -16 courses.

51. The school has effective strategies for teaching both literacy and numeracy across the 11 to 16 age range and pupils have a good range of opportunities to develop their skills in many of their subjects. For example, algebraic skills are developed in science in calculations of acceleration and braking distances, and measuring skills are used in design and technology and physical education. Most subject areas help pupils to develop their specialist vocabulary, and there are particularly good opportunities for pupils to use key subject vocabulary in physical education and geography. In religious education, the teachers encourage reading fiction to highlight important themes and pupils read aloud fluently and confidently.

52. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities and a variety of trips and visits that enliven the work of many subjects. Many pupils participate in the sporting clubs and team games at lunchtime and after school, and in the range of musical activities on offer. Other examples of clubs include mathematics, dance, and art, and there is a thriving school bank. All pupils participate in activities week, which in 2001 included activities as diverse as self defence, Japanese, sewing, and 'letterboxing' on Dartmoor.

53. There is a particularly good programme of personal, social and health education, which includes sex education, misuse of drugs and aspects of citizenship. This is well planned and co-ordinated and well taught by the staff involved. In addition, many subjects of the National Curriculum contribute to pupils' personal development in areas such as building relationships and solving problems, and to their understanding of citizenship.

54. The careers programme is very well planned and starts by introducing pupils to thinking about careers from Year 7 onwards, with activities that are both fun and educational, such as 'jobs bingo'. By the time pupils reach Year 9, the programme includes more detailed study about work and different career paths. All pupils in Year 10 undertake two weeks of work experience. This is well organised and they gain much from it. There is the opportunity for an individual discussion with the careers adviser and a good range of ICT resources to support careers education. As a result of the good provision in both PHSE and careers, pupils are well informed and well prepared for making decisions and undertaking the next stage of their education or training.

55. The school has established good links within the local community and these enhance the educational provision of all students. Since the last inspection these have been strengthened. The sports centre enables the school and students to benefit from a number of links with the many sporting clubs that represent a diverse variety of sports in the local and surrounding area. The many ongoing links between extra-curricular activities and the community, such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme, music, drama, local sporting clubs, and local radio enrich the curriculum and make a good contribution to the attainment and personal development of many of the students. Effective links exist with the Young Enterprise programme and the school also enjoys good working partnerships with the local further education colleges and the other local schools. For example, the school shares with Year 6 pupils some work and textbooks used in mathematics and English with Year 7 students. Arrangements and provision for the smooth transfer of pupils from the partner primary schools are good. The school has built some good quality links with local business personnel and employers. These make a positive contribution to the very good provision for careers guidance and personal development of students, for example, in improving interview techniques. The students take part in fundraising through non-uniform day and in performing for the community. For example, students are currently beginning rehearsals for a production of *Guys and Dolls* later in the school year. The school enjoys a close association with the Royal Cornwall Show and many students and staff take part in this annual celebration. All these activities enrich the curriculum and make a good contribution to the attainment and personal development of many students.

56. The school makes satisfactory curriculum provision for the pupils with special educational needs (SEN). All the curricular requirements of statements of SEN are met, and pupils with statements receive effective support. Individual education plans (IEPs) are detailed, up-to-date and provide good guidance for teachers.

57. The school offers a good range of courses in Years 10 and 11 for pupils who have special educational needs, including vocational and English support courses. The English support lessons are helpful, but the impact of the course is less than it could be because it is not sufficiently linked to the mainstream English lessons. In Years, 7, 8 and 9 a small number of pupils are withdrawn from their lessons to receive some additional literacy teaching. This inevitably has a negative impact on the pupils' learning in the subjects missed. However, this is managed appropriately by running short courses, and by careful selection of the lessons to be missed. In most cases the gains made through the withdrawal teaching outweigh the losses in the main class provision.

Sixth form

58. The Sixth Form offers a broad range of AS and A2 courses, together with health and social care GNVQ. There is a good choice for students who want to take up academic courses, but very limited opportunities for those interested in following a vocational pathway, or for lower attaining students. This means that some students are not able to remain at the

school to build on their achievements and experiences from Key Stage 4. The school should now evolve a strategy to extend its provision, exploring links with other institutions.

59. For those who stay on to the Sixth Form, the curriculum is well organised and the courses are well matched to their needs. Nearly all who embark on Sixth Form courses continue through to take the appropriate level of examination. The school makes every effort to ensure that pupils can follow their chosen combination of courses. Occasionally, as in AS theatre studies, French and design and technology, this results in a very small group in Year 13, but the teachers concerned take steps to ensure that students still have a good quality experience.

60. The school makes appropriate provision for the development of key skills. This is mainly through the subjects and courses undertaken, but it is supplemented by a taught module in ICT. Communication skills are well developed through work in English and other subjects including, for example science, where students write extended essays and make formal presentations to the class. Students practise basic number skills in business, working out percentages and break even calculations as well as undertaking more complex work in statistics in geography and equations in physics.

61. Private study is used constructively in many subjects. The teachers set a good range of research, preparation and writing tasks. For example, students read and prepare for discussions in English, and undertake research tasks using the Internet in geography and religious education, but not enough use is made of private study in mathematics. There are adequate facilities and resources for students and these are well used.

62. There is a good range of activities and courses to enrich the curriculum, including general studies and a tutor-based guidance course which includes careers. Students participate enthusiastically in a very good range of leisure activities, including surfing, aerobics, tennis and soccer. All of this makes a good contribution to their continued moral and social development. However, the school does not meet the requirements for religious education for all students, or a daily act of collective worship. This has a negative impact on their spiritual development. Opportunities for work experience, especially for those students taking business and health and social care courses, would be beneficial.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

63. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall.

64. The school's provision for spiritual development is now satisfactory which represents an improvement since the last inspection when spiritual development was a key issue for action. Since the last report the school has introduced a thoughtful whole-school policy on spiritual development and staff have received in-service training on this issue. This has led to improvement in some subjects but as yet provision is not consistent across the school. In religious education there is good provision for pupils to explore important questions such as the environment, the existence of God and evil and suffering. In English pupils use stories and novels to explore spiritual issues. There are however limited opportunities elsewhere in the curriculum to explore spiritual questions and for pupils to reflect on their learning.

65. Assemblies at their best make an important contribution to the pupils' spiritual development e.g. an imaginative Year 7 assembly on the environment enabled pupils to reflect on their favourite places and the possible impact of pollution on them. However, in other assemblies opportunities were missed to encourage pupils to reflect. On occasions, the timing and number of notices had a negative effect on the quality of the pupils' learning experience. Most assemblies make a good contribution to the pupils' moral development. In

a thoughtful and well-led Year 10 assembly the pupils skilfully debated the issues related to gun control which provoked some mature reflection on decision making. The absence of music and visual aids in assemblies has a negative impact on the quality of the experience.

66. The school's provision for moral development is good. It is very good in religious education and personal, social and health education where pupils consider ethical issues such as drugs, relationships, warfare and medical ethics. Provision is also very good in English and drama where strong debating skills are well used to explore moral issues.

67. Provision for social development is also good. In a number of subjects (design technology, drama, English, personal, social and health education (PSHE) and religious education) the pupils work effectively in groups. Relationships in the school are positive and pupils both co-operate well with one another and work independently showing responsible attitudes. The school's good planned provision leads to purposeful relationships and very good personal development. Pupils are generous with their time and energy in supporting a range of charitable events.

68. The school's provision for cultural development is satisfactory. Good use is made in some subjects of local community activities such as arts projects. In English the pupils study literature from other cultures and in religious education there is a strong commitment to pupils' developing understanding and respect for different faiths and cultures. In geography the pupils in their work on Africa consider stereotyping and in design and technology there are helpful opportunities for pupils to research other cultures and their special foods. There are regular visits to France and Germany. There are however missed opportunities in lessons in art, ICT and modern foreign languages to promote the pupils' cultural awareness. Overall there is insufficient provision across the curriculum to fully prepare pupils for life in a multi-cultural society.

69. The Sixth Form provides students with good opportunities for their social development, for example, in their work with younger pupils and in the extra-curricular activities on offer such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award. There are also good opportunities for moral development through the tutor based guidance programme and the general studies course, both of which give students the chance to reflect on moral issues and to participate in discussion. Provision for spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory, although opportunities are limited for the majority of students because they are not developed in subjects such as English and geography. The work in subjects such as religious education and art provides a context for the students following these courses to explore and reflect on their own and other cultures and on spiritual matters, but there are no opportunities in assembly, for instance, for all students to have a time for reflection.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

70. The level of care that the school provides for its pupils is very good. Since the last inspection many aspects of the pastoral system have been strengthened and improved and are now a part of firmly established practice. The school has a friendly ethos marked by the provision of a clean and ordered environment in which pupils can learn effectively and in which parents are made welcome. There is evidence of easy relationships and trust between pupils and teaching staff and pupils are offered a range of opportunities to receive help and support for personal difficulties. Arrangements to promote pupils' general well-being are very good and this is a strong aspect of the school. Health and safety around the school is satisfactory, although one or two areas require some attention. The school provides good support for disabled pupils and those with specific difficulties and ensures that these pupils feel fully included in school life.

71. Appropriate child protection procedures are fully in place. The child protection officer, the head of the lower school, has received recent and varied training in aspects of child protection. Liaison with class tutors, learning support assistants and other staff is good and all are kept aware of child protection issues. The good use of learning support assistants contributes positively to the general well-being and progress of pupils. The school has an appropriate health and safety policy. The arrangements and records for dealing with first aid, sickness, accidents and emergencies are very good and well understood by pupils. Several members of staff hold first aid qualifications and the whole school provision is co-ordinated by an experienced member of the administrative team. Fire drills are regularly undertaken and accurate records kept. Mustering instructions are on view in the school buildings. The lessons in PSHE provide pupils with many very good opportunities to explore a wide variety of issues.

72. The school has good procedures for monitoring and promoting discipline and behaviour. These encourage high expectations and since the last inspection there has been a greater emphasis on the positive in managing the pupils' behaviour. Staff work well to promote a consistent approach to behaviour throughout all aspects of the school life. This is reinforced in lessons and assemblies and by the example of the adults who work in the school. Sanctions and rewards are used effectively and there is very little bullying or harassment. A policy of immediately involving pupils, teachers and parents, effectively helps the school to avoid any serious incidences. The consistency of approach to the procedures used and encouraged by the heads of year is an important element in the success of the school's discipline policy.

73. The monitoring of the pupils' personal development is good. The form tutors and the heads of year stay with the pupils for the five years of compulsory education and this enables two members of the teaching staff to know and understand each pupil and their families very well.

74. Procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are consistent and work very well. Form tutors and the Heads of Year follow up reasons for unauthorised absence with phone calls and letters home. They are well supported by the educational welfare officer who investigates the attendance difficulties of students with a poor record whilst reminding parents of their legal duties and the educational consequences that follow pupils with records of poor attendance. During the inspection lessons started on time and most students were punctual. There are effective procedures to account consistently and accurately for all pupils arriving late and for those leaving or joining the school during the school day.

75. Procedures for the assessment of pupils' academic progress are good overall. The involvement of the senior management team in target setting and monitoring in Year 11 in 2001 added strength to the process. This was a good significant contributory factor in the raising of the GCSE results in 2001. Day-to-day marking and feedback are good in science, mathematics, English, design and technology, business studies and geography. Insufficient use is made of available data to improve pupils' learning in modern languages, music and ICT.

76. The school has adopted the draft revised SEN Code of Practice and has clear criteria for the identification of pupils. It has sound systems for assessing reading and spelling abilities, and also uses end of key stage test results to make judgements about the progress of individual pupils. The school does not yet use these assessments rigorously enough to evaluate its provision or the progress of different groups of pupils, and links between pupil progress and SEN development planning are weak.

77. Statutory requirements for statements of special educational needs are met well. Statements are up-to-date and actions identified in the statements are fully implemented. Additional staffing is used appropriately and effectively. Pupils with statements generally have full access to the curriculum. Where disapplications have been made the procedures are appropriate and followed carefully. Annual review processes are thorough, and usually include information provided by the pupil's parents. However, parents are insufficiently involved in drawing up, supporting and reviewing individual education plans (IEPs).

Sixth form

78. The school provides good support and advice for sixth formers. Tutors know the students very well and there is regular contact between all the students and their tutors. The head of the Sixth Form operates an open door policy to make available to all students a ready access to help and guidance, as they need it. Regular one to one interviews take place between students and form tutors and students state that the tutors are very good at noticing problems and offering appropriate support.

79. Induction arrangements to support students as they move into the Sixth Form are effective and help the students to settle quickly and to feel confident in their new learning environment. Individual attendance and personal difficulties are closely monitored and supported through an open and friendly approach from teaching staff. This provides very good personal support for all students. Tutor based guidance in key skills; finance, driving and other aspects of personal, social, health, citizenship and education (PSHE) are provided in Year 12 until all topics have been fully covered. Students in Year 13 find the module in information and communication technology useful.

80. Careers guidance is of a high quality and students are given clear information about the courses offered before they start. This occurs through individual interviews and tutor sessions and is carefully backed by impartial advice. There is open access to the careers library and weekly interview sessions that are open to the Sixth Form and to those at pre-Sixth Form stage where personal career advice is built into the PSHE lessons. At present the school is not able to offer a sufficient variety of courses to suit the needs of all students coming through the school and wanting to go on to post-16 education. However, these students are given sound advice about courses on offer elsewhere and opportunities to visit other colleges to help them choose a suitable alternative place of study. All students are supported through the process of completing higher education applications and given informed and reliable advice on suitable programmes. All students also go to the Exeter University open day and further residential visits to Cambridge and other universities are arranged for those interested in also attending other open days.

81. Each subject area has appropriate systems for assessing students' attainment and progress. The information is used effectively to guide planning in the subject and teachers adapt lessons according to students' progress and their levels of understanding. Where appropriate, students receive individual support and coaching and this is very effective in building their confidence and enhancing their progress.

82. Students receive good academic support and guidance from their subject teachers. The quality of marking is good; teachers' comments are detailed and well focused. The assessments they make are accurate and reliable and they give students a clear picture of the standards they are reaching and what they need to do in order to improve. The students speak with confidence about the advice and feedback they receive. They appreciate the guidance offered and, because they are keen to do well, they generally act on it. Students in Year 13 are able to make assessments of their own work and in most subjects they have a good idea of their strengths and weaknesses. They are helped by their teachers who explain

examination criteria very clearly, so that in most subjects they know which are the areas they need to concentrate on in order to achieve good results. Parents receive a useful progress report during the year, but the end of year reports lack detail about students' strengths and weaknesses in each of the subjects they are studying and contain very little advice to students on the actions needed to improve the standards of their work.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

83. The school's links with parents are effective. Most parents are supportive of the school, pleased with the quality of teaching and the pastoral care and are generally satisfied with the education provided. This judgement is more positive than that reflected by the findings of the last inspection. Contact with parents prior to the inspection showed that parents feel that the school is successful in promoting positive attitudes and values.

84. A significant number of parents noted that they would like to see the quality and consistency of homework improved. Inspection evidence shows that the homework policy is inconsistently applied in the lower school, although it is appropriately set for older pupils. Some parents noted a concern about the standards of behaviour and what they perceive to be a lack of sanctions. They also note that they do not feel well informed about their child's progress or that the school works closely with them. Inspectors agree that the computerised annual reports lack a personal touch and observe that there is no explanation of National Curriculum levels. This makes it difficult for parents to interpret clearly their child's attainment and how well their child has progressed. As noted elsewhere in the report, inspectors found that the majority of pupils behave well at all times and that the school uses appropriate sanctions to deal with the small amount of undisciplined behaviour. Most parents enjoy a good relationship with the headteacher and staff and feel that the school is approachable and handles complaints well. There was no evidence during inspection to support the claim that the school does not work closely with parents. Parents are generally satisfied with the information they receive about the work of the school. A number did, however, indicate that they would appreciate information about the extra-curricular activities on offer.

85. The quality and quantity of information the school provides for parents is satisfactory. Parents are provided with newsletters, letters on specific topics, and reports on pupils' progress, although curriculum information is more limited. The governors' annual report and school prospectus both offer parents other useful information. The governors' report does not give all the required information for parents of pupils with special educational needs. The use of pupil planners to record homework provides a good home school link. Parents feel that parents' evenings are useful. The school has an open-door policy for parents wishing to discuss matters or make complaints. As yet the school does not consult with parents on matters relating to the curriculum.

86. Parents of pupils with a statement of special educational need receive appropriate information through an annual review and are invited to attend meetings to discuss these. Parents of pupils with statements are nearly always involved in annual reviews. Most attend review meetings, whilst others make written contributions. However, there are insufficient opportunities for parents to be involved in formulating pupils' individual education plans and copies of these are not sent home.

87. The parents' involvement in their children's learning is good. There are for example, good links between parents and the mathematics department: a number of parents are intrigued by the maths puzzles that are sent home for parents to try. Many parents, carers and friends of the school support school productions, such as the recent summer song and "dance spectacular". Although very few parents help in school, many are willing to help with

transport and supervision for extra-curricular activities, school outings, trips abroad and sporting events. All these links between the school and parents make a positive contribution towards the quality of the learning at school.

88. There is a very successful and well-established Wadebridge School Association. It arranges social and fundraising functions for the school with the help of parents, friends of the school, staff and pupils. They arrange events such as the Christmas Fayre, Lucky Number Club, and social attractions such as the Murder Mystery Evening and annual summer WSA quiz. The school association funds a considerable number of educational projects.

89. There is a school fund to which many families donate. This provides prizes for the awards evening and for students with 100 per cent attendance. Through this fund the school is also able to buy additional insurance cover for students when involved in physical education activities, and this fund has also been used to pay for extras such as National Trust membership, entry for the UK Maths challenge, and school badges.

Sixth form: students' view of the school

90. The Sixth Form works closely with parents and both students and parents express very strong positive views about this. They have a clear understanding of what the school aims to do and how it goes about its work. The students' approval for the school is reflected in their involvement in school life, their work and their willingness to help to enrich the Sixth Form ethos.

91. Parents are very happy with the impartial advice available on the range of choices and institutions that are available to post-16 students. They welcome the help and support given by the school in completing higher education applications and in choosing suitable degree and other higher education courses. Parents are pleased with the good induction into the Sixth Form provided by the school and the way in which the school has helped students to settle comfortably into new routines. Parents are also pleased with the good guidance and support their children receive within the Sixth Form.

92. These sentiments are echoed by the students, who are well satisfied with the Sixth Form provision. Students make it clear that they value their time in the Sixth Form and feel that the school treats them as responsible young adults. Many comment that they would advise other students to join the Sixth Form in the school; that the teachers are accessible and help with difficulties with work; and that they are encouraged to study and research topics independently. The majority of students also feel that they are following programmes suited to their talents and career aspirations.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

93. The overall quality of management in the school is good. It makes a positive contribution to the standards being achieved and to the good rate of progress by most pupils. The headteacher and the senior management team are providing good leadership. The overall direction of the school is clearly focused on improving standards and teaching. There is a strong commitment to improvement and a clear capacity to improve further. A particular strength is the high level of consistency in the work of the pastoral managers, the heads of lower and upper school and the heads of year. Together they have a profound effect on the quality of relationships in the school and the very good level of care for the pupils.

94. Procedures for the monitoring and support of teaching are good. Each teacher is observed on three occasions each year, both by a senior manager and by the subject head

of department. Constructive feedback is given and the outcomes are recorded. Together with the specific training events focused on teaching over the past few years, this has been a key factor in the overall improvement in the quality of teaching in the school. Procedures for target setting are good in Years 10 and 11. Data on the pupils' performance is well analysed by senior managers and increasingly so by heads of department to set targets for individual pupils, subjects and the whole school. Procedures for self-evaluation are sound. For example, the dip in results in 2000 led to considerable soul searching and to energetic action to improve them in 2001. The main weakness in the school's overall evaluation of its performance is the need to take more fully into account the above average attainment in the core subjects of the pupils when they arrive from their primary schooling.

95. The school's forward planning is good. A clear example of this is the planning and introduction of the Sixth Form. Recently, the key priority has been to improve the examination and test results. In 2000-01 this focused very intensely and successfully on performance in science. In many respects the carrying out of planned activity has been more impressive than the actual development plan. The latter is a comprehensive list of planned action but one in which it is difficult to ascertain what the key priorities actually are. Criteria for success are not always clearly defined in the accompanying action plans and costs not always identified.

96. As indicated above, senior managers intervened effectively to ensure rapid improvement in science, both in GCSE and in the end of Year 9 tests. The school's system of attaching senior managers to specific departments works well in both supporting and, where appropriate, challenging the subject teams. In most instances, the senior manager has expertise in the subject. In science, for example, the headteacher, himself a scientist, took on this role. More recently another senior manager, a German specialist, has been supporting the modern languages department. This has been a factor in the improvement of the results in German in 2001 though there is still some way to go before all the pupils are achieving as well as they should be in modern languages.

97. Action taken by senior managers has been effective in tackling most of the issues from the last inspection, though there is still some way to go on some. Standards in art, which were criticised last time, have improved considerably. The monitoring of teaching is now good. In ICT there has been good improvement in the level of equipment available and in providing more coherent provision in Year 10, the two areas of criticism. There are, however, weaknesses, not identified last time, in coverage of all the strands and in provision in subjects across the curriculum. In respect of the provision for spiritual development the school worked hard to develop a policy and to provide training. This has had some impact. Provision is now satisfactory but has not developed as much as anticipated. Subject development plans have improved but could still improve further.

98. The overall quality of leadership and management in subjects is good. It is very good in business studies, English and in design and technology. In each of these subjects there is a very positive impact on the teaching and on the results being achieved. Leadership and management are good in mathematics, geography, history, music, physical education and religious education. Here, too, the impact is positive. The one subject with current weakness is modern languages in which work on improving teaching has not focused sufficiently on the reasons why many pupils do not do as well in languages as in their other subjects.

99. Management of special educational needs is sound. The school meets statutory requirements regarding the SEN Code of Practice. All related documentation is maintained well. Statements and individual education plans (IEPs) are up-to-date, reviewed on time, and are fully implemented. The school uses its additional funding for special educational needs appropriately and gets good value from the work of the learning support assistants. The SEN policy meets statutory requirements, but the governing body is not sufficiently involved in

monitoring the implementation of the policy in the school, and the governors' annual report does not provide an evaluation of the success of the policy as required.

100. The monitoring of the progress of individual pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. However, the process for using this information to evaluate the progress of groups of pupils, and of the implementation of the school's policy, is weak. The responsibility for this analysis is not clearly defined, and the available information is not analysed rigorously enough to identify current strengths and weaknesses, or priorities for development. SEN development planning is therefore unsatisfactory.

101. Governors have a good awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and a clear determination to address the latter. For example, two governors were attached to the science department to monitor progress in the last year. They are currently concerned to see further improvements in modern languages. Strategically, they have been effective in planning the introduction of the Sixth Form and are now actively investigating specialist college status, building on the strengths in business education. They have ensured that most statutory requirements are met. In this there are, however, exceptions relating to the coverage of all the strands in ICT, and to the provision of religious education in the Sixth Form. They have not been able to find an effective way of meeting the strict requirements for a daily act of collective worship.

102. The school makes effective use of its resources and ensures that money allocated for specific purposes, such as the provision for pupils with SEN and staff training, is well used. In supporting SEN, for example, the school employs a team of support assistants who enable pupils to join in lessons and make good progress.

103. The school's achievement in introducing a successful Sixth Form from scratch is clear evidence of the way in which the finances have been targeted on major areas of development. This led to an overspend in the previous and current financial year, but careful budgeting and good financial administration are putting the school back on course to achieve a balanced budget by the end of the financial year 2002-03. In the current development plan, the priorities are not sufficiently sharply focused, nor have they been costed. The school applies the principles of best value in a general way, but there is insufficient analysis of data about performance to demonstrate that the school compares and challenges itself rigorously.

104. The school has an adequate number of teaching and non-teaching staff. There are satisfactory arrangements in place to compensate for the shortfall of permanent specialist teachers in English and mathematics. There has been no adverse impact on pupils' progress in these subjects. In modern foreign languages, however, difficulties in making a temporary appointment to cover maternity leave has had an adverse impact on standards.

105. The non-teaching staff make a significant contribution to the school, for example the very effective librarian who runs study skills classes and the site managers who undertake important repair and decorating jobs. All appreciate working with school managers who encourage them to use their initiative.

106. Staff development is now well managed in the school. In the last two years, there has been a very firm focus on improving teaching and learning. This has had a positive impact on the overall quality of teaching. Performance management is well embedded. Arrangements for non-teaching staff are less well advanced: there are no formal systems of performance review for them.

107. Overall, there is adequate provision of learning resources. A particular strength is in religious education, in which there is an extensive range of books, videos, tapes and artefacts

as well as good access to ICT facilities. The teachers use them well to stimulate pupils' interest, promote effective learning and raise attainment.

108. The library resources are significantly supplemented by the work of the librarian. Good quality resource materials are produced for both teachers and pupils. These typically include information spanning a rich variety of sources; abstracts, newspapers, websites, CD-Roms and videos. The librarian teaches study skills and so contributes directly to the achievement of the objectives of the National Literacy Strategy framework. Training is given to teachers to promote pupils' independent learning. By analysing borrowing patterns, the librarian is able to identify special needs such as those suitable for visually impaired pupils.

109. There are insufficient resources for teaching systems of computer control in design and technology and composition in music. The stock of fiction in the library is less than expected for a school of this size.

110. The school's accommodation is adequate overall. Good progress has been made since the last inspection to improve learning opportunities for students through better accommodation. A series of building projects has been undertaken to enhance and extend the school's provision, the largest of which is to accommodate the new Sixth Form. The accommodation for most subjects is now good. In science, the quality of teaching has been enhanced through a programme to refurbish laboratories, which is almost complete. In English, science, mathematics and modern foreign languages, the creation of suites of classrooms has improved access to subject materials and resources. However, significant issues remain, as despite additional buildings, the school has grown and accommodation is only just sufficient for current needs. The library remains cramped, which limits the flexibility with which it can be used. Good progress has been made in providing wheelchair access to buildings. However, access to the entrance hall and the upper floors of the tower block have yet to be provided.

Sixth form

111. The leadership and management of the Sixth Form are good in most respects and have contributed significantly to the school's achievement in establishing a successful Sixth Form within two years.

112. The head of Sixth Form gives a strong lead, establishing a very positive ethos in the Sixth Form area and promoting a good team spirit among staff and students. This is a key factor in developing the students' enthusiasm for being in the Sixth Form and encouraging them to work hard, make the most of their opportunities and join in the life of the school. The governors played a key part in setting the aims and values for the Sixth Form when it was established and these are clearly articulated and demonstrated by staff and students.

113. Students in both Years 12 and 13 have good opportunities to comment on their experience of teaching and learning in the Sixth Form. Their comments are acted upon and steps taken to improve the teaching where appropriate. However, there is no systematic monitoring of teaching, nor rigorous analysis of examination performance. The overall responsibility in these areas is not sufficiently clear, because currently heads of subject, the head of Sixth Form and other senior staff all play a part. The school has value-added data which it uses to monitor the progress of individual students, but not enough use is made of the information to set targets for achievement and retention.

114. Resources have been carefully targeted and well used in setting up the Sixth Form. The overall cost-effectiveness is carefully evaluated, so that the school is able to support some less popular A2-level subjects because there are relatively large classes in Year 12.

Where appropriate, there is also some joint AS-level and A2-level teaching. There is a small subsidy to the Sixth Form from the main school. However, taking account of the improving standards, the Sixth Form is currently cost effective and gives reasonable value for money. The principles of best value guide spending in a general way, but as in the main school, are not rigorously applied.

115. The staffing, accommodation and learning resources are adequate for the courses currently on offer, but the accommodation does not currently allow for expansion.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

In order to improve further, senior managers and governors should:

1. improve standards in modern foreign languages, by:

- improving the leadership of the department;
- raising the teachers' expectations of what the pupils can achieve;
- providing more and better opportunities for the pupils to practise and extend their speaking;
- building on the very good practice that exists in some classes.

(See paragraphs 9, 168 - 173)

2. improve the provision for ICT, by:

- meeting statutory requirements for the pupils to use ICT to measure, record and control events;
- providing more opportunities for the pupils to apply their skills in ICT in their other subjects.

(See paragraphs 162, 164, 166, 167)

3. improve the quality of homework in Years 7 to 9, by:

- reviewing and reactivating the advice given to the teachers;
- monitoring the quantity and quality of homework;
- intervening where homework is not being set consistently or to a good standard.

(See paragraph 37)

4. extend the curriculum in the Sixth Form for vocational courses and for lower attaining students.

See below for recommendations on how to tackle this issue.

(See paragraph 58)

Sixth Form

1. extend the curriculum for vocational courses and for lower attaining students by;

- researching the aspirations and goals of pupils, parents and the community;
- evolving a strategy for developing provision, including exploring the possibilities of collaborative working with other institutions.

(See paragraph 58)

2. improve reports to parents by;

- including more detailed analysis of students' strengths and weaknesses in each of their subjects;
- giving more detailed advice on how to improve their work.

(See paragraph 82)

3. introduce religious education for all students by;

- extending the scope of tutor based guidance;
- introducing time for reflection in Sixth Form assemblies.

(See paragraph 62)

Other weaknesses, not included above, which should be considered by the school:

1. reports to parents in years 7 to 11 (See paragraph 84).
2. the preparation of the pupils and students for living in a culturally diverse society (See paragraph 68).

Sixth Form

3. Clarifying roles and responsibilities between the head of Sixth Form, other senior staff and heads of department (See paragraph 113).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	151
	Sixth Form	47
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		53

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 – 11							
Number	3	25	63	51	8	0	0
Percentage	2	17	42	34	5	0	0
Sixth Form							
Number	2	12	25	8	0	0	0
Percentage	4	26	53	17	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth Form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1008	151
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	78	

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth Form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	34	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	146	1

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	30
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	42

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.9
National comparative data	7.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
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)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	94	105	199

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	64	67	77
	Girls	84	77	80
	Total	148	144	157
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	74 (73)	72 (72)	79 (66)
	National	64 (63)	66 (62)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	43 (40)	45 (47)	39 (28)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	67	74	66
	Girls	86	82	84
	Total	152	156	150
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	76 (72)	78 (77)	75 (73)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	41 (31)	37 (54)	28 (33)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (28)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	111	95	206

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	63	102	108
	Girls	59	86	92
	Total	122	188	200
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	59 (53)	91 (91)	97 (95)
	National	50 (47)	89 (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	41 (40)
	National	39 (38)

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	22	55
	National		*

* not available at time of publication of this report

Attainment at the end of the Sixth Form (Year 13)

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	21	22	43

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	18.0 [14.4]	20.4 [15.0]	18.8 [14.7]	0	0	0
National	* [17.8]	* [18.6]	* [18.2]	* [2.6]	* [2.9]	* [2.7]

Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year. * not available at time of publication.

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	12	100
	National		*

* not available at time of publication

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	
Black – African heritage	3
Black – other	3
Indian	
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	1
White	1151
Any other minority ethnic group	1

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	45	4
Other minority ethnic groups		

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	64.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	19
Total aggregate hours worked per week	487

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	77.2
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13

Key Stage 3	27
Key Stage 4	23

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	2,787,159
Total expenditure	2,841,110
Expenditure per pupil	2,454
Balance brought forward from previous year	-30,671
Balance carried forward to next year	-84,622

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	16
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	14

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	4
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	4
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1159
Number of questionnaires returned	315

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	37	59	9	3	2
My child is making good progress in school.	31	52	5	1	10
Behaviour in the school is good.	20	53	14	3	10
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	15	57	17	5	7
The teaching is good.	17	64	5	2	12
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	17	47	19	5	12
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	41	46	5	4	4
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	41	49	4	1	4
The school works closely with parents.	15	47	19	5	13
The school is well led and managed.	22	51	9	5	12
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	25	55	10	1	9
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	17	46	12	4	21

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

ENGLISH

Overall, the quality of provision in English is good.

Strengths

- The pupils' use of language is often vigorous, candid and expressive.
- The teaching is good and the pupils are very well prepared for their end of Year 9 and GCSE assessments.
- The head of department provides very good leadership.

Areas for improvement

- More of the teachers need to develop the use of open questioning.

116. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2000 were above national averages. In some years, as in 2001, results were well above national averages, and above average when compared with similar schools. The proportion of pupils attaining levels 6+ and 7+ are particularly impressive. Girls do better than boys, but not disproportionately so when compared with national averages, and the gap has begun to close. The standards of the pupils currently in Year 9 are above average. As in Years 10 to 11, most are achieving well, including those with special educational needs.

117. GCSE results in both English language and literature are above average. The girls' results are significantly better than those of girls nationally, while boys perform in line with boys nationally. The gap between the two is narrowing in the school. The proportion of pupils not entering for GCSE is sometimes higher than the national average; however, these pupils successfully complete a certificate of achievement in English. These above average standards are mirrored in the work of the pupils currently in Years 10 and 11. Most, including those with learning difficulties are achieving well.

118. There are a number of strengths in the standards being achieved. The school has a good tradition of competitive success in public speaking, and this is a strength. Making prepared, spoken presentations in class is a well-developed practice in all years. Prompted by the best teaching, many pupils speak clearly, confidently, openly, fluently, and engagingly. They often use impressive and vigorous vocabulary in their speech and writing. However, in many lessons, the pupils did not listen to one another during whole-class question-and-answer sessions. Many pupils read for pleasure and read aloud with expression, but a significant minority find reading aloud difficult. Well-planned teaching enables the pupils in all years to understand grammatical and literary terms, such as "tense" and "metaphor". Many pupils go on to use such terms independently in their own talking and writing. Many are confident in making notes that help them with preparing assignments and revising for tests. They draft their writing well, making good use of their teachers' careful marking. Some particularly fresh and vigorous writing is being created in response to the new Year 7 scheme of work, well taught by non-specialists who are well supported. As the pupils go through the school, most successfully extend their range of different types and styles of writing. The highest achievers write with sensitive insight into literature, with fluency and cogency about matters of fact and debate, and with flair when creating their own fictions.

119. The most able pupils are stimulated to excel, particularly by the end of Year 9. Some pupils, helped by the best teaching, are able to evaluate their work according to precise criteria. An example of this was in a lesson in which the pupils were preparing a speech on tackling issues of right and wrong; they were able to explain and apply techniques of persuasion and argument. Pupils who have special educational needs make good progress, especially where their teachers have high expectations of them. On two occasions in a mixed-ability lesson, the teacher asked low attaining pupils by name to contribute, and successfully helped them to extend their skills in writing creatively about their early memories.

120. The teaching makes a good contribution to the pupils' spiritual and cultural development through work on literature and specific topics. It makes a very good contribution to their moral and social development, evident in their public speaking, group work, and reflection on human dilemmas and values, such as honesty, justice, war.

121. The teaching is good. It is never less than satisfactory, and sometimes excellent. The strengths far outweigh the weaknesses. The teachers have good knowledge of the subject and prepare the pupils very well for the national tests and GCSE examinations. Their analysis of the difference in the standards reached by boys and girls, and by the more and less able has led to well planned support for individual pupils in Years 10 and 11. The pace and structure of lessons are good. The teachers set clear objectives for lessons and units of work. The teachers mark the pupils' work regularly, and enable the pupils to benefit from this when re-drafting their writing. The best teaching uses open questioning, which enables the pupils to listen to one another, and then moves the pupils' learning on to higher levels of thinking and appreciation. The teachers manage the pupils' behaviour well. At the beginning of one lesson, for example, the teacher praised each pupil by name as she or he settled down to read, thereby establishing an excellent atmosphere of calm and concentration which was sustained for the whole lesson. Often the teachers are able to link learning about techniques and skills with the pupils' interests. However, some of the teaching of the certificate of achievement groups relies too heavily on the study of words at the expense of sentences and texts and does not enable the pupils to apply their learning meaningfully. Interesting and attractive displays of the pupils' work, combined with praise and a commendation system, serve to motivate the pupils very effectively. Homework is generally used well to reinforce and extend the learning in lessons. The pupils' work is effectively assessed, and the use of individual pupils' targets has begun to enable some pupils to know what to improve in their work and to know how to do that. Assessments are well standardised, but the record cards do not serve to enable teachers and pupils to identify what the pupils are good at and what they should do next.

122. Overall, good teaching has a positive impact on the pupils' learning, in the standards they reach, and in their motivation. The pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. Many volunteer answers to the teachers' questions. Most concentrate well throughout lessons. They have good humoured, relaxed, yet respectful relationships with their teachers and classroom assistants. The pupils generally work hard, and respond very well to the guidance and instructions they receive. Although, few examples of the pupils' taking initiative or acting independently were observed in lessons, their written work does show a lot of extra effort, for example, word processing work.

123. Leadership and management are very good. New in post, the head of department has a very clear view of standards, she has quickly brought the teachers together as collaborative team and is making a positive impact on both teaching and standards. Further development has been well planned, including the mutual observation of lessons to enable the teachers to learn from one another and benefit in particular from the head of department's excellent teaching skills. Accommodation is excellent and resources are good, though more

works of fiction are needed in the library. Use of ICT is good, well promoted by easy access to computers in a room adjacent to the English classrooms, and much improved since the last inspection. Reports to parents do now have something of a subject flavour, but need to be clearer about what the pupils have achieved and how they might progress further. The department has made good improvement since the last inspection. The department's scheme of work now incorporates topics which make a specific contribution to the pupils' spiritual development. Monitoring and evaluation have also improved, with a focus on reducing the gap between girls' and boys' attainment and promoting the best possible progress for both high and low attainers.

124. The school began its development of literacy across the curriculum before the introduction of the national strategy, and is making good provision overall. Beyond the work of the English and drama teachers, there is very good work enhancing the pupils' development of literacy in design and technology and in religious education, and good work in physical education. Satisfactory provision is made for some aspects of literacy in mathematics, science, geography, art, and music. Spelling is weak in history and elsewhere in some pupils' notes or first drafts. Examples of best practice are provided by design and technology teachers, who regularly use vocabulary lists, discuss meanings, and provide writing frames for lower achievers, and by religious education teachers, who encourage discussion, use a good range of types of writing, and emphasise the accurate use of technical terms.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- The pupils are now achieving well in Years 7 to 9.
- The teaching is good.
- The head of department is providing good leadership.
- The teachers provide some very good extra-curricular activities.

Areas for improvement

- The pupils' competence in using and applying mathematics.
- The pupils' ability to represent their findings visually.
- Opportunities for all pupils to use information technology in the subject.

125. In the most recent national tests (2001) at the end of Year 9 the pupils' results were in line with the national average but well below those of pupils in similar schools. Given that the attainment of these pupils in mathematics was average when they entered the school, their achievement was sound. There has been no significant difference in the standards reached by boys and girls.

126. Based on the evidence of the inspection, the standards being attained by the pupils currently in Year 9 are above average. This is so in all aspects of their work. Their ability to use and apply mathematics is weaker. Most can identify algebraic patterns, solve linear equations and identify the symmetries of different shapes. However, their ability to handle statistics and to represent their findings visually is a relative weakness. The more able pupils can rearrange algebraic formula and use trigonometry confidently to calculate the angles and sides of a right angled triangle. Overall, most pupils are now achieving well in Years 7 to 9. This is a direct result of good, challenging teaching.

127. GCSE results are above average. Girls tend to achieve more higher grades than boys. These results represent satisfactory achievement on the part of most pupils, given their prior attainment at the end of Year 9. On the evidence of the pupils' work and the lessons observed, standards of work attained by the pupils currently in Year 11 are equally above average and their achievement is satisfactory. Although the pupils' number work is good, their ability to use and apply mathematics is weaker. Many pupils can handle quadratic equations, calculate pairs of simultaneous equations and use 'trial and improvement' methods to solve cubic equations. They make good use of trigonometry to find the lengths and angles of right-angled triangles, though, as in Years 7 to 9, their drawing skills are weak. Most pupils can work out the mean, median, mode and range of a set of data and identify the relationship between two variables using scattergraphs. The more able pupils can manipulate and solve algebraic fractions and confidently calculate arc lengths and sector areas.

128. Good teaching in all years ensures good learning. Lessons get off to a prompt start with a useful starter activity, for example working out whether 997 is a prime number. The prompt start ensures that time is well used and the pupils are quickly engaged in the lesson. The teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge, give confident explanations and have high expectations of their pupils in terms of work, presentation and involvement. Relationships are positive, productive and good humoured resulting in good attitudes and behaviour. The teachers have a good awareness of individual pupils' strengths and weaknesses making use of assessment records which are centrally collated. However, too little attention is given to the spread of ability and extension activities highlighted in lesson planning are not always used in the classroom. In a small number of classes, the teacher's explanations dominates the lesson so that pupils are not fully engaged in the work and their thinking is not sufficiently stimulated.

129. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. Work samples and lesson observations confirm that some pupils are stretched by imaginative and challenging teaching whereas for others the teaching lacks sufficient challenge and rigour. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good in Years 10 and 11. For example, in a lesson in Year 11 the pupils were provided with personalised work programmes to ensure that their learning built upon their prior knowledge.

130. Other subjects make a satisfactory contribution to the pupils' competence in numeracy. Algebraic skills are utilised well in science for formulae involving speed, distance and time as well as for calculating relationships between electrical power, voltage and current. Pupils make good use of measurement for physical achievement in physical education and good use of measuring skills, such as weighing foods, in design and technology. Pupils also collect, process and present data for surveys in design and technology while Year 7 pupils produce pie charts from Excel spreadsheets in ICT and make good use of spreadsheets for data presentation and follow up analysis in geography. There is as yet no whole school numeracy policy to provide a coherent framework to develop pupils' numeracy skills as mentioned in the last report.

131. The leadership and management of the subject are good and are making a positive impact on the quality of teaching and the standards being achieved. There is clear direction. There is a shared commitment to improvement. The head of department provides good support for non-specialist teachers and has coped admirably with problems surrounding the rapid turnover of staff in the last year. The provision for literacy within the department is satisfactory and technical vocabulary is prominently displayed in all classrooms although not always sufficiently stressed in lessons. The provision for information and communication technology (ICT) is inconsistent, though the teachers make good use of graphical calculators. The teachers provide a very good range of extra-curricular activities including the

Genii Club which provides a variety of extension activities for able pupils in Years 7 to 9 and the Penguin Club which provides pupils with additional numeracy support and is appreciated by pupils and supported by their parents. There are also good links with partner primary schools which ensure good continuity in the pupils' learning from Year 6 to Year 7. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory and the department is now well placed to continue to improve and to raise standards.

SCIENCE

The provision for science **good**.

Strengths

- The teaching is good, particularly in Years 9 to 11.
- The vast majority of the pupils are making good progress.
- The pupils' scientific knowledge and understanding.

Areas for improvement

- Standards in investigative work.
- Greater consistency in providing opportunities for the pupils to use technology (ICT).

132. The results in the 2001 national tests at the end of Year 9 were above the national average and in line with the average for similar schools. During the last three years the results have been above the national average except in 2000, when they were in line. The standard of work of the pupils currently in Year 9 is above the national average. Their achievement, including their progress over the three years and the gains they make in lessons, is good. The major factors contributing to this good achievement are good teaching and a sharp focus on revision and test requirements. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9.

133. The percentage of pupils attaining A* to C grades in GCSE in double award science in 2001 is above the national average for 2000. In 1998 and 1999, performance was above the national average, but in 2000 it was only in line with it, and below the average of the other subjects in the school. The current attainment of the pupils currently in Year 11 is above average and their achievement is good. The majority of pupils respond well to the challenges set by many of the teachers. Their progress over time is good, except for pupils with special educational needs, for whom it is satisfactory.

134. Since the last inspection in 1996, except for the year 2000, the school has maintained above average standards at the end of both key stages.

135. By the end of Year 9 the majority of the pupils have a good knowledge of scientific facts and the more able are developing a good understanding of scientific concepts such as the calculation of speed; the reactivity series of metals; the chemistry of photosynthesis; and respiration. In Years 10 and 11 the pupils add to their knowledge and understanding. The more able readily understand the concepts of electro-magnets and can use symbol equations. At both key stages standards in science investigations are not as high as might be expected given the above average standard of attainment in knowledge and understanding. Investigative work is not at present an integral and formal part of the curriculum in Years 7 to 9 and it is not consistently assessed. The department has firm plans to remedy this. The higher attainers at Key Stage 4 are learning to apply mathematical principles to science, for example, calculating acceleration; braking distances; and voltage, current and resistance for circuit data. Throughout the school the pupils make good use of graphs and charts. Some of the middle and lower ability pupils struggle with the application of mathematical principles to

science. The majority of pupils produce good quality written work. Pupils are satisfactorily learning scientific vocabulary. The application of ICT to science has improved since the last inspection and the department now makes a satisfactory contribution to the teaching of ICT. Specific learning targets for aspects of ICT in each year group, however, are not formally agreed and assessed and there is an inconsistency in the approaches of teachers.

136. Overall the teaching of science is good, particularly in Years 9 to 11 and thus has a positive impact on the pupils' learning. Lessons are well planned and prepared. The teachers' subject knowledge is very good and they have a good knowledge of examination requirements. In the majority of lessons they give clear expositions, engage pupils' attention and enable them quickly to gain knowledge and understanding. Many of the teachers skilfully question pupils, enabling them to think through ideas for themselves. The teachers have good routines for revising previous work at the beginning of lessons, and summarising key points at the end. These strategies lead to effective reinforcement and consolidation of learning. In the best lessons the teachers show enthusiasm and provide challenging tasks; the pupils work with keen interest and often at a good pace. Unsatisfactory aspects of some teaching include not always matching the tasks to the pupils' capabilities in Year 7, and insufficient focus on the main objectives of lessons. Good features of the teaching of lower attaining pupils include a patient approach; the use of tried and tested routines; and a good variety of activities to maintain pupils' concentration. In a small minority of lessons with less able pupils there was insufficient motivation and progress was slow.

137. The head of department is providing sound overall leadership. Action taken by the co-ordinators for Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 is having a positive impact on both teaching and standards. For example, they set targets for individual pupils based on past performance. They monitor the pupils' progress, identify under-achievers, and intervene appropriately. They ensure that the assessment data of particular classes is shared amongst the teachers who teach them, so that all the teachers can monitor progress. During 2000-2001, the department made a good recovery from the disappointing examination results of 2000. Very good strategies to improve standards were put in place, including the involvement of the senior management team in monitoring progress. Since the last inspection substantial improvements have been made to the accommodation. Resources, which were judged to be inadequate in the last inspection, are now adequate.

ART AND DESIGN

Overall, the quality of provision in art and design is **sound**.

Strengths

- Standards have risen significantly at GCSE since the last inspection. Pupils make good progress in Years 10 and 11.
- The teaching in Years 10 and 11 is good.
- Effective use is made of assessment to identify pupils' individual strengths and to plan future learning in Years 10 and 11.

Areas for improvement

- There is too great a variation in the quality of teaching, planning and assessment.
- The provision of opportunities for the pupils to use information technology.

138. The pupils enter in Year 7 with average drawing skills. The more able pupils are already confident in their ability to record accurately from observation but many find difficulty when asked to draw a basic arrangement of a group of still-life objects. By the end of Year 9

most attain standards in line with those expected of pupils of their age, although some attain higher standards, particularly in their three-dimensional work.

139. Overall, in Years 7 to 9, most pupils make at least sound progress. However, some make good progress in all aspects of their work. For example, they produce lively self-portraits in Year 7, which demonstrate their growing ability to paint, and produce very subtle compositions based on their study of Cubism in Year 8. They also make good progress in learning to model and carve in clay making lively figurative compositions of people in motion. They have good opportunities to develop their art appreciation skills and in Year 8 some pupils have produced high quality newspaper articles describing what they think of Cubism, writing under such headings as; "Is Cubism the new thing?" and "It's just a big mess!"

140. The teaching is sound in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11, where the pupils make most progress. The pace of the lessons is brisk, the tasks challenging, the expertise of the teacher apparent and the relationship between the teacher and the pupils very good. In the best lessons, the teacher has high expectations of the pupils, both in the quality of the work they are expected to produce and of their behaviour in the classroom.

141. Not all of the teaching is of this standard however and in some lessons there are weaknesses. In particular the management of the pupils in the classroom is, at times, unsatisfactory. For example, the pupils are allowed to sit on overcrowded tables when other tables are empty, or materials are not effectively controlled when handed out. In these lessons the purpose of the task is often not made clear to the pupils and as a result they become confused and lose interest. Technical skills are not well taught and the teacher's expectations of what the pupils should achieve insufficiently demanding. As a result pupils in these lessons do not make sufficient progress.

142. There has been a significant improvement in standards at GCSE since the last inspection. In Years 10 and 11 the number of pupils choosing to continue their art studies has risen and there has been a significant rise year-on-year in the percentage of pupils gaining A* - C at GCSE. Results are now above average, as are the standards being attained by the pupils currently in Year 11. The pupils are making good progress; they are achieving well in relation to their prior attainment. This is because effective assessment strategies have been introduced which enable teachers to pinpoint with pupils both their strengths and weaknesses. In order to give pupils the very best chance of attaining at least Grade C at GCSE a good range of courses and examinations are offered to meet the pupils' individual needs including three-dimensional studies and graphic design as well as general art and design. Consequently more pupils, especially boys, opt to take art, and more are gaining the required standard.

143. In Years 10 and 11 the teaching is good. Some is very good and it is never less than sound. In the best teaching, challenging projects and homework tasks are set that capture the pupils' imagination and enthusiasm. For example, the pupils are required to make a face out of a shoe, to write a description of how it feels to walk into a surrealist painting or to undertake a series of drawings exploring line and tone. In lessons the teaching is brisk – the teacher sets demanding practical tasks, and expects the pupils to complete projects in double-quick time. They regularly receive high quality individual attention as they proceed and they are never left in doubt as to what they need to do to improve. However, not all of the teaching is of this standard. In other lessons the pace is slower and pupils are allowed too long to complete sketches prior to starting a painting. They are not given sufficient advice as to what they need to do to improve. As a result, a few less motivated pupils fall behind with their work.

144. As at the time of the last inspection the department does not have sufficient technician support and there are few computers within the department, in particular to support those pupils following the graphic design course.

145. The leadership and management of the department are sound. A weakness, however, is the inconsistency in planning and assessment and in some of the teaching. This is not being addressed sufficiently in the monitoring activity. Strengths include the planning and use of resources and the overall action taken by the school's management to improve standards.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- The high standards achieved, particularly in Years 10 and 11.
- The expertise of the teachers and the high expectations they have of their pupils.
- Very good leadership.
- The teamwork of staff who provide a very good range of experiences for the pupils.

Areas for improvement

- Graphical and modelling skills to support the generation and development of design ideas.
- The attainment of some of the more able pupils in Years 8 and 9.

146. By the end of Year 9, the pupils achieve standards that are above average. They enter the school with average standards overall and make good progress over the three years. Pupils of all capabilities, including those with special educational needs generally make good progress. However, in some lessons the most able do not all reach the high levels of achievement of which they are capable. The pupils achieve equally well in a whole range of materials used. Their knowledge and ability to manufacture products is good and they use computers well to design and realise their ideas in graphical and constructional materials. They also have good understanding of mechanical, electrical and electronic control, and make systems that work well. The pupils organise their work well and have a good understanding of safety issues, which they apply successfully. They show care and good standards of presentation in their design work. However, the quality of the pupils' design work is often reduced by a weakness in using simple drawing and modelling techniques to generate, explore and develop ideas quickly.

147. By the end of Year 11, the pupils achieve standards that are well above average and they make very good progress over the key stage. The number gaining GCSE grades A* to C in 2000 was 61 per cent compared with the national average of 51 per cent, but rose significantly to 71 per cent in 2001. This was even higher than the very good results achieved in 1999. Pupils do better in design and technology than in most of their other subjects and for the boys, it is often their best subject. There is now no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls. Standards have improved significantly since the last inspection when they were above average overall. Standards are now consistently high in all areas, particularly in construction. Here, pupils on average achieved nearly a grade higher than in their other subjects. Nearly all pupils complete a GCSE in the subject compared to only 75 per cent nationally.

148. The quality of teaching and its impact on the pupils' learning is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. The pupils in Years 10 and 11 benefit particularly from good, regular feedback on what they have achieved and receive very good guidance on what

more they can do to improve. The teachers have very good knowledge and understanding of the subject. They provide challenging activities, which build well on the pupils' previous experience. Lessons have good pace with quick, efficient starts. Also, the teachers explain well what pupils will do and should achieve by the end of the lesson. They motivate the pupils well though early opportunities for practical activities. The teachers are well skilled in asking effective questions to check and extend the pupils' understanding, both in the course of and at the end of lessons. In the best teaching the teachers plan their lessons well and use a stimulating range of resources. They create a calm, industrious working environment. Their practical demonstrations and explanations are particularly good and the high expectations and enthusiasm they engender support the very good levels of achievement in the subject. The pupils are confident, clearly enjoy their work and are motivated by their success. Consequently, their behaviour and attitudes to work are consistently good. They talk freely about why they enjoy the subject and what they have recently learned. For example, two Year 7 pupils in their first practical food lesson since joining the school could not contain their pleasure at what they had achieved. In particular, they highlighted the confidence they had gained in carrying out practical tasks that were completely new to them. The teachers also provide good support for the development of the pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. It is common practice with the younger children to focus on specialist vocabulary and read new information together. In one good instance, the teacher of a Year 8 class highlighted essential words and phrases on the white-board and used them as a focus to explore previous learning and explain new knowledge and understanding for the lesson. The teachers also provide good opportunities for the pupils to apply and develop numeracy skills. For example, Year 7 pupils used their knowledge of place value well to work out the value of resistors in electronics.

149. The head of department provides very good leadership. The staff work well as a team to share expertise and develop new teaching materials and approaches together. There is a very good, clear educational direction for the subject. Also, the common desire amongst teachers to improve standards and opportunities constantly is central to the success of the subject. Procedures for the assessment and marking of the pupils' work are good and are used well to raise standards. Very good use is made of the resources available, though the lack of modern computers and equipment results in low standards of computer control. Accommodation is good overall, despite insufficient storage. There are two health and safety issues that need to be addressed. The timber preparation area is cluttered and unsafe and not all members of staff have full safety certification.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Mostly specialist teaching which adds to pupils' knowledge and understanding of the subject.
- Good preparation for fieldwork, coursework and examinations at Key Stage 4.
- Good knowledge of pupils and their potential.

Areas for improvement

- Develop further the use of ICT for all pupils in Years 7 to 9.

150. Results at GCSE are above average, considerably so in 2001. Over one quarter of pupils entered in 2001 attained either A or A*. Girls performed much better in the 2000 exam; in 2001 there was no significant difference. These results represent good achievement for all pupils, including the more able pupils and those with special educational needs. This

represents good progress since the last inspection. The pupils perform well in coursework and fieldwork as well as in the final examinations. This is due in large part to the preparation and individual support they receive during Years 10 and 11. In the present Year 11 the pupils are attaining above average standards in their level of geographical knowledge and understanding and have made good progress. The more able write extended explanations of geographical terms and explain the patterns of land use in a city. Average pupils describe the factors affecting the location of settlements and the less able can give local examples of settlement land use. Work completed by the present Year 11 for their GCSE portfolios indicates that the less able can recall basic information about a place and can make simple statements about human processes such as population growth. More able pupils on the other hand, can both describe and explain physical and human patterns and processes, for example.

151. By the end of Year 9, standards are equally above average, with many pupils reaching levels 6 and 7. Many carry out independent research using a good range of geographical skills. They are capable of drawing conclusions based on the evidence provided and presenting their findings using a range of different techniques. In one lesson more able Year 9 pupils were writing very thoughtful answers about stereotypical images of the United Kingdom and Africa. Standards are also good in Year 8 at this stage of the year. Pupils are making good progress in learning mapwork skills in Year 7 and understanding environmental pollution in Year 8. Overall, their achievement is good.

152. The teaching in geography is good. Specialist teaching in Years 10 and 11 ensures a good level of understanding and knowledge. Thorough preparation for fieldwork, coursework and developing examination technique has resulted in pupils achieving good grades at GCSE. The teachers give very good individual feedback to pupils on the ways to improve their work. Lessons at all levels are carefully planned and structured with a good variety of activities. The level of questioning is sound in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11, where it encourages pupils to explain their answers in more depth. In one good GCSE lesson the teacher used the pupils' own knowledge of settlements to develop their understanding of the use of land in urban areas. In the good Year 8 lessons the teachers made good use of video and outside speakers to engage the pupils' interest. The pupils subsequently responded well to questions about environmental issues. Support for lower attaining pupils was particularly good in one Year 11 lesson, but occasionally there is a lack of suitable alternative activities for some lower attaining pupils.

153. The good teaching has a positive impact on the pupils' progress and on their response in lessons. Most are attentive when teachers are talking and concentrate well when they are set work, though a minority of older pupils sometimes find this difficult. Most respond well to questions and are willing to ask questions. Many can discuss issues and events sensibly and give their own views and opinions.

154. The head of department provides good leadership. The teachers work well as a team. Planning of work is regularly reviewed and the analysis of results is improving. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) is developing, though not in all classes in Years 7 to 9.

HISTORY

The quality of provision in history is **good**.

Strengths

- The pupils have good factual knowledge and understanding, particularly in Years 9 to 11.
- The overall quality of the teaching is now good.
- The new head of department is providing good leadership.

Areas for improvement

- Effective use of information technology.
- The pupils' ability to handle historical sources.
- The improvement of results in GCSE.

155. The pupils' performance at GCSE over the past three years has varied. In 2000 66 per cent of the pupils entered gained A* to C grades. This was above the national average and represented a steady improvement from 1999. However, in 2001 the results fell to below average with only 48 per cent gaining A* to C grades. This fall is explained by a number of factors, the most significant of which were:

- staffing changes and some inexperienced teaching of GCSE;
- weaknesses in the pupils' ability to handle historical sources;
- weaknesses in the management of the change in examination syllabus.

156. These are now being addressed through the development of a scheme of work for GCSE and an explicit focus upon the syllabus requirements by teachers in the department.

157. Observation of lessons and the scrutiny of students' work confirm that the standards of the pupils currently in Year 11 are broadly average and that they have made sound progress. Those with special educational needs in the certificate of achievement group are making good progress. What all pupils can do well is to describe historical events such as the reasons why individual Germans voted for Hitler and the Nazi party in 1932. Middle and higher ability pupils are able to analyse and then explain complex historical trends such as the impact of events such as the First World War and the Depression on the role of women. The area of weakness for all pupils is in their ability to handle sources. For weaker pupils an additional area of weakness is in their recall of factual knowledge.

158. The standards of work achieved by the pupils in Year 9 are in line with national expectations. Given their below average attainment on entry, in particular the lack of depth to their historical knowledge, they are all making good progress during their three years in the school, including those pupils with special educational needs. Their progress is slow at the beginning of Year 7 but then speeds up and is particularly good in Year 9. They produce good extended writing when given opportunities such as writing a letter from Henry VIII to Archbishop Cranmer explaining why he wanted to dissolve the monasteries. They demonstrate good factual knowledge and understanding, particularly by Year 9, and can give accurate descriptions of features of past societies such as the workings of the nineteenth century cotton industry. Their understanding of interpretations of history and of the use of sources is weaker. They are all developing a sound understanding of the sequence of past events.

159. The quality of teaching and its impact on the pupils' learning in history is good. The teachers create good relationships with their classes. As a result, most pupils in all classes are willing to answer questions and to offer their own ideas. The teachers' questioning, both

orally and in writing, is particularly skilful. For example, Year 7 pupils were challenged through detailed questioning to explain the evidence on which their conclusions were based and this forced them to check back. Year 9 pupils were challenged by the teacher's questions to focus on the detail of two contemporary engravings of nineteenth century cotton factories. This helped them to pay attention to the detail and go beyond their first impressions. Planning is a strong feature both of individual lessons and of a series of lessons. Year 8 pupils were able to demonstrate their good understanding of Henry VIII's problems because the previous series of lessons had built their knowledge up step by step. The relative weakness in the teaching is where the teachers' explanation is too long and where the marking gives the pupils gives insufficient information on what they need to do to improve.

160. The leadership being provided by the new head of department is good. He has begun to monitor the teaching formally. Resources are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 with a suitably wide selection of textbooks. However, in Years 10 to 11 there are insufficient textbooks for each pupil to have his/her own copy. Little use is currently made of information and communication technology. There have been a number of improvements since the last inspection. There is now a strong team of specialist historians who are beginning to work together effectively as a team in very good accommodation. Improvement since the last inspection has been sound.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY [ICT]

The quality of provision in ICT is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- The pupils' attainment in research skills and in exchanging and sharing information;
- The teaching of key skills in Year 10.
- Good quality resources and accommodation.

Areas for improvement

- Opportunities for all pupils to use ICT to measure, record and control events.
- Ensuring more consistent opportunities for the pupils to use ICT in other subjects.
- Establishing procedures for reliable assessment of the pupils' work in ICT in other subjects.

161. At the end of Year 9, standards in ICT are above average. The level of the pupils' research skills and their knowledge of the processes of exchanging and sharing information are well above average. Their use of systems to control events is average but their use of systems to sense data is below average. Pupils enter the school with good levels of competence in ICT. They make steady progress overall so that by the age of 14, their achievement is broadly satisfactory. Typically, Year 7 pupils can combine text with graphics from clipart or from the Internet. By Year 8, they can identify key words to use in Internet research, select a suitable search tool and use discretion to locate relevant further information on websites. Having found suitable material, they can copy both text and graphics to edit and incorporate into their own documents. For example, in one lesson, pupils used their reading of newspaper articles in the library to guide their Internet research on animal cloning. By the end of Year 9 pupils can structure information, refine it carefully and present it in polished form. For example, working from a brief to design publicity material for a hotel, some pupils prepared high quality presentations that incorporated animated text and graphics appropriate for a sophisticated adult audience.

162. By the end of Year 11, pupils attain above average standards in most aspects of ICT. However, their use of computer control systems and data sensing is below average. On

balance however, their achievement is satisfactory. In Year 10, all pupils follow a nationally accredited key skills course that allows them to build on their earlier achievements in ICT. During Year 11 some make further progress by, for example, learning to resolve differences in format in order to copy text from a document to a database. Pupils increasingly put their ICT skills to good use in English and design and technology. They use sort or search functions in a database, to find records quickly corresponding to specified conditions, for example to identify foods with certain nutritional characteristics in science. In the other subjects opportunities are limited by the extent of individual teacher's expertise.

163. Pupils with special educational needs and those who find learning difficult make good progress in ICT and achieve well. Differences between attainment of boys and girls recorded in teachers' assessments in recent years do not follow a consistent pattern and no evidence of differences in their attainment is evident in current work. Gifted and talented pupils are not routinely identified; some of the most capable pupils have extra challenge provided by their teachers but others are held back by tasks that they find easy.

164. In those subjects where specific ICT skills are taught, such as data logging in science, the pupils' experience is too dependent on the individual expertise and interests of teachers. For instance, some pupils learn to measure physical phenomena using sensors linked to graphical calculators in science as but this experience is not common.

165. Throughout the school, the teaching is satisfactory. It is good in Year 10 and accounts for the rapid progress made by pupils in key skills and their subsequent successes in accreditation. Strengths in teaching include very good subject knowledge and good planning. When teachers have very clearly defined objectives for the pupils' learning and they convey these to pupils, the pupils focus their attention on the central purposes of the lesson and make good progress. For example, in a Year 7 lesson, the teacher regularly drew the pupils' attention to the aims, clearly recorded on the board, so that they concentrated on mastering conventions of lay-out whilst learning how to re-size images embedded in text. However, the teachers generally do not tell pupils how their work relates to levels of attainment and so pupils do not always know how they can effectively attain higher levels.

166. Opportunities to use ICT across the curriculum are still patchy: not all pupils currently enjoy equal standards of provision due to the inconsistency with which departments teach those aspects for which they are responsible. In Years 10 and 11, requirements are not met, as all pupils do not learn to use computers to control external events. Currently, assessments are based on those aspects of ICT that are taught by subject specialists, no account being taken of pupils' achievements in other subjects, especially those that are the medium for teaching sensing and control.

167. The schools' arrangements for the management of the subject are broadly satisfactory; some aspects are strong whilst others are weak. For example, since the time of the last inspection, the provision for ICT in Year 10 and the quality of resources and accommodation have been much improved. Good use has been made of special funds for the training of teachers. However, mainly due to staffing difficulties that have now been resolved, monitoring, evaluation and review activities have been insufficient to identify and address specific weaknesses. For example there has been little co-ordination of the teaching of ICT in other subjects, assessment procedures continue to be unreliable and statutory requirements are not fully met.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

The overall quality of the provision for modern foreign languages is **unsatisfactory**.

Strengths

- There is some excellent and some very good teaching in a minority of lessons.
- The reading skills of many of the pupils.
- Targeting pupils and giving extra lessons helped to raise GCSE results in 2001.

Areas for improvement

- By Year 11 most pupils make better progress in their other subjects.
- The work on improving the teaching has not focused clearly enough on improving the pupils' learning.
- In many lessons the teachers do not expect the pupils to learn enough.
- In many lessons pupils do not have enough opportunities to practise speaking.
- The leadership of the subject, especially clear direction of what the pupils should be expected to attain.

168. The GCSE results in German, the language studied by most of the pupils for five years, have been broadly average. The exception to this was in 2000 when they fell markedly before rising again to broadly average in 2001. In 2000, boys' performance was well below the national average for boys. Results in French, which is only taken by a very small group of more able pupils, are above the national average. Overall, the results in both languages are not as high as they should be, given the ability of the pupils, their results in their other subjects and despite the improvement in German in 2001. Standards are not as good as they were at the time of the last inspection; improvement since then has not been satisfactory.

169. In Years 10 and 11, there is a considerable amount of underachievement in both languages. With several notable exceptions the teachers generally do not expect high enough standards. As a result, too many pupils are working at a low level in class, for example giving single word answers. The work in one Year 11 lesson on describing the weather was very similar to work in Year 7 and Year 9. By the end of Year 8, many pupils have learnt to express ideas in the past, achieving at least a level above the national average. However, their progress then slows considerably when they are set much simpler work in Year 9. By the end of Year 9, standards are in line with the national expectation but no more than that. The achievement of the most able pupils in all years is not as good as it should be. Most pupils with special educational needs make sound progress.

170. The strongest feature of most pupils' work is reading comprehension. This is mainly because their English literacy skills and knowledge are good. For example in a Year 10 French lesson, the pupils confidently worked out the meanings of a number of adjectives because they looked like words that they knew in English. From Year 7 up to Year 11 the pupils' attainment is weakest in speaking. Again, with some notable exceptions they have too few opportunities to practise speaking in lessons. Too often they read aloud from a script rather than speak from memory. There is not enough advice on improving pronunciation. Most pupils do not learn enough about grammar to be able to express their own ideas in the foreign language.

171. Most of the teaching in Years 7 to 9 is sound. In Years 10 and 11, too much is unsatisfactory, though some is good or excellent. Overall, there are too many lessons where the pupils do not understand the purpose of the work set. Where the pupils do not learn enough, they become disaffected and difficult to manage. Some feel that learning a language

is a waste of time. In the current Year 10, approximately one quarter of all the pupils are no longer studying a language.

172. Expectations are not high enough. As a result the pupils are insufficiently challenged by the activities, they make little intellectual effort and work at a slow pace. In the minority of lessons where the learning is very good or excellent, the teaching is lively and challenging: the pupils enjoy being made to work and think hard. They are happy for the teacher to tell them where they are going wrong, so that they can improve their performance. In an excellent Year 11 lesson, pupils in a lower set were able to perform at a level higher than the upper set, because the teacher's interesting, well-planned activities helped them to produce more complex language with confidence. These pupils were keen to tell the inspector how much more they had learnt this term, compared to last year. Some, but by no means all of the weaknesses, are explained by the difficulty in making a temporary appointment to cover maternity leave.

173. There are weaknesses in the leadership of the department. The analysis of how well the pupils are doing (or otherwise) is not rigorous enough. Assessment is not used effectively to identify strengths and weaknesses in the pupils' learning. Work on improving teaching, although containing sound features, is not focused clearly enough on improving the quality of the pupils' learning or on their attainment in class. Where both of these are very good, this is the result of talented teaching by individual members of the department. Overall, a stronger lead is needed on what pupils at different stages should be expected to be achieving. Examples of more effective recent management include the targeting of pupils in last year's Year 11 and the provision of extra revision classes and resources to help improve examination grades.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- The results at GCSE and the increasing number of pupils opting for music in Years 10 and 11.
- The teaching is good.
- The instrumental teaching and the range of ensemble activities that enrich the curriculum.
- The pupils' very positive attitudes to their work in music.

Areas for improvement

- The pupils' ability to evaluate music by other composers and by one another.
- The use of assessment in Years 7 to 9 to plan future work for classes and for individual pupils.

174. The standards that the pupils attain at the end of Year 9 are in line with national expectations. Four of every five pupils reach or exceed Level 5, which is the level that the majority should achieve. Last year, all GCSE pupils achieved A*-C grades, including one pupil who was amongst the top five results in the country.

175. The work observed in lessons in Years 7 to 9 was mainly at an exploratory stage and often at a simple technical level, such as percussion pieces using basic musical elements. Other work - completed compositions and performances available on disk - indicates that standards overall are satisfactory and are consistent with the published assessments. The one weakness in the pupils' attainment in Years 7 to 9 is their ability to appraise music. This is because this still is less well taught. As a result, the pupils' descriptions and evaluations of

music by other composers or themselves are at too superficial a level. When the pupils enter the school, their musical skills and experience are, on average, a little below the expectation for pupils of that age. However, good teaching enables most to achieve well and to reach the levels expected by the end of Year 9. Pupils with special educational needs make sound progress in Years 7 to 9.

176. Although the rapid increase in the subject's popularity in Years 10 and 11 is likely to be accompanied by a wider range of results, the standards of the pupils currently in Year 11 are above average, including examples of technically competent and well refined pieces. These pupils are achieving well.

177. About 10 per cent of pupils [just above the national average] receive instrumental teaching. The good quality of this teaching complements the good range of activities, such as the well-run choirs, steel band and rock groups, that are a feature of the school. Talented pupils perform well in Years 10 and 11.

178. Pupils in all classes make good progress because they behave very well, appreciate one another's work and are well motivated by the music studied and the style of teaching. However, some pupils, when working in groups, lack sufficient, specific guidance on how to refine ideas, how to set short-term goals and how to negotiate and rehearse together.

179. The teaching is good overall and pupils learn well as a result. Their interest in the subject is encouraged by the teachers' own enthusiasm, the firm but positive way that lessons are organised and the good relationships both between pupils and between pupils and teachers that are a strong feature of the department. The teachers have good subject knowledge and skills so that they can respond precisely to the pupils' needs to ensure that they work at a good pace. Examples were seen in Year 7 lessons when pupils were beginning to understand rhythmic patterns and notations and when small groups were developing short compositions in response to a picture stimulus, as well as in exam groups.

180. In some lessons, however, more musically able pupils are not given sufficiently demanding work, such as in an otherwise very good Year 9 lesson where all of the parts in a short, sound-track performance were of similar, modest difficulty. In other cases, the learning is hampered when pupils are not sufficiently clear about their task and the specific techniques or targets that they are required to reach. For example, in developing keyboard variations on a familiar tune, some Year 8 pupils would have been clearer about what they should do if models had been demonstrated before they began. More explicit explanation of the standards they should reach would also have given individual pupils a better understanding of their goals. In Years 7 to 9, assessment of the pupils' work is a weakness.

181. The recently appointed head of department is providing good leadership, he is taking appropriate steps to improve assessment procedures and the use of assessment. Overall improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Resources are adequate overall: there is good provision of electronic keyboards though access to computers is limited.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Good teaching which results in good learning.
- The wide range of extra-curricular sporting activities, which have a good take-up.
- Very good facilities.

Areas for improvement

- Monitoring of teaching to ensure the consistent application of good practice
- Further raising of standards by the end of Year 9 and in GCSE.

182. The teachers' assessments of pupils in Year 9 in 2001 show that attainment at Level 5 or above was slightly below expectations, particularly for a substantial proportion of girls. The standards of the current pupils in Years 7 to 9 in performance, knowledge and understanding are in line with the expectations of similarly aged pupils nationally. This represents good achievement for pupils of all levels of ability, including the most able and those with special educational needs, since the majority of pupils enter the school at the age of eleven with standards at or just below expectations.

183. The percentage of pupils gaining a grade A*-C in the 2000 GCSE examination was close to the national average. The trend in results over the previous three years has been one of gradual improvement, although the performance of boys and girls relative to each other has been variable. The pupils following the GCSE course achieve standards that are in line with national expectations in practical ability and theoretical understanding. This represents sound achievement for pupils of all levels of ability, including the most able and those with special educational needs, in terms of their prior attainment at the age of fourteen. However, the capacity of some lower-achieving boys to demonstrate their understanding of theory is sometimes restricted by poor writing and verbal skills.

184. Pupils in Year 7 make good gains in learning the basics of safe and effective tackling in rugby, and the basics of effective stickhandling in hockey. In Year 8 basketball, most pupils make good progress in learning how to execute an effective lay-up shot whilst consolidating basic handling and passing skills. Lower-attainers find it difficult to sustain these skills in a competitive game. Year 8 girls make good progress in learning how to shadow and intercept a pass in netball.

185. In a core physical education lesson in Year 10 the pupils made very good progress in developing the ability and confidence to construct synchronised swimming routines. Pupils on the GCSE course in Years 10 and 11 make good gains in their understanding of the structure of the human body and the relationship between exercise and health. They also learn how to translate this knowledge into practice by designing fitness circuits. They develop a good ability to analyse and evaluate one another's skills and tactical awareness, as seen for example in a Year 10 hockey lesson.

186. The overall quality of teaching is good. The teachers in all year groups are particularly effective in using questioning to reinforce and extend understanding, as seen for example in a GCSE theory lesson in which the teacher skilfully developed the pupils' awareness of the principles of effective fitness training. The teachers manage classes well and work through brisk practices which ensure a good rate of effort by pupils, and which result in good or very good learning. This was evident for example in a rugby lesson for Year 7 pupils in which a skilful combination of explanation and demonstrations helped give pupils the confidence to

tackle effectively. The teachers also give good feedback to individual pupils so that they know how well they are doing and how they can improve further, as in a GCSE theory lesson in which pupils were examining different body types. The teachers' expectations are suitably challenging, and they give pupils responsibility to further their own learning, so that higher achievers in particular make good progress. This was very evident when pupils were encouraged to develop their own paired routines in synchronised swimming. The pupils' attitudes are good in most lessons, and their motivation contributes to the good pace of learning.

187. Where aspects of teaching are less effective in otherwise satisfactory or good lessons, the teacher's explanations are overlong and restrict the pace of learning. Occasionally there is insufficient reinforcement of rules, for example in what constitutes a foul in ball games.

188. The department has overcome recent staffing difficulties and under the good leadership of the head of department, the teachers are implementing a new assessment system designed to assist individual target setting and improve standards. The school has very good accommodation, and the use of the sports hall in particular has a positive effect upon standards. There is a good range of extra-curricular sport and the rate of the pupils' participation is high. Many pupils do well in competitions within and outside the county. Talented pupils perform well.

189. Pupils' progress is now better and more consistent overall than when the school was last inspected. The teaching has improved, curriculum imbalances have been rectified, assessment and working relationships are now better. There has been good progress overall since the previous inspection.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Provision for religious education (RE) is **good**.

Strengths

- Standards by the end of Year 9 and 11.
- Well above average results in the full GCSE course.
- The teaching is good.
- The subject is well led and managed.

Areas for improvement

- Ensure that the more able pupils are always sufficiently challenged in lessons.

190. By the end of Year 9, standards are above the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus and achievement is good. The pupils make good gains in their knowledge and understanding of Christianity and the other principal religions studied. They clearly recall key beliefs and practices and are skilful in linking their own ideas and experiences to important religious beliefs and teachings. In an imaginative Year 7 lesson the pupils were able to effectively link environmental issues with Christian beliefs on creation and human responsibility. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress through effective teaching, good support from classroom assistants and resources which are well matched to their learning needs. There are occasions, however, when the most able pupils are not sufficiently challenged. In a Year 8 lesson more able pupils relied on a word search activity rather than being challenged to develop their skills of interpretation.

191. Although small in number all pupils in the last three years who have entered the full GCSE course have achieved grade C and above, which is well above average and an outstanding achievement. This is largely due to good quality teaching and to the skill, enthusiasm and dedication of the head of department who provides well planned and effectively taught lunchtime support sessions for pupils.

192. Within the GCSE RE short course standards are above average overall and the pupils' achievement is good. Results dipped in 2001 from previous years but the quality of learning observed, particularly the focused, skilful teaching, the positive relationships and very good attitudes to learning should ensure standards should continue to rise. The knowledge, understanding and evaluative skills shown by the pupils are consistently good. Through imaginative teaching and enjoyable learning most pupils can effectively apply key religious beliefs and teachings and apply them to a range of moral and social issues. In a creative Year 10 lesson the pupils were able to identify through music and effective group work the four different types of love and apply them to moral and social concerns.

193. In all the years, the pupils show good attitudes to their work and concentrate very well. The purposeful relationships evident in many lessons enable the pupils to share their views openly and without embarrassment. The teachers' high expectations of the pupils' behaviour lead to good attitudes to learning. Only very occasionally do pupils not sustain interest and concentration.

194. The quality of teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. This represents good improvement since the previous inspection. No teaching was less than satisfactory. The teachers are skilful in their use of questions, show confidence in subject knowledge and use a wide range of teaching strategies to stimulate the pupils' learning. In a Year 11 lesson on Judaism the imaginative learning activities enabled the pupils to develop their understanding of Jewish laws and apply them to moral and social issues. Very occasionally the whole class introduction part of a lesson is too long leading to a small minority of pupils losing concentration.

195. The head of department provides good leadership and management. This, together with a number of other features, has a positive impact on the pupils' learning. Resources are very good and the assessment of the pupils' learning is good. Effective use is made of the locally agreed syllabus criteria to assess pupils' standards and give guidance as to how pupils might make further progress. The subject makes an important contribution to the school's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its pupils. It also makes a good contribution to the development of the pupils' skills in reading and writing. Areas of concern identified in the previous report (a minority of pupils behaving poorly, occasional unsatisfactory teaching) have been effectively dealt with. The one weakness is that at present there are few boys taking the full GCSE course.

OTHER SUBJECTS IN YEARS 10 AND 11

196. Work was sampled in two subjects: drama and business studies.

Business studies

197. Results in business studies GCSE in 2001 were very good. Seventy-four per cent of pupils achieved the higher grades A*-C and there was a 100 per cent overall pass rate.

198. The teaching is very good. Good planning, high expectations and the creative use of resources ensure effective learning and a high level of pupil involvement.

Drama

199. Provision in drama is good. GCSE results are above average. Results in 2001 were exceptionally good. It is a popular subject in Years 10 and 11.

200. The pupils develop a good understanding of drama conventions. Less academic pupils are helped to achieve well. For example, in a lesson in Year 10, boys with special educational needs achieved very well because drama allows them to express their ideas and imaginations physically, co-operatively and enthusiastically. All the pupils keep useful logbooks as a reference point for their plans, progress and reflections.

201. The teaching is good. Key words are displayed on the walls and referred to by the teachers to clarify tasks. The teachers praise the pupils' achievements well, but could give more specific feedback, referring to lesson objectives and inviting the pupils to do likewise. The pupils work well together, showing high levels of concentration. They clearly enjoy their learning through drama, and have an impressive trust and confidence in their teachers.

202. The leadership and management of drama are good. The teachers work well together, sharing approaches and skills.

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

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2001. The figures in brackets give the school's results in 2000 and the national results in 2000. (*At the time of publication, national figures for 2001 were not available – indicated by * below*).

GCE AS-level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Biology	24	96	*	42	*	5.6	*
Business	18	100	*	78	*	7.8	*
Health and Social Care	16	50	*	0	*	1.5	*
Geography	26	96	*	35	*	5.3	*
History	22	100	*	14	*	4.9	*
Religious Education	3	66	*	66	*	5.3	*
English	25	100	*	44	*	6.5	*
French	7	100	*	0	*	4.6	*

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	22 [17]	100 [88]	* [89]	18 [24]	* [45]	5.2 [4.4]	* [6.0]
Biology	15 [13]	93 [100]	* [88]	53 [38]	* [34]	5.7 [5.4]	* [5.3]
Business Studies	12 [9]	100 [100]	* [91]	58 [56]	* [30]	7.4 [7.1]	* [5.3]
Geography	16 [15]	94 [93]	* [92]	44 [27]	* [37]	5.5 [5.6]	* [5.7]
History	9 [8]	89 [50]	* [89]	44 [25]	* [34]	5.8 [3.3]	* [5.4]
English	19 [16]	95 [88]	* [96]	47 [25]	* [36]	6.2 [3.9]	* [5.9]
French	There	were	no	entries	in	2001	.
Religious Education	6 [5]	83 [100]	* [91]	0 [40]	* [35]	5.0 [6.0]	* [5.8]

Intermediate vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		Average point distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Health and Social Care	7 [6]	86 [100]	* [81]	29 [50]	* [37]	0 [50]	* [30]

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

203. The focus was on mathematics and biology, but chemistry and physics were also sampled.

204. In 2000, the A-level results in chemistry were in line with the national average. In 2001 the results were below those predicted from GCSE results. The AS-level results in 2001 were below the grades predicted from the students' GCSE results. In the one lesson seen, the teaching was good. The teacher had good subject knowledge, gave clear explanations and asked searching questions about the results the students had obtained in a practical investigation. The students gained a good basic knowledge about the properties of aliphatic and aromatic amines, and the reasons for the differences between them.

205. In 2000, the A-level examination results in physics were in line with the national average. In 2001 the results were above those predicted from the students' GCSE results. The teaching in the one lesson seen was very good. The teacher had very good subject knowledge and an enthusiastic approach. The students were stimulated to work at a very good pace and they gained a good understanding of the complex concepts involved.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Standards are improving.
- The teachers' very good subject knowledge.
- The positive relations between teachers and students.

Areas for improvement

- Arrangements for students who did not take GCSE at higher level to enable them to catch up with the others.
- Better use of assessment data to set more challenging targets for the students.
- Encouraging the students to increase their independent study and research outside lessons.

206. The A-level results in 2000 were below the national average with 88 per cent of the students achieving a pass grade and 24 per cent achieving the higher A and B grades. The 2001 results show improvement on these figures. The performance of boys is better than that of girls. Overall, the students did no better or worse in mathematics than in their other subjects. The students' results have been in line with those predicted from their GCSE performance. Their achievement has therefore been satisfactory. However, more recent work is better as a result of the teachers' better understanding of the A-level examination requirements.

207. On the basis of the students' work and the lessons observed, standards being attained in Year 13 are broadly average. This is so in pure mathematics, statistics, mechanics and decision mathematics. The students can simplify surds, factorise quadratic equations and use radians to calculate arc lengths and sector areas. In statistics, they have a good understanding of correlation and show increasing confidence in using the normal distribution while in mechanics they use vectors and can resolve forces. In a lesson on discrete mathematics, Year 12 students confidently use sorting algorithms such as bubble

sort, quick sort and bin packing and make very good use of a local map to find the spanning tree for a journey around the locality. However, the students' basic numeracy skills are relatively weak. As a result they have difficulty working with fractions for special angles and use a calculator to convert fractions to decimals and work out $2 \div 8$. A number of students, especially those who followed the GCSE mathematics course at the intermediate level, have struggled to cope with the demands of advanced work.

208. Teaching and learning in the Sixth Form are good. Lessons get off to a quick start and the teachers demonstrate very good subject knowledge; they give confident clear explanation of key facts. Lesson objectives are shared with students so that they have a good idea of the format and composition of the lesson. The teachers enjoy positive relationships with classes and most lessons contain some element of challenge. For example, in a Year 13 lesson students were challenged to show that $\sin(A+B)$ is not equal to $\sin A + \sin B$. However, in some lessons there is insufficient attention given to the spread of ability, so that able students are not challenged and less able students are not adequately supported. On occasions, the teacher dominates the lesson and there is insufficient emphasis on learning. Consequently, the students' independent learning skills are not sufficiently promoted.

209. The teachers keep value added data in terms of projected A-level grades. However, their analysis of this is insufficient to set challenging targets for students. Homework is set regularly and marking completed to a satisfactory standard but feedback lacks sufficient detail to ensure that students can always act upon their errors. Students' work confirms plenty of practice of A-level type questions but less evidence of undertaking examinations papers under timed conditions or of students working beyond the questions presented to increase their capacity for independent study and research.

210. The curriculum is appropriate. It includes provision for A and AS-level examinations covering modules in pure mathematics, statistics, mechanics and decision mathematics. The curriculum is appropriately flexible to accommodate students wishing to take different combinations of modules or else AS and A-level further mathematics. The school also offers a GCSE re-sit course although attendance at this is rather erratic and, during the week of the inspection, only two students were in attendance.

211. The provision for literacy in mathematics in the Sixth Form is satisfactory and the teachers make good use of technical vocabulary. The provision for information and communication technology (ICT) is satisfactory and the teachers make good use of graphical calculators. For example, in a Year 12 lesson the students used calculators to identify the shapes of quadratic curves thus saving time and increasing their understanding.

212. The leadership and management of the subject in the Sixth Form are satisfactory. The head of department provides a clear vision and direction for mathematics post 16. She has a good idea of the department's strengths and weaknesses but there is insufficient monitoring and evaluation to highlight strengths and act upon areas of weaknesses.

Biology

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

Strengths

- The A-level results are above the national average and show an improving trend.
- The teaching is good.
- Students are motivated and work hard; they have a good grasp of biological concepts and their application.
- Fieldwork reports are of a high quality.

Areas for improvement

- ICT facilities in the Sixth Form laboratories are inadequate for the large number of pupils in the AS-level groups.

213. The A-level results in 2000 were above average. They improved further in 2001. All students who took the examination gained a pass; the percentage of A-B grades was well above average. The majority of the students performed better than predicted from the GCSE results. All the students who started the course completed it. Twenty-four students took the 2001 AS-level examination; almost all attained higher grades than those predicted from the their GCSE grades. All the students except one gained a pass.

214. The standard of work of the current Year 13 students is well above average. The students are performing well in relation to predictions based on their GCSE results. Their achievement is often very good. In one lesson, the students showed good knowledge and understanding of seashore ecosystems and factors affecting the size of populations. In another they demonstrated their ability to use t-tests on experimental data. Generally, the students are responding well to challenging tasks set by the teachers and working at a good pace.

215. Students who have only just started the AS-level course are successfully tackling the demands of advanced work and are attaining standards as least as high as expected. In the lessons seen they demonstrated a good basic knowledge of protein chemistry and a satisfactory knowledge of the structure and functions of cell membranes. They carry out practical work enthusiastically and in one lesson were successfully producing good quality chromatograms. Their files are well presented and include good quality notes.

216. The teaching is good and often very good. The teachers have very good subject knowledge; they are enthusiastic; expect high standards; and set challenging tasks. The students respond to this very positively; they show keen interest; work hard, often at a good pace; and tackle the tasks set with determination. Throughout lessons the teachers question pupils skilfully, encouraging them to think through ideas for themselves. They provide good quality written resources, and information to back up the teaching. During lessons the teachers give effective guidance to help the students write good quality notes. Students say that teachers are very willing to give them personal help when needed.

217. The teachers organise work for the pupils very well. They set structured essays; sample examination questions; short tests; and open-ended investigative work. The teachers provide very good feedback to the students on the quality of their work. They write perceptive comments to help students with future work and to correct mistakes in the biology. Students appreciate the good written and oral feedback they receive; they know what level they are aiming for and how they are currently performing.

218. The students' attitudes are very good. They are keen and interested, motivated, hard working, and co-operative. In many lessons they work at a good pace. They are successfully learning to work independently. Their essays are well focused because many of the students follow the teachers' guidance and frameworks. Appropriate help, and advice about resources, is given to students when they are preparing for investigative course work. The students competently carry out research from books and databases, writing good quality notes.

219. The subject is well managed by two biologists who are members of the school's senior management team. They are committed to high standards and are very well organised. They use past assessment data to set challenging targets for individual students; they closely monitor progress and intervene appropriately if students are not achieving expected grades. Accommodation is good. Resources are good, except for ICT. There are insufficient computers in the Sixth Form laboratories for use by the large AS-level groups.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

220. No subjects in this areas were inspected in detail, but work was sampled in design and technology. Results at A-Level in 2001 in design and technology showed that most students reached a higher level than would have been expected from their GCSE results. There was 100 per cent pass rate and more than half the students entering gained A or B grades. One lesson was seen and the teaching was very good.

BUSINESS

221. The school currently offers AS-level and A2-level business courses and both the six unit and the twelve unit AVCE courses. In 1999 and 2000, a GNVQ course at intermediate level was also offered. The focus of the inspection was on the A-level courses, but the AVCE (the replacement course for Advanced GNVQ) was also sampled. Intermediate GNVQ completion rates in 1999 and 2000 were well above the national average, with an improving trend in the results. In both years the majority of students taking these courses achieved distinction or merit grades. Advanced GNVQ results in 2000 were in line with national standards, but with a higher than average non-completion rate. This was because students left to take up employment opportunities. Results in 2001 were considerably better and showed good added value, with all students achieving a distinction or merit. The quality of teaching is very good, but the overall vocational relevance of the AVCE course would be enhanced still further if all students had the opportunity to undertake an extended and structured work placement.

Business studies

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

Strengths

- Standards are well above average.
- Teaching is very good, with a close focus on students' learning and progress.
- The planning, challenge and pace of lessons.
- The students' attitudes towards the subject in general and their willingness to contribute in lessons.
- The focus on developing independent learners who can think for themselves.
- The students' understanding of the importance of the higher level skills of analysis, synthesis and evaluation.

Areas for Improvement

- There are no specific areas for improvement.

222. A-level results in 2000 were well above the national average and showed a further improvement in 2001. More than half the students achieved A or B grades in 2001. Average points scores were the second highest for any subject in the school in 2000 and the highest in 2001. The AS-level results in June 2001 were very good, with no student achieving less than grade D and 78 per cent of students achieving A or B grades. Students achieve higher grades than would be expected from their GCSE starting point.

223. The overall standard in all the current Sixth Form courses is very good, with attainment well above average and very good levels of achievement. The quality of AS and A-level course work is very good, with exercises based on past examination questions being used to reinforce learning and provide students with effective opportunities to apply the higher level skills of analysis, synthesis and evaluation. Year 12 students are able to use appropriate technical language and apply their knowledge effectively to new situations, for example, by identifying accurately potential markets for local businesses as part of an introduction to market analysis. They also understand the significance of break-even analysis for different groups of people involved in business finance. Year 13 students are able to relate to the application of higher level skills not only to their work but also to the demands of the examination they are taking, to present a clear model for what a good answer would look like. For example, they can evaluate and present clearly two sides for argument and provide a coherent conclusion.

224. The response of students to all the business courses is very positive. They are enthusiastic, motivated and have a very mature attitude towards their study. They are very effective independent learners and have well developed research skills. They work well with each other in small groups and are keen to respond to questions and contribute to discussions. There is a very positive working relationship between the students and their teachers based on mutual respect and high expectations.

225. Overall, the quality of the teaching is very good. Some is excellent. The impact of the teaching on the quality of the students' learning is also very good. The teachers are well qualified and are using their own professional development to further their understanding of the relationship between teaching approaches and effective learning. This is having a direct impact on the quality of teaching in the classroom. The teachers' planning is detailed and the timing of activities is adhered to rigidly; progression in the students' learning is managed very effectively. A wide range of effective teaching approaches is used, including questioning, discussions, brainstorming and structured individual research. These approaches, coupled

with encouragement and praise from the teachers, really help to engage the students in their learning; the result is lessons that are intense and very well, structured learning experiences. The use of local examples familiar to the students as the starting point for building understanding, is a particular strength. The quality of the relationship between the teachers and the students and the good use of resources also make a significant contribution to the quality of learning.

226. Assessment of AS and A-level course work is very good. From the start of the course there is a standard marking procedure, linked to the actual examination assessment criteria, so students have a clear understanding of what they are achieving in relation to A-level grades. Detailed written feedback on each piece of work gives clear guidance on what students have to do to improve their performance.

227. The leadership and management of the business studies courses are very good. There is a systematic analysis of results and conclusions fed back into the planning of the teachers. The teachers attend appropriate training related to the courses they are teaching and are confident and well informed. The accommodation is good and students have access to good resources, with very good support from library staff. The subject leader is very professional, enthusiastic and dedicated to doing the very best for his students and this is reflected in quality of teaching and the results achieved by students.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

228. Information and communication technology was not inspected in detail, but one lesson of ICT key skills work was sampled. Standards were in line with expectations and the teaching in this lesson was good. Students were effectively developing appropriate skills to support their learning in other subjects.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

229. No subjects in this area were inspected in detail, but work in sports studies and the Sixth Form leisure activities was sampled. Results in the 2001 AS-level sports studies show a 100 per cent pass rate, with many students reaching higher levels than would be expected from their GCSE results. In the lesson observed, the teaching and learning were good and students were reaching an appropriate standard for the early stage in the course. The teacher's enthusiasm and good management of practical activities encouraged students and enabled them to make good progress. The school offers a good range of leisure activities in the Sixth Form and all students participate.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

230. The school currently offers the intermediate GNVQ course in health and social care and the three, six and twelve unit AVCE courses. These AVCE courses replaced the Advanced GNVQ in September 2000.

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

Strengths

- Results in advanced level GNVQ are well above average.
- The teaching is good, with good planning of both the course and individual lessons.
- The students have a good understanding of the values and ethical considerations arising from work in health and social care.
- The working relationship between staff and students is very good.
- The level of feedback and support available to students is good.

Areas for improvement

- Making available long term work placements to improve the vocational relevance of the courses.

231. At intermediate level, the completion rates in 1999 and 2000 were significantly above the national average. The results included a high proportion of merit and distinction grades. In 2001 the completion rate was, however, not so high. At advanced level GNVQ, the pass rate in 2000 was significantly above the national average. In both 2000 and 2001, all students achieved either merits or distinctions. The number of students was small but results show that students achieved good results in relation to their GCSE starting point.

232. In June 2000, the results in the external assessments of the new AVCE courses were disappointing, with no student achieving more than grade C and several students un-graded. These results were influenced by problems with the availability of exemplar test materials and a prolonged period of staff absence.

233. The number of students taking health and social care courses in the first two years of the Sixth Form was small. Through a combination of hard work by teachers and good results, the number of students taking these courses has risen steadily.

234. The overall standard in all the current Sixth Form courses is above average. The students are achieving well. The content and presentation of coursework is generally good. Information gathered from research into local services is used effectively to improve the quality of this coursework. A more consistent use of ICT, by all students, would enhance presentation further. There are satisfactory links with local services and the community. However, the overall vocational relevance of the course would be enhanced further if all students had access to an extended and structured work placement. The progress of Year 13 AVCE students is satisfactory, with most having successfully completed at least five of the 12 units and three more currently being worked upon.

235. The students use appropriate technical language effectively. This is illustrated by their feeling for the values that underpin the provision of both health and social care services and their ability to engage in thoughtful and informed discussion about serious ethical issues, for example, when considering issues such as gene therapy, fertility treatment and a client's right to confidentiality. There is effective development of the higher level skills of analysis and synthesis in some of their portfolios, particularly in the unit involving personal research. In some other units analysis and evaluation is weak and superficial.

236. The response of the students to the health and social care courses is very positive. The students are enthusiastic, motivated and have a mature attitude towards their study. Most intend to work in the sector. They are very effective independent learners and have well developed research skills. They work well with each other in small groups and are keen to respond to questions and in discussion.

237. The quality of teaching, and its impact on the students' learning across the courses, is good. The teachers use a wide range of effective teaching approaches, including discussions, presentations, videos and structured individual research. These approaches, coupled with encouragement and praise from the teachers, really help to engage students in their learning. The use of local examples familiar to the students, as the starting point for building understanding, is a particular strength. Effective planning, the quality of the relationship between teachers and students and good use of resources make a significant contribution to the quality of learning.

238. Marking and assessment of the students' coursework is generally good. The detailed feedback to help students improve their work is a particular strength. Assessment is generally well matched to assessment criteria. The exception is in some AVCE units where evidence of higher level skills in the work is weak and the higher grades awarded are therefore generous. In some of the early assignments that were developed for the AVCE, there was no explicit link between the tasks the student had to complete and the assessment criteria. This problem has been recognised by the school and is being remedied. Opportunities for the development and assessment of key skills are clearly identified in assignments and exploited where they are relevant to the work the student is doing.

239. The leadership, co-ordination and management of the health and social care courses are very good.

240. The planning of the courses is very good. Good systems are in place for monitoring and internal standardisation of work. All staff attend appropriate training related to the courses they are teaching and are confident and well informed. Accommodation for teaching the course is good and students have access to good resources, with very good support from library staff. The course co-ordinator is very supportive, enthusiastic and dedicated to doing the very best for her students and this is reflected in the success there has been in establishing the health and social care courses.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

241. No subjects in this area were inspected in detail, but work was sampled in art and drama. In art, the number of students who have taken the examination is too small to make reliable comparisons with national results, but students taking the AS-level in 2001 achieved higher grades than would be expected from their GCSE results. In the lesson observed, the teaching and learning were good, with a good emphasis by the teacher on sketching and researching. In the music lesson seen, the teaching was very good.

242. In drama the numbers taking examinations are also too small for statistical comparisons. Two students entered the Theatre Studies A-level examination in 2000 and achieved an A and a C grade. Results in the 2001 AS-level performing arts were in line with levels expected from students' GCSE performance. Two lessons were sampled and the teaching was satisfactory. The students showed a good level of involvement in the subject and worked with enjoyment.

HUMANITIES

243. Geography, history and religious education were inspected in depth. No other subjects in this area were sampled.

Geography

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

Strengths

- Most students are making good progress in both the AS-level and A2 courses.
- The teaching is good.
- The students have good skills in research, fieldwork and coursework.

Areas for development

- More support tailored to the needs of weaker students.

244. Results in 2000 were in line with the national average, with girls performing particularly well against the national average and outperforming boys. Similar results were obtained in 2001. Results for AS-level in 2001 represent good achievement given the students' prior attainment. A third of the students achieved an A or B grade. At A-level nearly a third of students achieved A or B grades and virtually all were awarded a pass grade.

245. Observation of lessons and scrutiny of the present students' work reveal that most students are making good progress, achieving well and reaching a good standard in all aspects of the subject. Most have made good gains in knowledge of places and in understanding of themes, and have developed a good range of geographical skills. Many show good and very good ability to test hypotheses, and to collect and present data. Most also have a good knowledge of how to draw conclusions and describe the limitations of their fieldwork research. One or two weaker students have rather poorly organised coursework notes and are able to make only limited explanations of physical processes.

246. Overall teaching is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge, which enables them to support students, particularly in one to one situations. They prepare thoroughly, give good lead lessons and then support students' individual research particularly well. Students are given clear and accurate feedback on their progress and ways to improve their work. In several lessons teachers were structuring the work in such a way that it provided a framework for coursework research, fieldwork and examination style answers. Teachers also use a range of questions, which probe students understanding of the subject.

247. Discussion with students revealed a high level of satisfaction with the teaching. There was evidence of a range of teaching and learning activities beyond that observed and very good individual support for students in their coursework, fieldwork and examination preparation. Good knowledge of the syllabus requirements, marking of coursework and use of examination questions during the course, all help to prepare students thoroughly beforehand. Student learning is good. Students show a high level of independence. Several Year 13 students were able to talk authoritatively about their fieldwork experiences. In one lesson students' feedback to each other about urban development in the UK used a good variety of sources including video and taped materials. Their level of oral work and interest showed that they were acting like "geographers" rather than simply "studying" geography. Students enjoy the opportunities to develop their independent research skills whilst also valuing the input of teaching staff to set the scene and support their coursework with constructive criticisms.

248. Work in the subject is well led and managed. Up-to-date and topical research helps to motivate and engage student interest. Target setting and continuous monitoring helps to support student progress. Teachers work well as a team and know the students well. They are developing a good range of research topics and case studies. The new AS-level has been very successfully introduced and the residential fieldwork opportunity is very well used by the department. There are good stocks of reference material and staff are now making good use of the Internet facilities in the school.

History

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

Strengths

- The teaching is good.
- The new head of department is providing good leadership.
- The students enjoy the subject and respond well.

Areas for improvement

- Results at AS-level.
- The breadth of the students reading beyond the core texts.

249. The students' performance at A-level over the past two years has improved. In 2000 the results were well below average. In 2001, however, there was considerable improvement. In 2001 seven out of the eight students achieved A to E grades and three gained an A grade which was good. Four of these students have gone on to read history as all or part of their course at university. Students' performance in the first year of the AS-level examination in 2001 was, however, disappointing. All twenty-two students entered achieved a pass grade of at least an E but only three students achieved a B grade, whilst none achieved an A grade. For the majority of these students their history grade was either their lowest or equal lowest AS-level subject grade and results were not as high as would be expected from their GCSE results.

250. Observation of lessons and a scrutiny of the students' work confirm that the attainment of the pupils currently in Years 12 and 13 are in line with the national average and that their achievement is good. They are committed to their work and are making good progress with their personal studies. Students in both years are now able to analyse historical sources critically. For example, they show a good understanding of the limitations of a newspaper report of Bloody Sunday in St Petersburg in 1905 and demonstrate particularly good skills in using pictorial sources such as Nazi election posters. They have so far made insufficient use of information and communication technology and have insufficient breadth to their reading beyond the core texts.

251. The teaching of history is good. Strong features of this are the teachers' knowledge and good planning. For example, in a Year 13 lesson the teacher's sharp subject knowledge enabled her to give clear definitions of terms such as 'retaining' in the Tudor context. It also lay behind the skilful questioning by which she enabled her students to understand how the death of Henry VII's wife and his heir led to the greater instability of his regime which in turn offered an opportunity to the De La Pole family. In a very good Year 13 lesson the teacher used a range of reading, explanation and small stepped tasks to give the students a good understanding of Bloody Sunday in its historical context. This then acted as a firm base upon which they could meaningfully evaluate a newspaper account of the shooting. By the end of the lesson they had clearly understood how the writer had used language to create a certain tone that could capture the unwary reader's sympathies for one side. The students clearly

enjoy their history and speak with enthusiasm about aspects of the course and their personal studies.

252. The subject is well led and managed at A-level. The new head of department, together with his team, has analysed the reasons for the disappointing results at AS-level and taken effective steps to remedy them. Additional resources have been ordered. A greater focus is being given to examination requirements and what was the weakest area, that of pupils' historical skills in handling documentary sources, is receiving extra attention. There is a strong, shared commitment to raise standards and to succeed amongst both teachers and students. Teachers are sharing ideas and are giving good advice to students on what they need to do to improve. An ideal example is the allocation to each student of a member of the history department to support them in their personal study work with regular one-to-one sessions.

Religious education

Overall, provision in religious education for those students taking the advanced level courses is **good**. Provision for all other students is unsatisfactory as there is no timetabled provision for religious education.

Strengths

- The students' skills in research and independent learning are good.
- The teaching is good, with particular strengths in questioning and feedback to students.
- The students enjoy the subject and find it stimulating and relevant.

Areas for improvement

- Provision of religious education for all students.

253. Although the number of students taking AS and A-level religious studies is small, standards are good and students clearly enjoy the subject. Recent A and AS-level results were good with several students achieving high grades. The A-level results were mainly in line with students' predicted grades and no student achieved less than grade C. However, no student in 2001 obtained the highest grades.

254. From the work seen and lessons observed, standards are consistently good. The teachers' skilful use of questions and individual encouragement of students leads to good achievement. The students are able to identify key beliefs within differing ethical theories and then apply them to contemporary moral issues. Their good research skills enables them to present key aspects of religion to their peers and answer questions with skill and maturity. In a Year 12 lesson on Buddhism, for example, well-prepared presentations from members of the class effectively developed all the students' understanding of important Buddhist beliefs.

255. Students clearly value the subject. They are clear about their learning targets and consider there to be a good balance between the teacher's input and the opportunities for both independent learning and working collaboratively with other students. All students find the course stimulating, challenging and relevant.

256. The teaching is always good and has some very good features. Skilful use of questions and feedback enhances the students' understanding. Very good support is provided to individual students with strong encouragement of independent learning. In a Year 13 lesson on complex Buddhist concepts, the clear explanations provided by the teacher enabled students to overcome successfully an initial lack of understanding. The teacher gives regular feedback about progress and this helps students to develop their understanding.

257. The leadership and management of the subject are good. There is no provision for religious education beyond those students taking an AS or A-level course. This does not fulfil statutory requirements and limits the significant contribution the subject could make to the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

258. The focus was on English and French, but German was also sampled. In German, A-level results were below average in 2000, and students performed less well than expected, given their GCSE results. In 2001, results were similar and students performed considerably less well than expected. One lesson was observed. This was a well-taught lesson where students made good progress extending their speaking skills as, for example, they described an intriguing picture. The teacher's rigorous approach ensured students were able to improve their accuracy in the course of the lesson.

English

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

Strengths

- The results at A-Level in 2001 show a significant improvement, and represent good achievement by the students.
- The results in AS-level are also good.
- The students show good attainment in the key skill of communication.
- The teaching is good, with a good range of strategies which involve students in the lessons and develop their understanding of set texts.
- Students respond very well and enjoy the subject.

Areas for improvement

- Written feedback to students is not as detailed as it could be and there are limited opportunities for students to undertake self-assessment.
- Little use is made of target-setting for achievement in the subject.

259. A-level results in 2000 were below the national average. In 2001 there was a significant improvement, with much better results at both the highest grades and the overall pass grades. However, while some students made good or very good progress from their GCSE starting points, a significant minority made less progress than expected. The AS-level results in 2001 indicate that all the students made progress in line with or better than expected. Nearly all the students who started either the A or the AS-level course went on to take the examination and to achieve a pass grade.

260. The standards seen in lessons and students' work during the inspection reflect the good standards achieved in examinations and the good progress represented in the AS-level results. In Years 12 and 13, good teaching is leading to good levels of achievement and above average standards. Year 12 students are adapting quickly to the demands of the AS-level course, showing a good grasp of the texts they are studying at an early stage in the year. They can analyse the development of a character in a novel or play and select supporting quotations. They participate well in discussion and can explain and justify their personal response to their set books.

261. In Year 13, students have a good knowledge of the texts studied. They show a good understanding of plot and can analyse the author's use of language. They develop a good

personal response and exemplify their views with close reference to the text. Their communication skills are good. Many are very clear and confident in discussion. They write fluently and accurately, and the strongest students show an individual style and real flair for the subject.

262. The teaching of English in the Sixth Form is good. The teachers are particularly skilled at using a range of strategies and teaching techniques which encourage the students to participate in discussion, formulate their own views about characters and events and then justify them with reference to the text they are studying. For example, Year 13 were asked to make a critical statement about the novel *Paddy Clark Ha Ha Ha*, make notes on their views and then discuss them with the class. This led to a good level of intellectual debate, testing and strengthening the students' understanding of the language and structure of the novel as well as the development of the characters. Similarly, students worked in pairs to respond to reviews of *Measure for Measure*. This stimulated a detailed examination of textual evidence and led to a heated debate over the portrayal of Isabella.

263. The teachers have high expectations of the students and present them with a good level of challenge in the questions they pose and the tasks they set. They show a good level of skill in breaking down complex questions and concepts, so that students can understand the task and rapidly make progress. As a result, students quickly move beyond a superficial interpretation and develop a mature and detailed response to the literature they are studying. Their critical faculties are increasingly well developed. Teachers give good oral feedback, but written feedback is more limited and students are not sufficiently encouraged to undertake self-assessment.

264. Lessons proceed with a good pace and a variety of activity, challenging students and leading to effective learning. The teachers have a good relationship with their classes and this contributes to the students' good motivation and enjoyment of the subject. They work hard in lessons, are actively engaged for the full time and support each other in paired and group activities.

265. The work covered in lessons is effectively supplemented by a good range of tasks set for the students' private study. For example, students research the historical and cultural background to Shakespeare, using ICT resources. They study sections of their texts in preparation and come to the lessons ready to debate and examine language or plot in detail.

266. Sixth Form English is well led and managed. Results are improving as a result of improvements to the teaching. The head of department works effectively with the other Sixth Form teachers and has achieved a good level of consistency in teaching methods. This means that students become used to participating actively in lessons and responding to a good level of challenge. Texts are chosen that will appeal to both boys and girls and the work is well structured to enable students to make good progress. The head of department keeps a clear focus on standards, but makes insufficient use of target setting for overall performance.

French

Overall the quality of the provision is **sound**.

Strengths

- The current students are making good progress, have very good attitudes to the subject and think highly of their teachers.
- The teaching is well focused on the students' needs and relationships are very good.
- Students learn to work well independently. Good, imaginative use is made of the Internet for up-to-date information and resources.
- Good opportunities for individual tutorials with teaching staff and the foreign language assistant.

Areas for improvement

- Students come on to the course with low starting points; methods of GCSE preparation do not provide an appropriate level of grammatical understanding to ensure smooth transfer to AS-level courses.
- No opportunities for an extended stay in France.

267. As numbers of students taking French are very small, statistical comparisons are unreliable. However, the results of individual students have generally been below what might be expected from them, given their potential, based on their overall performance at GCSE. There are currently two students studying A-level French. They were members of a class of six who took AS-level French last summer with grades ranging from C to E. The students performed relatively well in their speaking examination, following careful teaching and preparation. The weakest areas are those requiring a very accurate written response.

268. The standards of work seen in these students' folders are broadly average. Students generally achieve well. They have a low starting point in terms of their understanding of grammar but make good progress and learn to express their ideas well, using a good range of vocabulary and idiom. Their written accuracy improves, but it is an area where they continue to lack confidence. This has a negative impact on their oral fluency. The students are relatively reticent in spontaneous discussion and prefer to pre-prepare oral contributions. Nevertheless they have good ideas and can argue points on diverse topics such as terrorism, environmental issues, racism or happiness with intelligence and conviction.

269. The teaching is good overall. The teachers take note of the low starting points and build a very structured course, to ensure students catch up on grammar basics and have regular opportunities to revise and extend them. As relationships between the teachers and students are good, the students work hard. The teachers expect, and get, a mature, independent approach from the students. Good use is made of current articles and information from the Internet to enliven exam topics. Students are expected to use the Internet themselves to pursue news items of personal interest. This regular structured and informal exposure to texts in French helps the students to build their vocabulary and repertoire of current idioms.

270. The students' work is carefully and diagnostically marked. The teachers write long, detailed comments on the work of individual students. Issues picked up in one piece of work often form the basis of the next stage of learning. Every opportunity is taken to build on what students know and can do. Students are rewarded for their efforts with encouraging, personalised messages.

271. The students learn well. They are industrious in class. They listen hard and respond well to their teacher's support and encouragement. They rise with energy and good humour

to the challenges their teachers pose, for example speaking in French for a minute without hesitation or repetition on random topics such as football, free time or war.

272. Leadership and management are good. The whole course is well prepared and well taught as a result of the committed teamwork of the staff involved.