

INSPECTION REPORT

KING EDWARD VI SCHOOL

Lichfield

LEA area: Staffordshire

Unique reference number: 124408

Headteacher: Mr A D Meikle

Reporting inspector: Mr E Wheatley

10013

Dates of inspection: 4 - 8 February 2002

Inspection number: 192064

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 18 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Upper St John Street Lichfield Staffordshire
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr M Maybury
Date of previous inspection:	January 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities (Sixth Form)	Aspect responsibilities (Sixth Form)
10013	Ted Wheatley	<i>Registered inspector</i>		How high are standards? How well are students taught?
[OIN]	Daljit Singh	<i>Lay inspector</i>		How well does the school look after students? Attitudes, behaviour and personal development; How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
12844	Mick Saunders	<i>Team inspector</i>	English.	
23082	Graham Loach	<i>Team inspector</i>	Mathematics.	
27503	Marie Foulds	<i>Team inspector</i>	Biology.	
12118	Allan Paver	<i>Team inspector</i>	Geography.	How good are the curriculum and other opportunities?
22042	John Challands	<i>Team inspector</i>	Physical education.	
8744	Russ Whiteley	<i>Team inspector</i>	Art and design.	
24127	Jim Kidd	<i>Team inspector</i>	German; History.	
	Barbara Harrison	<i>Team inspector</i>	Theatre studies.	
18447	Ron Cohen	<i>Team inspector</i>	Business studies; Economics; Religious education.	
21806	Pat Swinnerton	<i>Team inspector</i>	Design and technology.	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

King Edward VI School is an 11 to 18, mixed comprehensive school that is larger than other similar schools. Numbers have varied over recent years. There are 1,097 pupils in the main school and 262 students in the Sixth Form. Approximately ten per cent of these join the school in the Sixth Form. There are broadly equal numbers of boys and girls though there are variations between years. There is a small number of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds; 16 have English as an additional language (EAL) but none are in the early stages of English language acquisition. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is well below average. The proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs is broadly average and the proportion on the school's register of special needs is well below average but is increasing. Pupils' attainment is above average on entry to the school. The school site comprises three main buildings on one large site; they were formerly two schools.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an effective school providing a good standard of education. The school is well led with a very clear direction for how it should improve. Standards are well above average overall and pupils and students make good progress. Pupils and students have very good attitudes to school and relationships are very good. Progress since the last inspection has been good and the school gives good value for money. Sixth Form provision is good and is cost effective.

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

- The progress made by pupils and students is good.
- The relationships between pupils are very good, irrespective of their backgrounds.
- The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 particularly provides a wide range of learning opportunities for pupils of all levels of ability.
- Teaching is good overall and there is a significant amount of very good teaching.
- The provision for ICT is very good.
- Pupils' attendance at school is very good.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- The provision of extension work to help a small proportion of the highest attaining pupils to make even better progress.
- Procedures to monitor and evaluate the work in some departments and to share good practice.
- The consistency of marking and guidance to pupils to help them raise their standards of work even further.
- The accommodation to meet the full curriculum needs of some subjects.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good progress since it was last inspected in January 1997. The management of the school has improved considerably; there are long-term strategic plans; the senior management has initiated procedures to evaluate teaching and learning and to help teachers acquire and apply these skills themselves. Overall, teaching has improved and is a priority in the school's development plan, although there is still room for further improvement in enabling pupils and students to gain independent learning and research skills. The improvement in personal, social and health education (PSHE) has been satisfactory. Overall, pupils and students show increased responsibility. The school has good capacity to continue its improvement.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	A	A	A	C
A Levels/AS Levels	A	A	N/A	N/A

Key	
<i>well above average</i>	A
<i>above average</i>	B
<i>average</i>	C
<i>below average</i>	D
<i>well below average</i>	E

In the end of Year 9 tests in 2001, the attainment of pupils was well above average in English, mathematics and science, and this has been the pattern over recent years. Compared with similar schools attainment was well above average in 2001. The proportions of pupils obtaining the average Level 5 or higher was well above average and for the higher Level 6 or better was also well above average in all three subjects. Inspection evidence agreed with this.

At GCSE in 2001, the proportion of pupils obtaining five or more A* to C grades was well above average, continuing the pattern of recent years. The proportion obtaining five or more A* to G grades was above average but slightly lower than in previous years. Nevertheless, over the last three years standards have been well above average. The school exceeded its target for five or more A* to C grades and fell short of its target for one or more A* to G grades by one per cent. Overall, standards in all subjects were well above average. All pupils, including those with special educational needs make good progress from when they enter the school to the time they are 16.

The attainment of students in AS and A Level examinations in 2001 was above average and compared with all Post-16 education providers was well above average. Results were outstanding in art and design and were well above average in biology, economics, English literature, French, design and technology and theatre studies. Standards were above average in business education and religious education and broadly average in mathematics, chemistry and physical education. They were below average in geography and physics. Standards of work seen during the inspection were never below average and were often above; issues arising in geography and physics have been addressed.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have very positive attitudes and enjoy coming to school. They take great pride in the work they produce.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is very good in lessons. Pupils work hard, concentrate very well and take great delight in performing well. Around the school, they are considerate and helpful towards each other and towards adults.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are very good and pupils take part in a large number of activities where initiative and responsibility are encouraged. They respond well to this and show significant growth in maturity and responsibility.
Attendance	Attendance is very good.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching is generally good. It is better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. In Years 7 to 11 teaching is very good or occasionally excellent in about two fifths of lessons, good in just over one quarter and satisfactory in just under a quarter. It is unsatisfactory in a very small proportion of lessons. Teaching is good in English, mathematics and science overall although there is a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching in science and mathematics. In science this is associated with temporary staffing difficulties and in mathematics because good practice is not always effectively shared. In the Sixth Form teaching in about four out of five lessons is good or better, very good, and occasionally excellent, in one in three lessons. It is never less than satisfactory.

The most significant features of the best teaching are teachers' extremely good command of their subjects, provision of opportunities for independent learning, and the quality of relationships, which provides a very good learning environment. As a result, learning is generally good and over their time in school pupils and students make good progress. However, opportunities for independent work are sometimes missed, especially for some of the highest attaining pupils. Overall, the needs of all pupils are generally well met and pupils of all abilities, irrespective of their backgrounds, learn well. Literacy and numeracy skills are taught well. Information and communication technology (ICT) is taught very well, with very well planned provision within all subjects.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good with a wide range of opportunities for pupils of all abilities. Provision for ICT in the main school is very good with well-managed methods to monitor what is taught throughout Years 7 to 11.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Overall good, with very good support.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision is very good with many opportunities for pupils' personal development. There are many social and cultural activities that a large number of pupils and students participate in. Statutory requirements for collective worship are not met.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good overall. Procedures for child protection and for ensuring pupils' welfare and safety are good. The use of assessment information to help guide pupils in improving the work they do is generally sound, and is developing well.

The school has good relationships with parents and works closely with them to ensure pupils and students are well supported as they move through the school.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher and senior team provide very clear leadership and direction for improvement. There is a high level of support among staff and most departments are well led and have well defined priorities for improvement.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors fulfil their roles effectively and are making great efforts to improve their knowledge of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Generally good, particularly by the senior team. Skills of evaluation are developing among other staff, with a high level of support and encouragement from senior staff.
The strategic use of resources	The school's budget is low by comparison with the majority of schools. It plans its expenditure carefully, links it closely to the school's priorities and explores ways to obtain the best value for money that it can.

The accommodation is well maintained by the school but is generally unsatisfactory for the wide curriculum the school provides. There is little social space and the dining areas are inadequate for the numbers of pupils using them.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like coming to school. • Children make good progress at school. • Behaviour is good. • The teaching is good and expectations are high. • Parents feel comfortable about approaching the school with their concerns. • The school is well led and managed. • The school helps children to become mature and responsible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of homework provided, which is generally seen to be too much. • The amount of information they receive about the progress their children make. • The school working closely with parents. • Some parents consider that there are insufficient out of lesson activities.

Inspectors are generally in agreement over the strengths that parents identified. Overall, the amount of homework was thought to be satisfactory; reports are informative, providing useful information about pupils' progress and setting them targets for improvement; and the school works as closely as it needs to with parents. The range of extra-curricular activities is generally good.

At the meeting the registered inspector held for parents before the inspection parents were pleased with the standards obtained by their children and praised the school. Overall they felt that the school suitably encouraged and helped their children, although a few felt that some children were not pushed enough to perform as well as they could. Most parents considered that the school provided the right amount of homework; some felt that there was too much. The inspection confirmed the strengths and found also that on occasion, but not frequently, some pupils are not sufficiently challenged.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

There are 262 students in the Sixth Form, which is larger than most Sixth Forms and is growing in size. Year 12 is larger than Year 13 and overall there are more girls than boys. More than 70 per cent of pupils stay on into the Sixth Form; others come from schools in the area. The staying on rate between Years 12 and 13 is about 95 per cent. There are no formal requirements for entering the Sixth Form, but students are given guidance on the courses to select. The school offers a wide range of AS, A Level GCE and GNVQ courses. It also provides courses in general studies course and Key Skills.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

This is an effective Sixth Form. Standards achieved by students are high overall and they make good progress. Teaching is good and often very good; the support teachers provide has a significant impact on how well students perform. The management of the Sixth Form is good and sensitive to the needs of students, identifying new courses and organising them where possible. Teaching groups are generally of a good size. The great majority of students complete their courses and their attendance is good. The Sixth Form gives good value for money.

STRENGTHS

- Students achieve well and in particular their standards of writing are very high.
- Teaching is good; about one third is very good and occasionally excellent.
- The relationships between students and between students and teachers are very good, leading to very good, responsible attitudes to learning.
- Overall, the curriculum is good, offering a wide range of AS Level, A Level and GNVQ courses matching the needs of all students.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- The challenge, personal targets and opportunities for extended work for a small proportion of students.
- Access to ICT resources to support work in several subjects.
- The social and study space for 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
Art	Very good. Results are consistently very high compared with the national average and course work is a particular strength. Teaching is excellent and is underpinned by strong subject knowledge.
English	Good. Standards are well above average and are a reflection of teachers' good subject knowledge and high expectations. Students value the close attention teachers give to their work and progress. However, good practice in teaching, assessment and target setting is not consistently shared between teachers.
German	Very good. Standards are above average. Teachers' command of the language is very secure. They provide students with a wide range of challenging activities, which is effective in fostering high standards.
Biology	Very good. Standards are well above average and students make good progress. Teaching is very good and students develop very good independent learning skills.
History	Good. Standards obtained by students are average. Teaching is good. Teachers have high expectations and challenge students to consider evidence before forming their own views.
Geography	Satisfactory. Attainment was below average in 2001. The causes have been identified and standards are rising in both Years 12 and 13. Teaching is good overall and occasionally very good.
Mathematics	Satisfactory. A Level results were broadly average in 2001 and students make good progress. Teaching is satisfactory; teachers have strong subject knowledge and establish very good relationships with students. Students have limited opportunity for independent learning.
Design and technology	Good. Standards in the Advanced Level Product Design Course are good. Teaching is consistently good and this, together with very good assessment and constructive advice to students, leads to good learning.
Theatre studies	Good. Results were well above average in 2001 following previous variable performance. Teaching is consistently good, as are relationships with students. However, there is too little support in written work for the lower attainers or extension work for the highest attaining students.
Business studies	Good. Standards are above average and are the result of good teaching that encourages very good response by students. The subject is well managed and led although poor access to computers limits the standards that students could reach.
Economics	Very good. Results are well above average. Teaching is very good, giving many opportunities for students to develop independent learning skills. The subject is managed very well.
Religious education	Good. Standards are high. Teaching is good and teachers' specialist knowledge leads to good learning. The management of the department is effective, though further development is needed of monitoring procedures to ensure that teaching and standards continue to improve.
Physical education	Good. Standards are broadly average. Teaching is good and there are many opportunities for students to take responsibility for their own learning. Relationships are very good. However, further development is needed in the guidance given to students on how to improve their standards and targets for them to aim for.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Support is good and students are given considerable guidance on their courses of study. Examination information is used well by some staff to set targets and to identify areas for improvement. However, this is inconsistent, with some staff not fully aware of the value of the range of examination information available and how it can be used.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the Sixth Form	Leadership and management are very effective. Planning for improvement is very good and responds quickly to students' needs. At a senior level analysis of performance data is very good and is used to assist curriculum planning.

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"> • Students like the fact that the courses they chose suit their talents and what they want to follow as a career. • The information they received about courses was clear and informative. • They are taught well and challenged in their work. • They are helped to study and to research independently. • They enjoy being in the Sixth Form and would recommend it to other students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The advice given to them on what courses they should choose for the Sixth Form. • The information on how well they are doing on their courses. • The advice on what they should do when they leave school. • The range of activities and enrichment courses.

Inspectors are in agreement with the strengths students identify and some of their areas of concern. Inspectors consider, despite what students feel, that the advice given on what courses to take in the Sixth Form, and what students should do when they leave school is good. Inspectors also judge that the range of activities available is good and there is a high level of participation. However, inspectors agree that while many students are kept well informed about how well they are performing and what they need to do to lift the quality of their work, some advice is limited and is not based securely on assessment information available, or used effectively to set targets.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

The progress made by pupils and students is good.

1. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school is above average overall. By the time pupils reach the end of Year 9, when they are 14 years old, levels of attainment are well above average. Standards in the end of Year 9 national tests in English, mathematics and science have been well above average over recent years showing sustained good progress from when pupils enter the school. Progress is maintained through to the end of Year 11 when pupils have achieved well above average five or more A* to C grades and in GCSE examinations in recent years. The percentage of five or more A* to G grades has been above average and sometimes well above average in recent years. The proportion obtaining at least one GCSE pass grade in recent years has not been less than the national average and sometimes it has been well above average. Overall, pupils make good progress and many pupils make very good progress.

2. Progress made in developing literacy skills is good. Pupils are encouraged to speak and explain. For example, in a Year 7 science lesson, pupils presented their own research on the functions of human organs to the whole class. In a Year 11 mathematics lessons pupils were expected to explain the mathematical processes they used in solving a volume measuring problem. In both lessons pupils' literacy skills developed well and as a consequence their progress in understanding of, firstly, the functions of organs of the body and, secondly, the mathematical process involved in the volume measuring problem was good. Numeracy skills develop well too. In science, design and technology and geography, pupils use number skills well and are expected to use them as part of their developing a good understanding and knowledge of the subjects. As a result, their progress in these subjects is enhanced.

3. In particular, the high quality of teaching and very good relationships between pupils and teachers play a significant role in aiding pupils' progress. Challenging work, frequent opportunities for independent learning and discussions in which pupils can explore their own ideas help pupils achieve well and gain personal confidence as learners. Literacy and numeracy skills develop well and support pupils' abilities to express their knowledge and understanding effectively.

The relationships between pupils are very good, irrespective of their backgrounds.

4. Pupils' and students' relationships with each other are very good. Throughout the school, and in the Sixth Form, pupils and students work extremely well together. They help each other; older students treat younger pupils well, listen to them and help them, and are very good examples of how people should behave towards each other. At lunchtimes, break times and whenever pupils move around school or are together, attitudes towards each other are friendly and supportive. The small number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is well integrated into the school community and there is understanding and tolerance of individual and cultural differences that makes for a warm, friendly atmosphere around the school. Pupils do not tolerate racism and the school has suitable rules and procedures to encourage this attitude.

5. In lessons, pupils work well with each other. In mathematics lessons, they collaborate well when working on problems, in science they help each other, share apparatus and move around rooms with consideration for each other. In Sixth Form physical education lessons students discuss issues surrounding the approaches to sport in different countries with respect for others' opinions and maintain very good working relationships.

The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 particularly provides a wide range of learning opportunities for pupils of all levels of ability.

6. The school meets all statutory curriculum requirements. In addition to that, the Years 10 and 11 provide a wide range of choices for pupils. Apart from a core curriculum of English, mathematics, science, religious education and PSHE, they can follow either or both of French and German and a choice from five different options within design and technology. Choices within humanities between geography, history or religious education are possible. The school also provides some short GCSE courses in art, design and technology, history. Physical education and religious education, which gives opportunities for pupils to follow a wide range of courses.

7. Other than GCSE courses, the school provides opportunities for pupils to follow accredited ICT courses and business GNVQ courses. For those pupils who find traditional GCSE courses too demanding, the school provides a wide range of alternative non-examination courses. These include community service, extended work placement and a wide range of link courses with local colleges of further education. This considerably enhances the range of choices open to pupils and the great majority are very well provided for.

Teaching is good overall and there is a significant amount of very good teaching.

8. Teaching is generally good. In the main school it is very good or occasionally excellent in about two fifths of lessons and in the Sixth Form it is very good or occasionally excellent in one in three lessons. This is an improvement since the last inspection. There is a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching, but considerably less than the 15 per cent at the last inspection.

9. The most outstanding features are teachers' subject expertise and this has a significant impact on how well pupils and students learn. Teachers' questioning, explanations, guidance for examination work and to direct pupils towards particular learning resources are very good because of their expertise. In one Year 12 physics lesson, for example, the teacher's expertise meant that there was a valuable discussion around some 'wrong' answers that helped students improve their understanding and knowledge about the exponential decay of radioisotopes. In a Year 11 French lesson the teacher's fluency in the language helped pupils acquire a high level of fluency themselves.

10. Teachers build on the very good relationships they have with pupils and students and provide opportunities in many lessons for research and independent learning. In addition, management of lessons seems straightforward and effortless, although it is a result of the well-established relationships seen in nearly all lessons and the interactions between teachers, pupils and students around school. Challenging work is common to nearly all lessons. Pupils respond well to this and feel confident to voice their own ideas and to learn from this experience.

The provision for information and communication technology is good.

11. The provision of ICT in the main school is very good and the requirements of the National Curriculum are fully met. Information and communication technology (ICT) is taught through all subjects and the school has a well-planned scheme of work indicating how elements of the subject are covered across the curriculum. All subjects include planned opportunities for word processing. Data handling and analysis are taught through science, geography and design and technology and control and modelling through both science and design and technology. Subject schemes of work show how they cover these elements of ICT. Procedures to check that over time there are no omissions are well established.

Pupils' attendance at school is very good.

12. Pupils and students enjoy coming to school and as a result attendance is high – well above average at 95 per cent compared with a national average of 91 per cent.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The provision of extension work to help a small proportion of the highest attaining pupils to make even better progress.

13. The great majority of pupils make good progress and achieve well over their time in the school. However, a few pupils, in spite of reaching high standards in their work could do a little better. Occasionally, marking on the highest attainers work gives proper praise for what these pupils have achieved, but fails to indicate what extra research or independent learning they might undertake to help them achieve even more. Similarly, the teaching of a few pupils in the top sets, seen in a small number of lessons during this short inspection, provides a high level of challenge up to a point, but does not leave pupils with the added incentive to research further.

Procedures to monitor and evaluate the work in some departments and to share good practice.

14. The school has made considerable progress since the last inspection to introduce monitoring and evaluation as part of the school's drive to improve teaching and raise standards. It has been successful and at senior level there is a high level of awareness of how to observe and evaluate teaching, to analyse examination information and to use it to improve teaching and set targets for raising standards. At this level, too, there has been effective planning to develop teachers' evaluation skills, and in some areas this has been very good and has resulted in improved teaching. In science and English, for example, evidence of this was seen during the inspection, although while teaching in mathematics is generally good, effective practice found in most lessons is not always effectively shared to ensure tasks are consistently demanding and pupils who occasionally exhibit undesirable behaviour are managed well.

The consistency of marking and guidance to pupils to help them raise their standards of work even further.

15. The quality of marking is predominantly good but there are some inconsistencies. On some work, teachers sometimes provide too little constructive comment to help pupils and students make the progress they are capable of or help them to understand the errors in their work. This was evident in a few science lessons and occasionally in some Sixth Form work.

The accommodation to meet the full curriculum needs of some subjects.

16. The school has done a great deal to maintain the quality of its accommodation through careful financial planning. It has decorated, repaired and refurbished where possible, and where funds have permitted. Of 12 temporary, mobile, wooden classrooms, four remain in just sufficiently sound condition with minor problems of some rotten woodwork and dilapidated internal condition; the remaining eight have been refurbished at a cost of £40,000 per building. They are in good condition but are relatively insecure so that none of them can have computers and classes using them cannot use ICT in lessons without moving. The school has improved the grounds since the last inspection so that pupils and students can move around the wide spread site with the minimum of delay. It has worked well with the local authority to change the use of an empty house on the premises to a base for learning support. The provision of the new mathematics block and the joint use of the splendid community facilities are exemplars of good co-operation. However, much remains to be done.

17. Performance arts subjects maintain high standards despite poor facilities. Music is taught in a building designed during Second World War, and it now has structural problems. It is well maintained and attractively decorated but it is well past its temporary life span and is some distance from where performances are held so that equipment has to be carried back and forth. Drama is taught in two converted practical rooms neither of which is purpose built and one of which is used for other purposes and is some distance from the changing rooms. The school hall is also used for drama and has better facilities than the classrooms but the stage lacks the equipment for modern productions and there is no way to cross the stage except when the curtains are drawn. Art attains outstanding results even though one of its three studios is too small to accommodate the classes of over thirty it is frequently expected to house.

18. There is too little social space for pupils at lunchtimes, so that pupils are often outside when it rains and when they queue for lunch. The site is supervised at lunchtime by the senior management team and supervisors in the dining room. Pupils behave well but it is not clear just where they are allowed to go in bad weather. The consequence is that, combined with travelling between buildings, pupils come to lessons colder and wetter than they would otherwise do in poor weather.

19. The dining facilities are too small although very efficiently managed by staff so that pupils move through quickly. There are 120 seats to serve over 700 meals within one hour. There is an alternative serving point for hot snacks, but pupils and students are obliged to walk around school eating their food. Remarkably little food is dropped around the site in the circumstances.

20. The present arrangement of buildings means that it is impossible to cluster some departments in the same building. Departments are split which cause resource problems, communication and minor management problems. English and maths each have rooms in more than one building.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

21. The school's areas for improvement are part of its development plan. This is a school that has planned progressively for improvement and is well aware of what it needs to do. Although there are areas for development in evaluating school performance, the great majority of staff is committed to maintaining recent improvements and improving further.

22. The school must now:

- Ensure that the highest attaining pupils make further progress by providing opportunities for extending their studies and to engage in personal research and independent learning.
- Improve the quality of monitoring and evaluation of the school's work by:
 - * developing teachers' skills in observing and evaluating teaching,
 - * establishing methods to share the very good teaching skills identified,
 - * ensuring all teachers can use examination and assessment information to help them set targets for their subjects and pupils.
- Improve the quality of marking to the best seen so that pupils know what they have to do to improve their work and improve the standards they achieve.
- Work in conjunction with the local education authority (LEA) to plan improvements to the accommodation so that:
 - * music is taught in suitable rooms,
 - * temporary buildings are removed and departments using them are housed in rooms that are part of the main buildings,
 - * access to computer rooms is available to all subjects to support work in these subjects,
 - * there is more social space for pupils to use at lunch and break times,
 - * dining facilities are better suited to the numbers of pupils and students using them.

Sixth Form

- Ensure that the highest attaining students are encouraged to extend themselves further through:
 - * personal research and independent learning,
 - * challenging personal targets so that students are aware that even though the standards they reach are high they are capable of higher achievement,
- Improve the access to computers to support the work students necessarily do,
- Increase the study and social space for students.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 - 11	44
	Sixth Form	67
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		35

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7–11							
Number	3	15	12	10	4	0	0
Percentage	7	34	27	23	9	0	0
Sixth Form							
Number	3	20	31	13	0	0	0
Percentage	4	30	46	19	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting the percentages for Years 7 - 11 and the Sixth Form as each lesson represents more than one percentage point.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7–Y11	Sixth Form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1,097	262
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	36	0

Special educational needs	Y7–Y11	Sixth Form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	35	6
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	122	6

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	16

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	18
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	22

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.7
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3
National comparative data	1

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting Year 1

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	118	100	218

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	98	102	101
	Girls	95	89	91
	Total	193	191	192
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	89 (83)	88 (83)	88 (80)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	56 (44)	65 (65)	58 (50)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	96	99	110
	Girls	95	92	95
	Total	191	191	205
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	88 (89)	88 (79)	94 (93)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	56 (59)	58 (55)	74 (59)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	105	104	209

GCSE results		5 or more grades A*-C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	62	97	100
	Girls	90	103	104
	Total	152	200	204
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	73 (68)	96 (97)	98 (99)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	46.1 (46.9)
	National	39.0 (38.4)

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	24 (20)	91.7 (65.0)
	National	N/A	N/A

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A Level or AS Level examinations:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2001	N/A	N/A

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	67	95	162
	Average point score per candidate	18.7	24.2	21.9 (21.6)
National	Average point score per candidate	N/A	N/A	17.3 (17.6)

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	56	75	141	17	15	32
	Average point score per candidate	18.6 (19.7)	23.6 (22.1)	21.6 (21.0)	12.0 (10.5)	19.2 (15.8)	14.4 (14.4)
National	Average point score per candidate	N/A	n/a	17.7 (18.2)	n/a	n/a	10.0 (10.6)

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

International Baccalaureate		Number	% success rate
Number entered for the International Baccalaureate Diploma and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all they studied	School	0	N/A
	National	N/A	N/A

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	2
Black – other	1
Indian	20
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	4
Chinese	1
White	1047
Any other minority ethnic group	6

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	1	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	9	1
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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)	80.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.0

Education support staff:

Y7–Y13

Total number of education support staff	18
Total aggregate hours worked per week	364

Deployment of teachers:

Y7–Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	79.3
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Average teaching group size:

Y7–Y11

Key Stage 3	24.7
Key Stage 4	22.1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	3,561,054.00
Total expenditure	3,607,774.00
Expenditure per pupil	2,634.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	134,620.00
Balance carried forward to next year	87,900.00

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	12.0
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	15.0

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
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
Number of questionnaires returned

1,359
366

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	39	49	7	3	2
My child is making good progress in school.	40	50	7	1	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	19	54	8	1	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	22	55	15	6	2
The teaching is good.	21	63	8	1	8
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	22	43	25	8	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	40	50	5	4	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	54	40	4	1	2
The school works closely with parents.	18	47	24	5	6
The school is well led and managed.	29	54	4	2	10
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	30	57	6	2	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	22	51	13	4	10

Other issues raised by parents

At the meeting with the registered inspector held for parents before the inspection, parents said that they are generally pleased with the standards and quality of education provided, the high quality communication and support the school gives to pupils and parents. There was a small amount of concern expressed over lack of specialist teaching in science and a lack of sensitivity to pupils' and students' individuality. A few parents expressed concern at the school not moving pupils between groups to match their particular needs. A large number of parents expressed concern over the low funding received by the school. Some others expressed concern over the inadequacy of the school's accommodation. Inspectors found that standards are high and not unduly affected by temporary staffing difficulties in science, that on the whole the school responds well to and encourages individuality, and that the school's mechanisms to move pupils between groups to match their learning needs are sound. Analysis of financial information shows that while the school's basic budget is low, it raises extra funds from different sources and overall funding is adequate. Inspectors agree that the accommodation provided by the school is unsatisfactory.

PART D: THE SIXTH FORM

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

23. Standards obtained in 2001 were above average for students in maintained schools and well above average when compared with all Post 16 providers. The average point score was 21.9 (taking into account A and AS Levels and advanced GNVQ results) compared with the national average of 18, and students achieved well taking into account their performance at GCSE in 1999. Results were a little higher than in 2000, and in line with the school's expectations for students. Standards have been well above average over recent years.

24. Results were outstanding in art and design and well above average in biology, economics, English literature, French, theatre studies and design and technology. Standards were above average in business education and religious education and broadly average in mathematics, chemistry and physical education. They were below average in geography and physics. There were too few students taking music and German to make comparisons, though in both all students received pass grades. Inspection judgements reflect these results overall. In most subjects students achieve at least well and in some they achieve very well, for example, in art and design, economics and biology. Achievement is sound in mathematics and in geography overall. However, in the latter, achievement has improved as a result of evaluating teaching and effective sharing of the best practice seen, most of it in the main school. In mathematics, a reliance on teacher dominated lessons and too few opportunities for independent learning have slowed learning a little. In physical education, reorganisation of teaching and schemes of work is starting to have a positive effect on the rate of learning. In other subjects, inspection evidence shows that standards are at least average and are often above. Overall, the progress students make in the Sixth Form is good.

25. Some students take advanced GNVQ units. In art and design all four students taking units obtained distinctions, nine of the 11 taking health and social care received distinctions and one a merit, and in business studies six out of 20 obtained distinctions, six obtained merits and four received passes; four are continuing to complete units.

26. In general studies, examination results in 2001 were broadly in line with the national average, which is creditable given the policy to enter almost all students in Year 13. However, performance over time has been variable and examination outcomes fall below those of other subject areas.

27. In Key Skills standards are above average overall, though these are variable. Number skills are very good and are taught well; communication skills are good overall, but in the small number of lessons seen standards depended on the tasks set and the quality of teaching. There is no great commitment by students and attendance fluctuates considerably. There is limited access to ICT facilities and this restricts the progress some students make, though many have access to computers at home.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

28. Most students have very positive attitudes to learning. They are often motivated and conscientious learners. They behave in a mature and responsible manner, value their fellow students and establish good relationships with each other and most teachers. They settle quickly, listen attentively, concentrate on the task set and work well together. Most students respond quickly and engage responsibly in discussions in English, maths, biology, art and sociology lessons. A minority of students sometimes become restless and lose

concentration when lessons are not challenging and engaging. This was particularly evident in Year 12 key skills lessons, where students became restless due to the lack of opportunities to ask questions.

29. Most students approach their learning outside lessons very constructively and are very positive about school life. A significant number take an active part in extra-curricular activities. During the inspection, students were observed organising assemblies, sports events, supporting younger students with reading, and supervising students as prefects. These good opportunities extend their learning and support their personal and social development. Students reported that most teachers are caring, sensitive and supportive. These opportunities promote very constructive relationships.

30. Students behave in a mature manner and are perceived by the school and wider community to be good ambassadors for the school. They are polite, friendly and respect other adults and younger students. Behaviour is sometimes lively and noisy when younger students move between lessons; Sixth Form students use their maturity and common sense to reinforce the school's code of conduct and encourage positive behaviour. Sixth Formers create a friendly environment for learning, based on trust, respect and tolerance.

31. Most Sixth Formers achieve good levels of attendance and this is consistent with attendance in the main school. They enjoy the challenge of the Sixth Form and most attend regularly and observe punctuality. Most absences are notified in advance and this enables the school to record a level of unauthorised absences in the Sixth Form broadly in line with similar schools. Existing attendance supports students' achievements, as well as their personal and social development. During the inspection, a significant number of students were absent from some lessons, particularly in general studies, although some of this was due to the number of students taking study leave and attending interviews with universities.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

32. Teaching is good overall and about one third is very good or occasionally excellent. Nearly a half is good and one fifth is satisfactory. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. Teachers' subject expertise is very good and plays a significant part in the standards reached by students. In biology, economics and art the level of discussion and exemplification, all of which were dependent on the teacher's knowledge, engaged students in high-level debate and helped them to develop extensive understanding. Lessons are very well planned, with a close awareness of the examination syllabus.

33. Teaching methods are generally good and frequently very good, providing students with opportunities for independent learning, group work and research. This establishes very good learning habits; students are confident and prepared to learn for themselves. However, occasionally methods are not effective. In mathematics, for example, teachers have a tendency to direct and explain and although they do this well, students do not always learn enough for themselves. In geography, teachers have begun to use a wider range of teaching styles and as a result students are starting to make more rapid progress. In general, expectations of students are high, although in theatre studies some higher and lower attainers are not always challenged suitably in their written work. In most subjects, teachers set targets for pupils, but this is not consistently the case and in some instances marking does not always provide guidance to students on how they could make further progress. Examples of good marking and formative feedback are seen in all subjects; it is particularly good in biology and art. Most students have a good understanding of how well they are doing and what grades they ought to be aiming for.

34. Students are managed well, and despite some criticisms about lack of opportunity for independent work they behave responsibly, rise to the challenges provided and learn well as a result.

35. Homework is set regularly, marked and useful feedback given to students to guide them in their studies. Students respond well to constructive advice and strive to improve their work.

36. Teaching of general studies is variable. Two lessons were observed. In one, attendance was a significant issue and, in the other, students queried the content of the course. While teaching was satisfactory, the emphasis on rehearsing past papers did not extend students' experiences or knowledge, or reflect the intentions implicit in the scheme of work. Similarly, some of the tasks used to teach Key Skills – communication – are not sufficiently challenging and students become bored.

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

37. The school provides very good opportunities for Sixth Form study, which meet the particular needs of students through a very well planned and organised, very wide, inclusive curriculum plan. The option blocks are constructed to meet the subjects chosen by students; student choice is not dictated by an imposed curriculum plan. In addition to general studies, the school offers twenty-six advanced courses, mostly to AS and A Level. This total includes four vocational courses: art and design, health and social care, business education, and information and communication technology. It is intended to offer psychology to A Level in the next academic year. Strong links with a local college of extended education allow students who so choose to follow a wide range of foundation and intermediate vocational courses for two days a week, to have one day a week of work experience and two days a week in school following a key skills course. Class sizes are generally good, but sets are very small in some subjects.

38. The general studies course is provided for Year 13 and is taught through a number of modules. This arrangement means that students have different points of starting, not always best suited to their needs or abilities. Key Skills are taught using the Universities Award. Structure and contents are, correctly, being reconsidered as a result of initial problems.

39. The curriculum does not provide work experience for the large majority not following vocational courses. An attempt to deliver this during the induction of new Sixth Form students was not successful in involving everyone. The school is now examining alternative means of delivery.

40. Coherent curriculum planning allows departments to deliver modular teaching in a way that best suits students and teachers and there is considerable flexibility to change the timing of modular examinations to meet perceived need.

41. The size of the campus means that if students have to travel between the two main buildings at the end of a lesson, at least five minutes are usually lost at the beginning of the next.

42. The lack of space within the school causes major problems for accommodating the particular needs of older learners. The only social space for any age group is shabby and too small for the number of students. Whilst the private study facilities around the new library are very good, there are not nearly enough of them. As a result students are allowed to sign in and out for home study leave. Students are given careful guidance on study habits and the great majority accept the guidance well.

43. The curriculum is enriched by a wide variety of formal and informal activities. There is a wide range of sporting activities, which reflect the very good sports facilities available, shared in part with the local community. Sixth Form students work hard to organise a successful range of inter-house activities including sports and drama. These allow a good range of participation for those who are not good enough to be included in the teams in such a large school. There are frequent opportunities for musicians and theatre groups to perform; the Sixth Form organise their own annual review.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

Assessment

44. The procedures for assessing students' performance are very good. GCSE results, module tests and teachers' assessments are used to build a comprehensive database from which the school can predict students' performance. The senior staff has done a great deal to develop the procedures and to guide teachers in using the information collected. To a large extent management has been successful and in most areas teachers use the information to set targets for students so that they know what they need to do to prepare well for examinations. Along with constructive marking and detailed feedback to students, the procedures work well to aid teachers with curriculum planning and to help students to learn effectively.

45. However, use of the information is not entirely consistent. There are still some teachers who use the information to predict, rather than set targets which help students achieve higher grades.

Advice, support and guidance

46. The arrangements for students' support, guidance and welfare are effective. They are complemented by the satisfactory arrangements for child protection in the school and Sixth Form.

47. The careers education programme ensures very good quality advice and support, and this enables the vast majority of Sixth Form students to make informed choices about higher education. However, some students and parents are concerned about the quality of careers advice, which does not adequately cover the broad range of university courses or provide enough information about training and employment.

48. There are generally effective procedures for monitoring and raising attendance, which enable the Sixth Form to achieve good levels of attendance. However, procedures to discourage unauthorised absences are not implemented effectively.

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

49. The school works effectively with parents. Parents are encouraged to be involved in students' choices of subjects in the Sixth Form and are kept fully informed. During students' two years in the Sixth Form, there are consultation evenings for parents and these are well attended. Students' and parents' views about subjects are taken into account; curriculum and organisational changes that have taken place in recent years have often been in response to parental and student demands.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

Leadership and management

50. The management of the Sixth Form is very good. The head of the Sixth Form has a very good overview of the quality of what the school offers and how the school should respond to the changing local and national demands and to the stated needs of pupils. He provides very good leadership to other staff. Direction for change is clear and linked closely to the school's development plan.

51. Changes are made after careful deliberation and evaluation of present provision. For example, removing work experience was carefully planned because of the demands of the taught curriculum, but re-introducing it is now being reviewed in the light of teachers' and students' responses.

52. Standards in subjects are closely monitored, and teachers have been trained in evaluative procedures themselves. Although these are not fully implemented, staff are well on their way to using the procedures effectively.

53. The school plans and manages its budget very well, even though its reserve funds are very limited. In the current financial year the main school subsidises the Sixth Form, but by less than two per cent. Good projections for the next financial year show that unless numbers drop dramatically the situation will be reversed and the Sixth Form will subsidise the main school. Overall the Sixth Form is cost effective and provides good value for money.

Accommodation and Resources

54. Accommodation is unsatisfactory. The students' study area is attractive and is well equipped, but it is much too small for the numbers of students. It has computers and access to the main school library, and students make good use of it.

55. In most subjects there are some accommodation problems. Art is in cramped rooms, economics and history are taught in rooms where access to computers is extremely difficult, but needed to complete a proper course of Sixth Form study. Accommodation limits the range of activity which can be undertaken in theatre studies, as does the lack of access to ICT and technical stage production equipment. Resources are generally sound although there are some shortages, for example, textbooks in geography.

56. Resources are used well, with the exception of ICT where there are problems due to the layout of buildings. Some economics, physical education and English lessons are taught in freestanding huts; this has serious implications for the frequency of use of computers, which are located in the main buildings. Better access to computers would improve the opportunities for independent learning. Nevertheless, where there is access to computers, teachers make good use of them.

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

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

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

GCE AS Level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Biology	2	100	52	-	2	1.5	0.8
Business studies	4	100	76	25	12	2.0	1.7
French	1	-	78	-	13	-	1.7
Mathematics	2	100	62	-	15	1.0	1.5
Religious education	1	100	85	-	26	3.0	2.4

GCE A Level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	19	100	96	89	46	9.1	6.6
Biology	35	97	88	51	34	7.0	5.3
Business studies	24	96	92	50	32	6.1	5.5
Chemistry	24	96	90	38	43	5.4	5.9
Economics	10	100	89	60	36	7.8	5.5
English literature	53	100	95	49	37	7.1	5.9
French	15	93	89	53	38	7.1	5.6
Design and technology	21	90	91	48	30	6.9	5.4
General studies	139	81	85	27	30	4.5	4.9
Geography	28	86	92	29	38	4.7	5.7
German	4	100	91	75	40	7.5	5.8
History	26	88	88	31	35	5.2	4.5
Mathematics	30	97	87	37	43	5.7	5.8
Music	3	100	93	33	35	5.3	5.7
Environmental science	12	83	90	42	30	5.2	5.2
Physics	19	84	88	21	40	4.4	5.7
Religious education	13	100	92	47	38	6.9	5.8
Sociology	32	84	86	44	35	5.8	5.3
Theatre studies	11	100	93	55	31	7.8	5.5
Sports/PE studies	17	82	92	24	25	4.8	5.1

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

59. The focus of the inspection was on two subjects, mathematics and biology. Work in chemistry, physics and environmental science was also sampled. In the 2001 examinations, chemistry results were in line with the national average, and students did as well as expected relative to their GCSE results. In the two lessons sampled, teaching was good. Practical work was directed well and evaluated very effectively. Students' attitudes were good. They sustained concentration and showed interest, and in particular, remained very focussed when working independently. In the 2001 examinations in physics, results were below average when compared with those seen nationally. However, external examinations taken at the end of Year 12 by current students indicate that a change in curriculum and style of examination is raising standards effectively. In the two lessons sampled, teaching was good. Teachers' good subject knowledge enabled them to give clear explanations and to handle students' questions skilfully and constructively. Students worked with interest, and their good relationships with teachers promoted meaningful discussion. In environmental science, the results of the 2001 examination results were in line with national average. The present Year 13 saw an unprecedented fall in numbers but in Year 12 the subject has resumed its former popularity. In the two lessons sampled teaching was good. The lessons were well planned and well developed and explanations were clear. In both, the homework set was useful and challenging.

Mathematics

Overall the quality of provision in mathematics is satisfactory.

Strengths:

- Strong subject knowledge base provided by subject specialists.
- Positive attitude of students towards mathematics.
- Very good relationships between pupils and teachers.

Areas for Improvement:

- There are few opportunities for independent learning or investigative work.
- Marking of work that provides constructive feedback for students is inconsistent.
- Standards of attainment in AS Level examinations are low.

60. Standards attained in A Level examinations in 2001 were broadly in line with the national averages and an improvement upon results in 2000. Girls performed at a higher level than boys. Standards attained at AS Level were below national expectations and resulted in a significant drop in the number of students opting to study mathematics in Year 13.

61. In work seen during the inspection student attainment in Year 12 is broadly in line with national expectations; this is a reflection of the commitment of the students and teachers' increased awareness of course demands. Students are making good progress. Students in Year 13 following the A2 course are working at a level of attainment above national expectations and high grades are anticipated for them.

62. Teaching is satisfactory overall. Lessons are well prepared; teachers have good subject knowledge and demonstrate sound classroom management skills. However, teaching is very much teacher dominated, allowing little opportunity for students'

independent learning. Marking is variable and does not always provide the constructive feedback that would enable students to improve future performance. Students willingly contribute to class discussion and questioning. Relationships between students and teachers are very good.

63. During the inspection Year 12 students demonstrated a sound understanding of algebraic method. They can identify convergent, divergent and oscillating series and apply appropriate formulae for summation. Year 13 students were able to recognise properties of statistical distributions and relate these with previous work on probability. Students were also able to resolve forces accurately and interpret the motion of connected particles.

64. The head of department provides effective leadership and is committed to raising standards. The departmental handbook contains a range of policy documents, schemes of work and the allocation of responsibilities. Detailed analysis of pupil performance has been established by the use of ALIS and has been extended to include the sharing of targets with pupils.

65. Lesson observations plus annual reviews within the performance management framework have identified appropriate strategies for further improvement. The time allocated for the teaching of AS Level mathematics is, however, less than the national average and is a factor in limiting the range of teaching strategies.

Biology

Overall, the quality of provision is very good.

Strengths:

- Teaching is very good. Teachers' very good knowledge and understanding of their subject provides challenging work, and good teaching methods support students' independent learning.
- Formal assessment is used to monitor students' progress effectively and good support is given.
- The subject is well led and a collection of good learning resources is being built up.

Areas for development:

- The procedures for target setting require some refinement.
- The curriculum could be improved further by identifying opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Within investigative work, there is a need for more ICT to be used for measurement.

66. Results in the 2001 A Level examinations, as measured by average point scores, are well above the national average. The school is able to show that, in relation to their GCSE results, most pupils did better than expected. Since the last report, results have fluctuated a little but have been consistently well above average. They were best in 2001 and the very good results achieved in the end of Year 12 examinations indicate a rising trend. Numbers have been increasing since 1999 and biology remains the most popular of the A Level sciences. More girls than boys choose to study biology, and on average, girls tend to gain the higher grades.

67. Standards of work seen amongst current students are well above average and reflect past examination results. Year 13 students show very good skills of research that lead to effective understanding of the subject material. For instance, in one lesson seen, they made good use of information from a range of different sources to produce very successful group presentations on the possible mechanisms of water movement in plants. Scrutiny of their work shows that many extend their knowledge and understanding beyond the demands of the

curriculum. They write coherently and apply their knowledge very effectively to novel situations. They put their numeracy skills to very good use when, for example, they use statistical tests to evaluate the results of investigations. Almost all students, including one with special educational needs, are achieving well, and some achieve very well. Students in Year 12, just over one term into the course, are already successfully taking their scientific knowledge and understanding to greater depths. In their study of cytology, for instance, they describe the complex nature of the cell membrane and appreciate the usefulness of different types of microscopy. In biotechnology they understand how experiments carried out in the laboratory can be scaled-up for industrial use. They have good practical skills and explain clearly the methodology involved and relate it to scientific theory.

68. Teaching is very good overall and as a result students learn very well. Teachers show very good subject knowledge when they use questions to probe students understanding, and when they answer students' unexpected questions. Their explanations are clear and show an up-to-date grasp of the subject. This was especially evident in one Year 12 lesson in which work on the structure of genetic molecules was very successfully developed through the interpretation of scientific data. Lessons are planned well to include a variety of effective teaching methods and students' independent learning skills are being very well managed. Whilst students rightly have to take much responsibility for their own learning, the results of their research are well co-ordinated in class. Good interaction in lessons encourages students to show initiative. Whilst ICT is used well for research and word processing, there is a need for further development of its use in measurement. Teachers would benefit from subject related training in ICT. The day to day marking seen is of a high standard and helpful to students and homework is used very effectively. Examination preparation underpins teaching and is very rigorous. The programme of work is well organised and each year group benefits from the teaching being shared between two specialists.

69. The good attitudes of students contribute much to their good progress. They listen carefully and often question intelligently to extend their knowledge and understanding, though occasionally some individuals are allowed to dominate the lesson. Students take much pride in their written work, which is almost always well organised and well presented.

70. Work in the subject is very well led and very well managed. The head of section has a clear vision for raising standards and together with an enthusiastic teaching team strives to improve and provide the best opportunities for students. There is effective sharing of skills and good practice amongst the teachers, who are responsive to change and not afraid to take on new challenges. The curriculum is broad and provides students with the opportunity to develop a range of skills that will effectively prepare them for their future careers, but spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects are not yet formally identified. The assessment and monitoring of students' progress is very good and students have a good understanding of how well they are doing relative to their expected grades. However, there is some scope for refining the target setting procedure through on-going review. Whilst the section recommends students to buy books for personal and home use, there is a good range of books available in the library and within the department. A very good range of in-house resources is being built up for student use and exam preparation, and students' individual needs are well supported.

71. Since the last inspection, schemes of work have been rewritten and improved and more ICT has been successfully incorporated. Whilst monitoring of student performance is better developed, more formal monitoring of teaching is still needed. Most of the accommodation has been refurbished.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

72. The focus of the inspection was on design and technology. No other courses are offered.

Design and technology

Overall, the quality of provision is good.

Strengths:

- Examination results and student numbers have improved steadily over a number of years.
- Students are good at applying their understanding of the design process to solve design problems.
- Students are articulate and display a good awareness of industrial practices.
- Students use ICT confidently when designing and making products.
- Teaching is good and well matched to the individual needs of students.

Areas for improvement:

- The research skills of a small number of students.
- The analytical skills of a small number of students.
- The breadth of design experiences for students to experience.

73. The A Level product design results have been above average for a number of years. Most students achieve a grade higher than their predicted grade based on prior attainment in GCSE. The number of students choosing to take this subject has risen considerably over the last few years. The number who fail to complete the course is not significant.

74. The standards of work in the current Year 13 are good relative to the grades they obtained in GCSE. Students are making good progress with coursework. The work seen displays an individual identity and work by the most able students is innovative. Students were observed using sophisticated software skilfully to aid designing. Folios are well maintained and students address fully all the aspects required by the examination board. A good feature of the work is the appreciation, which students show of the environmental, social and moral implications of making products.

75. The majority of students in Year 12 are achieving well. The few who are less successful either have very low prior attainment at GCSE and are finding the subject difficult or have embarked on projects somewhat beyond their capabilities and the materials available. Students were observed working independently on coursework and making good use of the time and resources available to them to apply their knowledge and understanding in the subject. Students in both Years 12 and 13 make very good use of a wide range of ICT applications to enhance their work.

76. Teaching is consistently good. A team of two teachers working with the same group enables students to access wider subject knowledge, particularly with regard to materials. Teachers have excellent planning skills, which are having a very positive effect in helping students to develop similar skills. Teachers have high expectations of students, which motivate and encourage them. Good classroom relationships exist and this promotes a co-operative working atmosphere that fosters productivity. Assessment procedures are excellent. Students understand what constitutes good work. Their performance is constantly monitored and they receive good feedback on their progress and what they need to do to improve. On a few occasions, however, teachers are over-prescriptive and provide too

much direction for student's work, making it less demanding. Few opportunities exist for students to widen their horizons in respect of designing by means of resources, visits etc.

77. Students respond very well to what is offered. They learn quickly and enjoy the subject because they find it interesting. Students work hard building on the good foundations laid in GCSE study to widen and develop their knowledge and understanding of the subject. They are willing to persevere when difficulties arise. They develop good independent learning skills when completing coursework. They discuss ideas readily with the teacher and each other and take account of the views of others. More able students seek out the views of experts about their design proposals before proceeding with their ideas. Students were observed working co-operatively and effectively to solve a problem that occurred when using software. A minority of pupils are over-reliant on teacher direction for their projects. They lack initiative to suggest possible routes through the work for themselves. This is particularly apparent when they undertake research and only the most obvious sources are investigated.

78. There is very good leadership and management of the subject and teachers work co-operatively. Teaching and learning are monitored and an appropriate development plan exists. Currently there is no progression in systems and control or food technology from Year 11 into the Sixth Form. No vocational courses are offered.

79. Since the last inspection very good improvement has been made. The department has updated from teaching discrete craft skills to delivering the wider subject of design and technology. Girls have been successfully integrated into the subject. The new A Level course in product design has been successfully introduced. The number of pupils opting for the subject has increased. Examination results have improved significantly and are now above the national average. Some improvements have been made to the accommodation. The second phase is due to start shortly. Information and communication technology (ICT) provision has increased and now includes computer-aided design and manufacture (CAD/CAM). An increased level of technician support is now provided.

BUSINESS

80. At Post 16 the school offers Business Studies at AS and A Levels and at AVCE. The school also offers Economics at AS and A Levels. The very small numbers at AVCE (4 in Year 13 and none in Year 12) determined the decision to concentrate on looking in depth at the AS and A Level provision.

Business Studies

Overall the quality of provision is good.

Strengths:

- Results in 2001 were above national averages.
- Teaching is good and occasionally very good.
- Very good student response.
- Very good leadership and management.
- Support provided for students is good.
- Good planning.

Areas for improvement:

- To maintain pace and challenge in all classes.
- To increase the access to ICT.
- To extend students' experiences of the business world.
- Accommodation and its impact on teaching and standards.

• Resources.

81. In GCE A Level business studies, attainment is above national averages. Indeed, the examination results have been above average for three of the last four years, including 2001, when half of the students achieved A or B grades.

82. The standards reached by current students, as seen in lessons and in their written work, are above average for both boys and girls. Year 12 students are particularly adept at using data analysis. For example, in their studies of business strategic planning, students can effectively study and analyse a company's business records in order to prepare a strategic plan for the firm's survival. Year 13 students can engage effectively in the micro aspects of business. For example, in their studies of a company engaged in the expansion of a leisure centre, students engaged effectively in a critical path analysis to plot the most efficient path for particular functions of the business.

83. In Year 12, students make good progress in understanding the central ideas of the subject, including those relating to the economic environment in which business operates, and they are good at applying their understanding. Students in Year 13 also progress well in their current work, and some are making good or even very good progress.

84. Overall, the quality of the teaching on the GCE A Level course is good and occasionally very good. The teachers' excellent rapport with their students and expert subject knowledge underpin discussion and lend clarity to the explanations provided. Lessons are carefully planned, and effective use is made of case studies and other activities to allow students to apply and extend their learning. Students are very well supported academically. The teachers' methodical explanations help lower attaining students to understand the subject better. However, a tendency to over- provide such help for the students sometimes means that they do not have enough practice in the kinds of analysis that will enable them to become more independent learners and reach the higher levels of attainment.

85. Students respond very well in lessons. Their attitudes are mostly mature and they sustain interest. Higher attaining students maintain intellectual rigour and portray evidence of wider reading. Too often, however, some students are happy to be passive recipients rather than active participants in their own learning.

86. Resources in the department are satisfactory. The subject has enough textbooks for all students, and students have opportunities to engage in activities, such as the Young Enterprise Scheme, which augment their business knowledge and understanding. However, although the temporary classrooms have been recently refurbished to a high standard, the lack of immediate access to ICT facilities has an adverse effect on students' progress and attainment. There is insufficient time for students to undertake visits, which would enhance their understanding of the world of business.

87. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department has a clear vision for the future which sensibly includes plans to strengthen both the academic and the vocational aspect of the department's provision to meet the wide and differing needs and aspirations of future students. Under his effective and efficient leadership, the department has produced a range of informed and informative documents, which deal with all aspects of the department's work. He provides an excellent role model for a department, which is committed to high standards and high achievement. In this he is well supported by his colleagues.

Economics

Overall the quality of provision is very good.

Strengths:

- Very good results at A Level and AS Level; Results at A Level have been significantly above national averages for the last three years.
- High standards of students' written work.
- Very good teaching. Teachers have expert subject knowledge and organise their courses well;
- Very good management of the subject.

Areas for improvement:

- Increase the opportunities for experience of the business world.

88. Standards are well above national levels. Results at A Level have been strong over time and significantly above the national average over the last three years. In 2001 the majority of students achieved grade A in the subject. A particularly pleasing feature is the number of girls taking the A Level examination and their relative success. For example, in 2001 one third of the students were girls and all attained grade A.

89. In work seen, standards are well above average, as in the last inspection, and achievement is very good. Students have a well-developed sense of the influence of economics on everyday life, such as the ways in which changing interest rates affect the whole economy. They have a very secure grasp of appropriate terminology, and Year 12 students refer to theoretical tools like "aggregate demand" and "supply functions" to help them analyse the impact of changes in demand. This was shown especially well in their studies of the effect on the world's economy of the attacks on the World Trade Centre. Standards of literacy are generally good. Students write well and use evidence to support their analysis of problems. Their numerical skills are sound, and they have a good grasp of key principles such as total, marginal and average relationships.

90. Teaching and learning are very good. Three out of the four lessons seen were very good and one was good. Teachers have expert knowledge of their subject and of the examination specifications and structure. Explanations are, therefore, very clear, reinforced by good use of diagrams and overhead transparencies for giving information. The teaching is very well structured, dividing the course into units that clearly specify the learning that needs to occur. Teaching is particularly strong where the teacher encourages the students to become independent learners. This was particularly, but not exclusively, displayed in a Year 12 lesson on the role of government intervention to correct the market. The teacher exhorted pupils not only to seek understanding of the economic issue in groups but then to present their findings to the other groups. Students, therefore, needed to take responsibility for learning key definitions, such as "negative and positive externalities" and reading important textual references in order to report back to their classmates. They responded with intellectual rigour and produced work of the highest level. Marking of work is mostly very detailed and helpful, using, where appropriate, criteria used by the examination board. Students are regularly tested and their notes and files checked, ensuring that they are kept in good order. Students work hard and recognise areas of weakness in which they need to improve. Relationships in classes are very good.

91. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. The department checks and analyses results carefully to identify areas of courses in which teaching and learning can be improved, and sets clear targets for action as a consequence. There are adequate resources, which have broadened since the last inspection, with increasing use of the Internet and a broad range of textbooks. However, there are few formal curricular links with business for work other than coursework. Overall, expectations are very high, and there is a strong commitment throughout the department to meet these expectations.

92. This is a good department, which continues to offer provision of a very high standard.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

93. The focus for the inspection was on physical education. No other courses are taught at present.

Physical education

Overall the quality of provision is good.

Strengths:

- The excellent attitude of students and the very good relationship between students and staff.
- Good teaching.
- The good opportunities for students to take responsibility for their own learning.

Areas for improvement:

- Planning for the increased use of ICT.
- Marking and target setting to help students improve their work.
- Planning of the Sixth Form course.

94. In the A Level examinations in 2001 the majority of students achieved or exceeded their predicted grades and performed at least as well in physical education as they did in their other A Level subjects. Results were in line with the national average and similar to results of recent years. In the AS Level examination in 2001 most pupils failed to achieve their predicted grade on the basis of prior attainment.

95. Standards of work of current students conform to national standards. In both Years 12 and 13 students overall are achieving standards expected in relation to predictions based on their GCSE results. In the practical lessons observed, however, they were achieving better than this as a result of effective teaching and an excellent and very mature response from students. The structure of the lesson and the range of the activities clearly focused their learning so that many students were able to apply previous knowledge and develop a good understanding of acquiring and teaching movement skills. Students recall knowledge well and apply their knowledge to practical activities in a range of different sports. Written work for the majority of students illustrates a good understanding of much of the work covered and there are very comprehensive notes, especially on physiology and anatomy, although there was little evidence in their written work of the application of this to practical situations. An exception to this was some very good work by one student in his personal performance portfolio, where good knowledge and understanding of physiology and anatomy and several other aspects of the course were used to good effect to identify how to improve performance in a specific activity. Overall, there were limited opportunities for students to illustrate their knowledge and understanding through assessed assignments or in practice answers to examination questions.

96. Students in Year 12 are only half way through their course but are achieving much as expected in their theory work, although the volume of written work is less than would be expected at this stage in the course. They show sound knowledge and understanding of the principles of training and of some of the contemporary issues in sport.

97. Teaching is good and students learn well as a result. Clear objectives, good planning and very good relationships with the students were a feature of the good teaching seen. Teachers illustrate very good subject knowledge through their exposition and through their question and answer sessions with students and this also contributes to the good learning that was observed. There were very good opportunities for students to work independently, to take responsibility for their own learning and then to help others in the group to improve their own performance. This was a feature of a well-structured and organised lesson where Years 12 and 13 worked together to analyse and improve performance in a range of sports.

98. Students learn well. They are co-operative and attentive, work productively, and respond well to the supportive teaching and different learning styles they experience. They work well in groups, support each other, and listen well to each other's ideas. Most are confident in offering their ideas and respond well when given responsibility for their own learning.

99. In many respects the good teaching and learning in the subject is supported by effective leadership and management. Day to day organization is good and there is a clear commitment to improving standards and building on the good start that has been made in A and AS Level physical education. This is illustrated by the clear picture that staff have of the potential of individual pupils and by some of the procedures that exist to ensure that this potential is realized. However, targets for students are not yet focused sharply enough on specific learning goals or on enough information from analysis of students' achievements. Marking is not rigorous enough and does not consistently and clearly identify targets for improvement; nor are there sufficient opportunities for students to produce work for in-depth assessment. Department planning does not identify in sufficient detail the priorities for the Sixth Form for this year, particularly with respect to the organisation of teaching and learning and the structure and organisation of the course. Nor is it linked to professional development requirements for members of the department. There are restricted opportunities and not enough encouragement for students to utilise information technology on the course.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

100. The focus of the Post 16 inspection was on art and theatre studies but music was also sampled. In music, with a small entry of three students, A Level results in 2001 were above average and students did as expected considering their GCSE results. Two lessons were observed and both were good. The emphasis on acquisition of musical skills was illustrated positively in a keyboard lesson and in an A Level performance class.

Art and design

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

Strengths:

- Quality of teaching is excellent.
- Strong, well established and caring relationships.
- Results at A Level and AVCE have, over time, been consistently well above the national averages.
- Superb and wide ranging stimulus material in all the art rooms.
- Proximity of the art rooms allows positive and constructive access for both teachers and students, enabling sharing of expertise.

Areas for improvement:

- Art rooms are too small and cramped for large classes.
- A technician would greatly enhance the work of the department.
- More storage is desperately needed for larger pieces of work.

101. Overall, standards in the department are excellent and have improved considerably on those outlined in the last inspection report. At A Level in 2001 all students obtained grades between A and C, which is well above the national average. The same applies to the AVCE students who, in 2001, obtained a 100 per cent pass rate, all at distinction level.

102. On the AVCE course students were observed using a variety of materials in their embossing and trapping work. They were able to manipulate wire, fibres and natural forms creatively and confidently as they fused them together. The use of subtle, gentle colours to highlight some of the artefacts added extra impact to the work. At the time of the inspection the majority of students in Year 12 were already at merit level.

103. On the A Level course, in both Years 12 and 13, the range and quality of the work is stunning. Techniques in drawing and painting are highly developed, which enables students to experiment and discover their own individual styles. They are equally at home with three-dimensional work in fibreglass, plaster and mod-roc; a life-sized sculpture of a woman with a cello in adhesive tape and wire is particularly impressive. A group working on the theme of deconstruction and illusion were able to create stylised, surreal and sometimes witty images with confidence and imagination. In a lesson based on book title stimuli the range of work was very diverse. Skilful observation of landscape and a vibrant, coloured cityscape in American comic book style were two of the responses to 'A room with a view'. 'Where angels fear to tread' inspired a very sinister, broody collage of terrifying and distorted images. At the time of the inspection, students were working at grades A to C.

104. Teaching is excellent overall and promotes the very high standards. Much of the work students produce is on display. Students are set work of considerable challenge to which they respond enthusiastically. Through well-considered feedback to individual students, independent learning is encouraged and students feel confident to move on and experiment. Students' work is monitored rigorously. They are all informed of their present position regarding achievement and targets are clearly set. The strong caring relationship established as a result of the teaching helps to develop the students' capacity for making, and taking, constructive criticism. The teacher's subject knowledge and expertise are valued by the students, who all react positively to advice and input. As a result of this inspired teaching, students are motivated to strive for high quality artistic achievement.

105. The head of department is enthusiastic, committed and energetic. The schemes of work cover the requirements of the A Level and AVCE syllabuses but are also flexible enough to allow students to develop and investigate their own specialisms.

106. The department is aware of pupils with special educational needs and differentiated work is available to help some students and challenge the gifted and talented. Regular meetings and moderation of marks ensure consistency of assessment across the department. The great wealth of students' work, which festoons the department, is an excellent source of inspiration for all the classes throughout the school.

107. The art rooms are close together, which allows positive and constructive access for both teachers and students and enables the sharing of expertise. However, the art rooms are really too small for some of the large classes. This leads to overcrowding and shortage of work surfaces. There is little storage space for some of the larger pieces of work, which also adds to the overcrowding problem. Because of the wide variety of media being used by students, a technician would greatly enhance the work of the department and cut down on some preparation time. Despite these disadvantages this excellent department continues to flourish. In response to the last OFSTED report, teaching is much improved and classroom displays are exciting and stimulating.

Drama and Theatre Studies

Overall, the quality of provision is good.

Strengths:

- Results were well above average in 2001 and have improved over previous years.
- Teaching is consistently good or better.
- Students' good understanding of the demands of the subject and their performance and production skills.
- The way students work together and the excellent relationships with staff.
- Leadership and management.
- The enthusiasm for ongoing self-review leading to continual improvement.

Areas for Improvement:

- Writing for the less able and extension work for the most able.
- Marking of written work to provide targets for students.
- Strategies to increase the involvement of boys in drama.
- Resources (including the use of ICT) and accommodation.

108. Following previous slightly variable performance over time, A Level results were well above the national average in 2001, with over half of students achieving A and B grades, and all achieving pass grades. Both boys and girls achieved well. In the first year of the new AS Level examination a slightly wider range of grades than predicted has been followed up by an increased focus in lessons and homework on sustained writing to complement the practical activity. Most students decide to continue the subject for a second year although the AS will provide a useful end goal for some students.

109. Attainment in lessons seen during the inspection was good, with examples of very good standards achieved by some pupils. All students demonstrated a good understanding of the demands of the AS and A2 specifications and a grasp of a variety of drama forms, which they were able to apply to their own performance. In a number of lessons they explored the director's concept of their chosen text. They were able to identify scenes characterising the essence of the play and to develop approaches to staging, thinking about the appropriateness and practicality of different techniques (the use of freeze frames, symbolism, back projection,

lighting, appropriate voice and movement). They used the relevant specialist vocabulary and theatrical terms and concepts to describe them. In discussion on a recently seen production of 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' they were able to apply their experience as an audience to identify the mood and impact of staging strategies and the director's intentions and influences – linking this to other cultural and historical points of reference. They were able to link this to contemporary approaches, and use the experience to refine their own characterisation and staging, with a Year 13 group beginning to explore the Theatre of Cruelty and the Absurd – through the medium of the dream.

110. Written work indicates that students can explain their theoretical knowledge and understanding of theatre practices from different periods, the playwright's intentions, and production styles. Whilst some use is made in lessons of mind maps, lower attaining students in particular would benefit from more structured support in recording their observations both on the development of their performance skills and in sustained writing on textual analysis. Tasks are not specific to the students' range of abilities and the most able would also benefit from more demanding tasks, greater emphasis on research skills and more testing written work. More informative marking of written work and the further development of recent assessment and target setting approaches will assist in this process.

111. The quality of teaching is a significant strength of the department. Teachers are secure in their knowledge of the theory and practice of drama and provide well planned and well structured lessons, intervening at appropriate moments to help students make connections and extend both their thinking and practical work. They provide a sequence of activities and adjust the focus and the time frame for practical activities to maintain pace and extend practice. They enjoy excellent relationships with students; mutual respect and collaborative teamwork are strong features of lessons. Students are highly motivated, able to evaluate practice and take pleasure in their work.

112. Some further attention to varying teaching approaches, on occasions, to respond to the different learning styles of boys would further enhance their motivation and achievement - as would occasionally reviewing the balance between student and teacher in directing practical work.

113. Whilst best use is made of currently available resources, students would benefit significantly from a better equipped workshop space which allowed for a more design based approach to the subject - providing appropriate technology (lighting/sound/video). This should include access to ICT to support better presentation of written work and the development of a resource bank through the interactive whiteboard. In the interim, some increased access to the hall to support preparation for practical exam practice is highly desirable.

114. The head of department is dynamic and keen to raise the profile of the subject and increase the uptake of boys, through strategies which include whole school productions, house drama, applying for a possible Award Mark and extra-curricular theatre visits. The departmental handbook incorporates appropriate schemes of work, recent policy development (in such areas as literacy in drama and support for the talented and gifted) reflects whole school aims and embodies a spirit of self-review. Recent initiatives in establishing student self-assessment, closer student monitoring and target setting are commendable and should be further developed - although targets are not yet sharply enough focused on specific learning goals.

HUMANITIES

115. The focus was on geography, history and religious education. Provision in sociology was sampled. Teaching of sociology is dynamic. Learning in the one lesson observed was very good as students considered “truth” from the points of view of science and sociology and were brought to realise that within both paradigms of study there are different definitions of the word. Attainment is above average and achievement is good.

GEOGRAPHY

Overall, the quality of provision in geography is satisfactory.

Strengths:

- The department is well led.
- There is a strong commitment to improvement and areas for development are well understood.
- Teaching is good; teachers have good subject knowledge and work well together.
- Available accommodation is well organised.

Areas for improvement:

- Attainment at A and AS Level in 2001 was below average
- The department does not retain its highest attainers from the main school.
- Good baseline information based on attainment and continuous assessment is not used strongly enough in the close counselling of students.
- The planning of individual lessons needs careful re-consideration.

116. Standards of attainment at A and AS Levels were below the national average and significantly below the school averages in 2001. At A Level four students, three boys and one girl did not attain a grade; these were students who had decided they did not wish to complete the course but were compelled to take the examination because of the school’s entry policy. A number of other students did not attain their target grades, which depressed the overall average point score. The attainment of girls was broadly average, but they did not do so well as they did in other subjects. Boys performed significantly worse than they did in other subjects at A Level. At AS Level, few students attained the higher grades and two remained without a pass at the end of the year. Some started A Level without a pass at AS Level. The department attracts few of its highest attainers to Sixth Form courses – teachers are now working hard to promote interest in the subject.

117. Inspection evidence shows that standards are improving. The work seen in Year 13 is at the national average and that in Year 12 is better than the national average. In one Year 12 lesson students advanced the level of their geographical knowledge and skills well. They investigated coastal erosion in Norfolk and the range of human reactions to it and then analysed costs and recommended solutions. They used Power Point skilfully to illustrate their group presentations and began to develop communication skills. In Year 13 students achieved a good understanding of the complex difficulties of resolving the “troubles” in Ulster as part of a case study of political separatism.

118. The overall standard of teaching is good. In one lesson in five teaching is very good and in three in five it is good. The rest is satisfactory. Teachers show strong subject knowledge in class discussion so that students develop their knowledge and understanding. The development of basic skills is good. Students have high levels of literacy, well displayed in extended writing and practise examination questions, though there is occasional and surprising carelessness, for example in the use of capital letters. Teachers’ expectation of numeracy skills is high and well met in the good use of arithmetical and statistical skills. Two

examples were the use of Spearman's Rank in correlating income and birth rates, and of proportional circles to illustrate the differences in the use of energy resources in developed and less well developed countries. Teachers have good ICT skills, which predate the recent national training programme. Consequently students use computer aided presentations and the department's own web site to collect notes and homework. The department is developing its use of an interactive whiteboard well.

119. Teachers depend heavily on a base of extensive well-planned printed notes and case studies. The best case studies contain good examples of work sheets enabling students to work for periods at their own level and pace to develop their knowledge and understanding. In a minority of lessons, teaching methods are not as well planned as the materials. Teachers then work harder than the students, who appear passive. Students are, however, good listeners. In an otherwise good lesson on political separatism, students found it difficult to make notes and respond to questions simultaneously. Their response appeared flat but discussion afterwards showed clear understanding of the complex issues involved in resolving the problems of Ulster. In one lesson work done by students on the age/gender pyramid of migrant workers in Germany was not reinforced by discussion because time was running out and the teacher was anxious to cover the content. It seemed that covering the content was more important than student learning. Ironically, the best learning observed was when the teacher was heard least and the students worked very hard to present their own well-researched findings about the Norfolk coastline.

120. Teachers are well aware of the need to modify their teaching styles. They are building on effective practice already used in the main school, and this is starting to show good results in developing students' thinking skills, independent learning and field work skills.

121. Marking is thorough and supportive and shows students how to improve their work. Homework is set regularly and often involves the use of the department's web site and other Internet sources. Not all teachers are aware of the few students who do not have computers at home and who therefore need access to computers in school, or whether they will be able to use the school machines.

122. Students are generally effective and efficient learners; their files are very full and are all very well organised. During lessons they are capable of understanding, collating and synthesising well a wide range of materials including video, whiteboard, text, charts, Ordnance Survey maps and statistical data. They manage their desktop computers well. In the best files, explanatory diagrams are very good and efficient; colour is well used. They are good listeners and express themselves well in extended talk. They are responsive to visual stimulus such as the photographs of advancing and receding coastlines and the videos of Ulster and of Berlin. They can relate photographs of Loch Torridon to the Ordnance Survey map of the area. Progress during lessons is good overall and is better in lessons seen, in Year 12.

123. Leadership and management of the subject are good because many of the points made above arise from teachers' monitoring, evaluation and perceptions of their own performance; this is increasingly well managed. Strengths and weaknesses are well known and shared within the teaching team and with the line manager; training and support are provided to help improvements. Relationships with senior management are open and honest and there is a strong commitment to improvement, which is already taking place. The consequence is that standards are already rising in Sixth Form geography.

124. The accommodation is satisfactory overall, and what is available is well organised and managed. Three teaching rooms are clustered around good storerooms and work rooms so that teachers have their own teaching and personal work areas. A fourth room, a refurbished mobile is close by. A fifth room, which is far from ideal, is occasionally used for geography.

125. Resources are unsatisfactory overall because there are insufficient books and some students are obliged to buy their own. Nevertheless, teaching rooms are well equipped with televisions, whiteboards and blackout. There is one new interactive whiteboard, a computer in each of three rooms, and the department is rapidly developing its own web site. During the inspection, students located information for homework placed on the site. This initiative has strong potential for raising attainment.

HISTORY

Overall, the quality of provision in history is good.

Strengths:

- Teaching is good and sometimes very good.
- Marking is detailed and gives students good advice on how to write essays of a high standard.
- Teachers produce resources of high quality, which serve to interest students and foster both discussion and debate.
- The department is well led and teachers share a vision for the future development of the subject.

Areas for improvement:

- Attainment levels, which have varied over the past four years.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory to allow the use of ICT for research.

126. Results in A Level examinations over the last four years have been at least average, but have varied from year to year. They met the national average in 2001 for the higher grades but this was somewhat of a decline from the results in 2000. Girls outperform boys on a regular basis. However, results at AS Level in 2001 were very encouraging; every student reached pass level and students performed well above the national average at the higher grades.

127. This improvement in standards was mirrored during the inspection and is a result of a recent improvement programme. From lesson observations, and from the scrutiny of students' work, it is apparent that, from a barely average starting point, students in Year 12 are making good progress in the acquisition of higher order historical skills. From a study of contemporary art, they can make quite perceptive comments on the personality of Peter the Great and the image he wished to portray. Moreover, they can produce detailed notes, from their own research, on developments in education during the period and also on the relationship between this Tsar and the Russian church. Students in Year 13 are very articulate; they engage in high levels of intellectual debate on the foreign policy of Elizabeth I, for example. They are skilled in the analysis and interpretation of source material, can give convincing arguments as to its significance, and can go further and assess both its validity and its usefulness to historians. Moreover, students write essays, which comprise introductions to set the scene, discussions of both sides of the argument, and conclusions, which refer to the evidence available to them.

128. Teaching is good overall and there are examples in both years of very good teaching. Teachers display profound subject knowledge, a real passion for history and relentless questioning which leads to high levels of intellectual debate. Because teachers know just the right questions to ask and because they encourage their students to question the evidence, students are more than willing to contribute and, on occasions, to enter into historical argument with their teachers! An impressive feature of the teaching is the emphasis on paired work, which offers students opportunities to challenge each other. Although a majority of students in Year 12 have not attained the higher grades at GCSE, teachers nonetheless have high expectations of them. This means that students feel valued and therefore

demonstrate good progress in their depth of thinking; they often surprise themselves at what they can do. Teachers continue to ask, “but why?” and “could you explain that further, please?” and this leads to high levels of objectivity and students giving reasons for their views. Teachers spend considerable time advising students on how best they may approach their studies, in order that they can feel confident when they approach their examinations. Marking of assignments is, therefore, completed regularly and to a very high standard, the most important aspect of which is the detailed commentary after every essay.

129. Students have good relations with their teachers and with their classmates. This is fostered by the notes, produced by the students themselves, which are shared with all members of the classes. Students not only speak highly of their teachers; they are also pleased when other students succeed. The celebration of success and the respect with which students treat their classmates, do much to bring about high self-esteem and a confidence to express opinions. Students enjoy history. The fact that there are three groups in Year 12 is a testament to the value they place on the subject.

130. Improvements in students’ attainment are the result of good departmental management. Teachers have spent considerable time considering how to improve standards and they share a vision for the teaching of advanced history. This vision comprises in-depth planning, challenge yet support in the classroom, and marking which both celebrates success and diagnoses where students can improve. Teachers work hard to provide their students with resources, which motivate them and ensure that they can face their examinations with confidence. The library is well stocked with relevant materials and students take advantage of the texts in it to follow their personal interests. However, because much of the teaching takes place in mobile classrooms, students cannot take advantage of ICT and the Internet as a tool for research. This affects their attainment adversely. Nevertheless, teachers in the department display a profound care for the welfare, both academic and social, of their students. The department is adept at evaluating its own progress and has put effective strategies in place to bring about ongoing improvement. It is, therefore, well placed for future improvement.

Religious education

131. In the Sixth Form, religious education is offered as an examination subject at AS and A Level and it is offered as part of the Sixth Form complementary studies unit in Year 12. Lessons in all these areas were observed.

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

Strengths:

- Public examination results above national norms.
- Good teaching that results in good learning. Lessons are well planned and well delivered.
- Good accommodation.
- The response of students; very positive attitudes towards Religious Education
- Very effective and efficient management and leadership of the department.
- Good contribution, via complementary studies, to students' personal development.

Areas for improvement:

- Continued development of monitoring and evaluation of teaching.
- Targets for lower attaining students in order to help them improve their grades at A Level.
- Provision for ICT.
- Time for staff development.
- Provision of religious education in the Sixth Form complementary studies in order to meet statutory requirements.
- Sufficient time for the subject.

132. In the A Level examinations in 2001, students obtained standards which were above average. About half of them obtained A or B grades and the others obtained C grade. Standards attained by students at the end of Year 12 were broadly average. Inspection evidence indicates standards which are already higher than national norms. Students can study a range of texts, including Biblical sources, and apply high order analytical skills to extract arguments to uphold or refute religious concepts. For example, year 13 students, in their studies of the concept of religious experiences, can study, evaluate and extract appropriate information from the Acts of the Apostles, where there are three slightly differing accounts of Paul (Saul)'s religious experience which led to his conversion. They effectively use these texts to discuss the fundamental elements of a religious experience. However, some students lack confidence in dealing with the complexities of analysis and evaluation when confronting them in tests and examinations; this leads to attainment falling below their expected levels. In the school's complementary studies programme for the Sixth Form, students in Year 12 study a unit on religious and ethical theories concerning contemporary moral issues. Lessons observed were lively, stimulating and enhanced students' learning. Because of the designed participatory elements, the lessons made a major contribution to students' attaining appropriate levels in Key Skills, as well as enhancing their personal development.

133. Pupils' achievement in both Years 12 and 13 is good. Pupils enter the Sixth Form with an average baseline of skills and knowledge. By the end of this stage of their learning they have made good progress and are skilful not only at selecting and demonstrating clearly relevant knowledge and understanding but also at using them to sustain a philosophical argument.

134. Teaching is good overall throughout years 12 and 13 and students learn well as a result. No lesson observed during the inspection was less than satisfactory and some lessons were good or very good. Teachers have good knowledge of the subject. Lessons

are well-planned and well-prepared and lead to students' learning. A developing characteristic of teaching in religious education is that the teachers' belief in the value of the subject is reflected in their enthusiasm for it. This is beginning to have a strong impact on students' learning. Teachers are particularly good at establishing good relationships. In some lessons, teachers tend to be too didactic and pupils are not sufficiently encouraged to become independent learners. In the best lessons, however, teachers are particularly adept at using a range of strategies to draw out significant points from material which is both challenging and exciting; they successfully exhort pupils to become more active participants in their own learning.

135. The response of students is very good and they generally show good application to their work. They respond diligently, settle quickly to task and sustain concentration. Their positive behaviour and response, which is often a direct result of good teaching and good classroom management, is an important factor in their increased learning.

136. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department leads the department dynamically, effectively and efficiently and is an excellent role model for a department team committed to raising standards and to the encouragement of pupils to even higher achievement. In this she is well supported by her colleagues in the department. She, in turn, gives them good support. She has already spent money prudently and effectively on a range of new textbooks, which contribute significantly to the achievement of students. She has a vision for the future of the department, which is based on a realistic evaluation of its strengths and the areas for its development.

137. There are some areas for development. The department has a comprehensive assessment policy based on sound principles and achievable outcomes. However, monitoring and evaluation of teaching and the setting of targets for students are not yet fully developed. Development in these areas would impact on all students but particularly the cohort of students who are currently working at the level of grades C or D. As yet, there is insufficient access to, and training in, the use of ICT to support the subject. The department has recently appointed young RE specialist teachers who are making a very good contribution to its success.

138. This is a good department with a commitment to, and capacity for, continuing improvement.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

139. The focus of the inspection was on English and German, but work in French was also sampled. French is more popular than German and results in recent years have been consistently above the national average. In 2001, the percentage of students gaining grades A and B was well above average. A Year 13 French lesson was observed and the teaching was very good. The teacher conducted the lesson almost entirely in French and students displayed high levels of fluency in the spoken language.

English

Overall the quality of provision is good.

Strengths:

- Well above average results in AS and A Level examinations.
- Students' achievement in creative and critical writing.
- Students' knowledge of literary and linguistic concepts and terms.
- Teachers' subject knowledge.
- The focus and detail of teachers' marking.

Areas for improvement:

- The sharing of best practice in marking and teaching.
- Specified time for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning in the department.
- Accommodation.

140. There are some 130 students following English Literature and English Language courses at AS and A2 Level.

141. Standards achieved in AS and A Level examinations are high. Over the past four years at A Level they have usually been well above the national average. This was not the case in 2000 when results for both boys and girls fell below the average achieved nationally. In 2001 results were very strong: well above the national average and above the average points scored in other subjects taken. The pattern of achievement over time is more erratic for boys than for girls, though the numbers of boys are comparatively small.

142. The work seen during the inspection was in line with these standards. Students, when given the opportunity, are confident speakers. They talk to good effect, sharing ideas and perceptions, and justifying their interpretation of a wide range of texts. Students generally write well. They use linguistic and literary concepts intelligently in personal responses to novels, poems, theatre and media texts. They make clear progress over the two years of the course. At best, as with a student who wrote a beautifully managed reply to Andrew Marvell in the style of *To His Coy Mistress*, writing is remarkably assured and creative. The same is true of reading. Students at all levels of ability read and interpret texts competently. Some read with considerable insight, as the following comment shows. 'Attwood's presentation of Grace as victimized on the one hand, but calculating and reserved on the other, suggests that Attwood does not want to make it easy for the reader to decide whether or not to sympathize'.

143. The achievement of AS and A Level students is good. In the work seen boys and girls were performing equally well. They respond to the high expectations of their teachers by producing work of real quality.

144. The teaching of English is good overall. No unsatisfactory lessons were observed and a significant proportion was very good. Teachers are well informed and knowledgeable. They relate well to students, who in turn are respectful and appreciative. All lessons are well planned in terms of content. The best also have variety and clearly explained purposes. For example, a lesson on the theme of war literature had students referring to grade criteria at its start so that work could be tailored to the expectations of examiners. Working in pairs, they studied extracts from poems, theatre scripts and novels and shared ideas in larger groups to prepare for presentations to the whole class. It was carefully managed work that led to readings of increasing insight and quality. Not all lessons involved students in this way. Students' opportunities to show and develop what they knew and could do were sometimes limited by teaching which required too much passive listening.

145. Teachers' questions are generally well directed. In a particularly successful lesson on the history of language students' presentations were developed by a series of challenging and direct questions, posed in such a way as to promote real enquiry and interest.

146. Teachers' marking is an important feature of good teaching. Exemplary commentary on an essay on *The Handmaid's Tale* showed the writer how to identify key words in the question and use them effectively to frame an answer. Subsequent work clearly improved on account of such close and attentive feedback. Again, that quality of response is not entirely general. The department would benefit from planned opportunities to identify and share the best practices of its members.

147. There is very good support for learning through a well-established system of individual tutorials. Students' writing and general progress is regularly reviewed. Targets are set in relation to expectations and prior attainment. Students feel themselves to be very well supported academically and pastorally by their English teachers. They appreciate their ready availability and concern for their progress.

148. Accommodation for the subject is satisfactory overall but is poor in some important respects. Some teaching goes on in non-specialist rooms at a distance from the accommodation suite in the Bader Building. The huts are dilapidated and dispiriting. The current arrangements make collaboration and communication more difficult than it should be.

149. The leadership and management of the recently appointed Head of English are good. She provides a very good model of energetic student-centred practice in her own teaching. She has a clear sense of the priorities for the department's development. Understandably some intentions (to upgrade schemes of work, for example, or to observe and plan collaboratively with colleagues) have yet to have an impact. Given support and time such developments will help to raise further students' achievement and enjoyment of the subject.

German

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

Strengths:

- Teaching is very good; teachers are very fluent in the languages and have high expectations of students.
- Attainment is above average.
- Resources produced by teachers are of high quality and encourage students to think deeply about the subject matter.

Areas for improvement:

- A significant minority of students does not complete their sixth-form studies to A Level.

150. Over the last four years, the numbers of students entered for A Level German declined. However, results have always been above the national average and in 2001 the results at the higher grades (A or B) were the best the school has had. High levels of attainment are being maintained and nearly 85 per cent of students gained grade A or B at AS Level in 2001.

151. Observation of lessons during the inspection and the scrutiny of students' files mirrored the high standards in external examinations. In Year 12, standards are above average and students can already take part in role-plays in German, on the advantages and disadvantages of different kinds of energy production, for example. Most use quite complex vocabulary accurately and are able to follow German spoken by native speakers at near normal speed;

they gather the meaning of the text and select the relevant details from it. Pronunciation is good and students read aloud with expression and understanding.

152. In Year 13, attainment levels are well above average and the grounding in the syntax and vocabulary of the language during Year 12 is put to good use. Students write quite perceptive essays on the set texts entirely in German and with a high degree of grammatical accuracy. Moreover, students display high standards in spoken German also. They can discuss with fluency contemporary issues on tourism and, because teachers use German extensively during lessons, they are adept at making intelligent guesses as to the meaning of new words and phrases. All students display a wide range of vocabulary and a thorough knowledge of quite complex grammar. They use these skills very effectively when speaking and writing and express themselves with real confidence.

153. The quality of teaching is a major strength of the department and is characterised by very secure subject-knowledge, the extensive use of German during lessons, and high levels of challenge. Teachers' emphasis on the active use of German encourages students to think in the language and this has a most positive effect on levels of comprehension and also fluency. Furthermore, because teachers have expectations of students' potential, students are more than willing to contribute, even when the content is complex, for example during a Year 13 discussion on the significance of aspects of Brecht's *Caucasian Chalk Circle*. Good relationships between teachers and students are a very strong feature; teachers' use of humour and praise, yet with a foundation of rigour and challenge, mean that lessons are enjoyable and that even complex grammar is brought to life. There is a good balance between a wide range of activities and students have opportunities to learn in their own ways. In most lessons, for example, there is writing, discussion work, grammar reinforcement, a check on vocabulary and listening exercises. Teachers spend considerable time offering their students advice on effective examination technique and are always available when further assistance is needed. Teaching, then, is challenging yet supportive. Students thrive on the amount of German they hear and on the rigour with which their teachers deliver the lessons.

154. Students adopt mature approaches to study, show real interest in German and speak highly of their teachers. They take responsibility for their own learning and enjoy the opportunities for personal research and the subsequent requirement to lead lessons, on the set texts in Year 13 for example. They are keen to take part in discussion work and, even when they find things difficult, sustain and develop their views with confidence; they are not afraid to make mistakes. Students are eager to offer support to their classmates and are delighted to celebrate the successes of all.

155. The department is well led and teachers plan the schemes of work in detail. Students are well aware of the subject matter to be covered and take their responsibilities very seriously, for example in preparation and learning of vocabulary. Students benefit from a good balance of activities designed to ensure that they are prepared fully for the requirements of external examinations. They benefit also from high standards of marking which provide them with realistic advice on how they may aim for even higher levels of achievement. Teachers in the department monitor the work of their students very closely and meet them on an individual basis to discuss targets. The visit of Year 12 students to Cologne, which takes place in the next couple of months, is yet another example of the commitment of teachers to the progress of their students. Teachers care deeply for the welfare of their students and the department is, therefore, well placed for future development.