

INSPECTION REPORT

ST BERNARD'S HIGH SCHOOL

Westcliff-on-Sea

LEA area: Southend

Unique reference number: 115381

Headteacher: Miss V A Squirrell

Reporting inspector: Nigel Pett
17331

Dates of inspection: 21st - 24th January 2002

Inspection number: 192110

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Bilateral; broadly comprehensive
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	11 - 18
Gender of pupils:	Girls in Years 7-11 and a co-educational sixth form
School address:	Milton Road Westcliff-on-Sea Essex
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr T Hedges
Date of previous inspection:	11 th November 1996

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17331	N A Pett	Registered inspector		Standards How well are pupils taught? How good are curricular opportunities? How well is the school led and managed?
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23063	P Latham	Team inspector	English as an additional language English	
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21848	E Singleton	Team inspector	Science	
15163	E Deeson	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
2198	J Wilson	Team inspector	Art	
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31218	T Allen	Team inspector	Geography	
31772	A Kelly	Team inspector	History	
19532	D Dale	Team inspector	Modern languages; French	
4454	E Charlesworth	Team inspector	Music Performing Studies	
1517	I Kerr	Team inspector	Physical education	
31135	D Griffith	Team inspector	Special educational needs	
10053	R Hobson	Team inspector	Equal opportunities Drama	
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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	5 - 8
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved?	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM	9 - 11
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	12 - 14
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?	14 - 16
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?	16 - 17
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	18 - 19
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?	19 - 20
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	20 - 22
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	22
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	23 - 27
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4	28 - 49
PART E: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM	50 - 61

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

This Catholic Voluntary Aided girls school is located in Westcliff, close to Southend-on-Sea, in Essex. The school takes its name and rich tradition from a former Bernardine convent school and is accommodated on a very compact site in a mixture of old and new buildings. It serves the immediate area of established housing, and a significantly wider area of south-east Essex. There are 694 pupils on roll, aged between 11- 16, plus 104 students in the sixth form, including 6 boys, making it smaller than the average secondary school nationally. Pupils and students come from the full range of socio-economic backgrounds, although a significant minority experience financial and social disadvantage. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average. Their ethnic heritage is mainly white European and the proportion having English as an additional language is lower than the national average. Ninety five girls are identified with special educational needs and 10 hold statements to address their specific needs, figures which are below average. Attainment on entry for the majority of girls in Year 7 was at least in line with expectations for their ages and, for a significant proportion, above expectations. The school's aims seek to provide for the all round development of its pupils and students in the context of a Catholic community, reflecting its mission statement to 'Love one another as I have loved you'.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good and distinctive school with many strengths. It has a very well defined Catholic and learning ethos which enables its pupils to achieve well, both academically and personally. **The strengths of this school significantly outweigh the areas for improvement.** Standards in National Curriculum tests and in GCSE examinations are consistently well above average. The overall quality of teaching is good. The headteacher sets high expectations and the school is well led. In some areas of management, there needs to be greater consistency in the way that roles and responsibilities are carried out. The school gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- Encourages pupils and students to achieve well and they achieve high standards in their work.
- Achieves very high standards in pupils' and students' behaviour, attitudes and values through the effective provision for their personal development.
- Teachers effectively promote the good progress of the large majority of pupils and students.
- Cares well for all of its pupils and students.
- Provides a very good programme of extracurricular activities.
- Enjoys an effective partnership with parents and the community.

What could be improved

- The consistent use of assessment procedures.
- Statutory curriculum requirements for music.
- The effectiveness with which some management roles and responsibilities are carried out.
- The accommodation.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in 1996. The overall improvement has been good. Standards in National Curriculum tests and at GCSE have risen, but not at GCE A level where the open entry to the sixth form leads to students achieving well, but below the national average. There has been effective improvement in the quality of teaching. Very good progress has been made in improving the quality of accommodation on a very restricted site, culminating in the recent opening of a multi-purpose hall, allowing opportunities for other work to commence. Monitoring and evaluation and the procedures for assessment have improved, but there is still some inconsistency in these aspects which reflect

shortcomings in the quality of leadership and management by a minority of senior and middle managers. Satisfactory progress has been made in developing the curriculum. Effective progress has been made in teaching of key skills, but accommodation limits the easy access to computers. The capacity for further improvement is sound.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16 and 18 year olds based on average point scores in GCSE and A-level/AS-level examinations.

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

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

The trend for improvement in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 is in line with the national trend. Results for 2001 were well above average in English and above average in mathematics and science. In comparison with similar schools, results were above average in English and in line in mathematics and science. Performance at GCSE has improved at a quicker rate than nationally and results were well above average, and high in comparison with similar schools. Many pupils do better than their prior attainment suggests, showing that there is significant value added in pupils' performance. Pupils with special educational needs generally make good progress. For pupils currently in school, standards are generally at least in line and very often above average at age fourteen and sixteen, although there are shortcomings in standards achieved in resistant materials, geography and music. At GCE A level, the average points score has been below the national average, reflecting the wide range of prior attainment of students who take the courses. Many achieve well, as is the case for students currently attending the sixth form.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Most pupils have positive attitudes towards their work and teachers. They enjoy school and work very hard. They are proud of their school and care for resources very well.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	The behaviour of most pupils is very good at all times. They understand the difference between right and wrong.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils show responsibility and care. They collaborate well and have very good relationships with teachers and each other.
Attendance	The overall attendance figures are good. Both authorised and unauthorised absences for the last year were better than the average for secondary schools nationally.

The overall standards of attitudes, values, behaviour, attendance and strength of relationships contribute significantly to the working and achieving ethos of the school. Pupils respond very well to the high expectations, appreciating and taking good advantage of their opportunities. They contribute well to the overall life of the school. The school lives by its mission statement.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years	aged 16-18 years
Lessons seen overall	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.

The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection. There is consistency in all year groups. The teaching of English, mathematics and science in Years 7-11 is good. Teaching of literacy is generally good and in numeracy it is satisfactory. Teaching of information and communication technology is good, but the application of skills in subjects across the curriculum is inconsistent. Teaching over time is good and has a positive impact on pupils' learning and leads to their good progress and standards. In the best lessons, pupils willingly respond to the teachers' high expectations and enthusiasm. Usually, there is a good match between the work set and the differing needs of the pupils. Where there are some shortcomings, it is because expectations, challenge and strategies are underdeveloped. Pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language are given satisfactory support. Overall teaching is a strength of the school.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	There is satisfactory breadth and balance. Extra curricular activities are a significant strength.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision is satisfactory. There is inconsistency in the use of individual education plans and learning support staff to meet the individual learning needs of pupils fully.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Strategies support this minority of pupils well and they make satisfactory progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good provision is made for all aspects of pupils' personal development. The opportunities provide well for social and cultural development. The judgements by Section 23 inspectors from the Diocese indicate that spiritual and moral development is a strength.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Pupils are well known and cared for on a personal level and this is a strength of the school. Assessment procedures are good, but are not consistently used.

The curriculum generally provides for the needs of the pupils with opportunities for vocational education. The school recognises that it needs to review and develop this further. Statutory requirements are not met for music in Years 7-9.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the head teacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides good leadership and clear direction for the school, but there are inconsistencies within senior and middle managers which impede the pace of change.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The work of the governors is effective and they generally fulfil their statutory responsibilities.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Effective analysis of a wealth of data informs whole school and individual pupil target setting, but the outcomes are not consistently used.
The strategic use of resources	Resources are well used to provide for its pupils and the school is giving good value for money.

The leadership has high expectations and has led to improved standards and the enhanced opportunities for pupils and students. These qualities of leadership are not consistently employed by a minority of staff with either whole school responsibilities, or management responsibility for some departments, to ensure that the vision is achieved. The school recognises that it can build further on its current achievements to improve its provision by ensuring that all managers operate consistently. There is an appropriate balance in experience and qualifications of the staff to meet the needs of the curriculum and pupils. The resources are satisfactory, but the accommodation has some limitations and these have an adverse impact on standards in aspects of design technology, performing arts, music and physical education. Though the playing fields are 3 miles from the school and the overall site is very cramped, good use is made of the accommodation available. Access for physically disabled pupils is very difficult, because of the many staircases and narrow corridors.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The standards and progress being achieved by their children. • The high standards of behaviour. • How well the school cares for its pupils. • The good attitudes, values and beliefs being promoted and achieved by the school. • The good quality of teaching. • Very good extracurricular activities. • The school is well led and managed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The information about the progress their children are making. • The amount of homework set .

The relationship with and overall support from parents are very good. There was a good return to the pre-inspection questionnaire, but only a small minority of parents attended the pre-inspection meeting. Inspectors firmly agree with all of the points that please parents most, although inspection evidence indicates that there is room for improvement in some aspects of management. Homework is effective and reporting to parents meets requirements.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

There are 104 students in the sixth form, including 6 boys. The sixth form is smaller than average. There are very few students from minority ethnic heritage. Approximately a half of the Year 11 students enter Year 12 and about 75 per cent of the year group remain for Year 13. Students choose from a range of one and two year academic and vocational courses. Standards on entry reflect the fact that it is an open sixth form.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form is good and reflects the overall ethos of this 11-18 school. There is a good range of courses. The quality of teaching is consistently good and students achieve well for their prior attainment. The quality of care is sound and teaching staff provide an effective level of personal and academic support. The quality of teaching, courses offered and the progress and standards achieved by the students make the provision successful and cost-effective.

Strengths

- The support given to students in subjects, so that they achieve well for their prior attainment.
- Attitudes, relationships and behaviour are very good.
- The quality of teaching.
- The involvement of the students in the life of the school.

What could be improved

- The overall management and leadership.
- Independent learning opportunities and facilities.

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Good. Students achieve well in relation to their prior attainment at GCSE. Teaching is good overall and staff use their subject expertise well.
Biology	Good. Standards are improving and students achieve well in relation to their prior attainment at GCSE. The strong subject knowledge of the teachers leads to good teaching.
Physics	Good. Standards are above average and students achieve well through the effective teaching. The subject, key skills and use of computers are well taught.
Business	Good. Students achieve well through the good teaching, which effectively uses assessment to support students' learning.
Health and Social Care	Good. Enthusiastic teachers use a good variety of teaching methods to challenge students to achieve standards of work that demonstrate very good progress. There is good use of external links and of information technology.
Performing Studies	Good. Teaching is very good and the students are very committed. They are achieving well. Accommodation for dance is unsatisfactory and this undermines standards.
Sociology	Very good. Most students are making good progress and achieving well. Teaching and learning are very good. More use of information technology and improved accommodation are required.
English	Good. There is a challenging well taught curriculum which is well matched to students' individual learning needs. Standards achieved are below average, but results in English compare well with other subjects.
French	Satisfactory. Standards are average. The quality of teaching is good overall and students achieve well, showing good levels of interest and involvement.

Inspectors sampled the majority of other subjects taught. The overall provision is good in German, art, design technology and history and satisfactory in information and communication technology. Standards reflect the provision, although most students are attaining in line with the average for their courses and their achievement continues to be good. This reflects the often good quality of teaching which presents challenging work.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Satisfactory. There is good pastoral care and teachers generally support and guide students well. Work is generally well marked and assessed and this helps students to achieve well. Access to computers is limited and this does have an adverse effect on developing skills. The facilities for private study are also limited, having an adverse effect on the opportunity for students to develop independent learning habits.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Satisfactory. The work of pastoral tutors is well organised and led. Initiatives to monitor teaching and learning are being developed. The management and development of the curriculum and the consistent provision for guidance, so that opportunities are enhanced, are underdeveloped. The school is aware that it needs to address this issue as part of its commitment to its students.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Only a very small minority returned their questionnaire and views were sought through discussion with the students. Most would recommend their sixth form. Students did not always feel that they were treated as adults or listened to. Inspection evidence confirms that the overall management and leadership of the sixth form require developing.

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teachers are accessible for help.• Choices generally suit their needs.• They are well taught.• They enjoy the sixth form life.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Facilities for independent learning.• Information on their progress.• Support and advice on their future.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Attainment on entry reflects a balance of the full range of prior attainment. A significant minority of girls have achieved well in their primary education and a minority enter with special educational needs.
2. Results in the end of Key Stage 3 2001 National Curriculum tests in English, mathematics and science at age 14 were well above the national average overall and above average for similar schools. In English, results were well above average and in mathematics and science above average. The proportion gaining the higher levels were also well above average in English and science and above average in mathematics. Results in GCSE examinations were well above average at 5 A*-C grades and very high for 5 A*-G and 1 A*-G grades. In comparison with achievement in relation to these pupils' grades at age 14 in 1999 results were very high, indicating their very good progress and added value. The average points score was above average nationally and when compared with similar school was very high. The trend for improvement has been higher than the national trend. The targets set for 2001 were exceeded.
3. Standards from inspection evidence for pupils currently in Year 9 show that they are achieving well and that most attain at least the national expectations, with a significant majority attaining above average standards. This is particularly so in English and mathematics and in a significant number of other subjects. Average standards are achieved in science, design technology, geography and history and they are below average in music. By the end of Year 11, standards are overall stronger and are above average in the very large majority of subjects, which shows good progress. For example, standards in science are above average. In design technology, standards are consistently above average in food and textiles, but are below average overall in resistant materials. In music and business education, standards are average. There are no girls taking geography in Year 11.
4. Standards in literacy are above average overall as the quality of speaking, listening reading and writing is generally above average. This reflects the good management by the head of English as the literacy coordinator in approaches to literacy teaching and learning recommended in the Key Stage 3 Strategy. There is still some variation in the manner in which subjects promote literacy, but good practice occurs in drama, science, geography and languages. Standards of numeracy overall are above average. The quality of teaching in the basic skills in mathematics is very good, raising standards, as a result of new initiatives. Good practice occurs in art, exploring the idea of three dimensions, using card, for example, with line, shape and form, and, in science, through recording and data handling. Standards in numeracy are average in other subjects overall, reflecting the fact that planning is inconsistent. Standards in information and communication technology are satisfactory overall. Whilst girls have good skills in many of the basic uses of computers it is in the use of these skills in subjects across the curriculum that shortcomings occur. Good use occurs in science and some subjects make use of the Internet, but overall the quality of planning and cross-curricular coordination limits progress and attainment.
5. Inspection evidence shows that the large majority of girls in Years 7-11 achieve well. The minority who are identified with special educational needs are very well supported for literacy and this enhances their access to the curriculum overall. Many proceed to Year 11 and enjoy good success in GCSE examinations. The quality of support and provision of strategies and resources to meet differing needs is often good, although there is some inconsistency. This reflects the variation in the use of individual education plans and the deployment and number of learning support staff. Similarly the minority of pupils with English as an additional language achieve well, and in the majority of subjects they are given good support. Whilst the quality of challenge in work is generally good, gifted and talented students are not always sufficiently challenged, yet they do achieve well, as is illustrated in their overall achievements in GCSE examinations.

Sixth form

6. In 2001 GCE AS and A level examinations, the average points score per candidate was below the national average. This reflects the fact that entry to the sixth form is open and there is a wide range of prior attainment. Many students achieve well. Such standards are apparent amongst the current students and, by the end of Year 13, the large majority are achieving well and meeting the expectations for their course. The section later in this report details standards in nine subjects inspected in depth and comments on the sampling of all other subjects taken in the sixth form.
7. Standards in the AS and GNVQ courses in Year 12 often reflect those expected nationally. In Year 13 the small size of some groups is indicative of students' choices after the AS examinations when they reduced the number of subjects that they were following. Where groups are small, for example, in mathematics, sciences and modern languages, standards being achieved are very wide. Potential grades vary between A and E. Overall, many students are achieving well and working effectively towards their target grades.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

8. The overall Catholic ethos distinguishes this orderly community. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are a significant strength of the school as was found at the time of the last inspection. Their attitudes to learning are very good throughout the school and make a significant contribution to their attainment and progress. They are proud of their school. Pupils work at a good pace and show interest, commitment and enthusiasm for their work, maintaining concentration and persevering even when faced with challenging tasks. They undertake work with enjoyment and confidence, listening attentively and making effective use of their skills. Collaborative work is very good and pupils are mutually supportive and encouraging. Pupils listen with care and sensitivity to each other and to teachers and, when oral contributions are called for, they respond readily. Pupils show initiative in organising and planning their work and their ability to work independently increases as they progress throughout the school, although opportunities are sometimes limited. These characteristics are evidenced in a wide range of lessons, being particularly apparent in English, science, art, food technology, drama and physical education. Overall the attitudes of girls with special educational needs and English as an additional language are good. They show similar attitudes to learning as other girls in Years 7 to 11, with positive attitudes and behaviour.
9. The behaviour of most pupils, in lessons and around the school, is very good and makes a very positive contribution to the way in which the school operates as a very orderly community that values the rights of all pupils to learn. Inspection evidence confirms the views of a very significant majority of parents that the school's values and attitudes have a very positive effect upon pupils and that it achieves a very high standard of behaviour. Property and equipment are treated with great care and there is no evidence of vandalism or graffiti, and only small amounts of litter. Pupils respond extremely well to the high expectations and ethos which makes them responsible for their own behaviour and actions, understanding its impact on others. There were six fixed period exclusions in the previous year. Incidents of bullying or other oppressive behaviour are very rare and when identified are dealt with quickly and effectively.
10. Very good relationships exist throughout the school. Pupils treat each other and adults with courtesy, respect and consideration and listen carefully to each other, respecting the feelings, values and beliefs of others. Pupils in all years work very well together in a wide range of extra-curricular activities, such as choral productions, debating societies and sporting fixtures. They value each other's contributions, giving constructive criticism and encouragement during rehearsals and working with a common sense of purpose.
11. Personal development throughout the school is very good and pupils respond extremely well to the ethos of responsibility for themselves within a supportive and caring environment towards each other. Their personal and social development is enhanced through the very many extra-curricular activities and trips in which they participate and through schemes such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, with a very high number of pupils enrolling at Bronze level this year. They respond very well to the many opportunities which are provided throughout the school to

make positive contributions to its life and work and that of the wider community. Pupils also use their own initiative to develop aspects of their personal development and contributions to society in the widest sense, particularly exemplified in their work for charities. Pupils organise events to support the charities which they have chosen such as 'Let the Children Live!' which supports the work of Father Peter in working with street children in Colombia, a sensory garden at Crossroads Kids and Great Ormond Street Hospital. Charity work within the school extends beyond raising money for worthy causes to practical work for local charities which is greatly appreciated.

12. Attendance is good and, during the last school year, it was above the national average. There was very little unauthorised absence. Levels of attendance are similar to those found at the time of the last inspection in 1996. The majority of authorised absences occur as a result of illness and medical visits with some absence for holidays. Lateness is properly recorded. Movement between lessons is purposeful. Staff and pupils arrive in classrooms punctually and lessons begin promptly. These good levels of attendance have a positive effect on attainment and progress.

Sixth form

13. The standards illustrated above are equally applicable to the students in the sixth form. They also respond very well to the high expectations and are an integral part of this inclusive community. The small numbers of boys who have joined the sixth form are readily accepted. Students take the opportunity to support younger pupils in a range of activities and accept responsible roles to support the good order of the school willingly.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

14. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection and is now a strength of the school. Overall, the teaching is satisfactory or better in almost all lessons inspected in Years 7-11. In nearly seven out of ten lessons it is good or better and in over a quarter of these lessons it is very good or better. There is a similar picture in Years 7-9 as in Years 10 and 11, although in the latter years there is more very good teaching. In Year 8 the teaching is good rather than very good. There was a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching in all year groups, found in music, science, modern languages and information and communication technology. In many subjects, teaching was good and this is evidenced in English, mathematics, science, food technology, drama, physical education and business education. In general, teaching over time is good and this is the significant factor in the good standards being attained and the good achievement.
15. Teaching in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science is good. In English and mathematics, the introduction of the national strategies is having further impact on standards which are already above average overall. In science, whilst the overall quality is good the teaching of investigations in Years 7-9 is underdeveloped. Teaching in specific information and communication technology is good, but in subjects across the curriculum there is inconsistency in the way that computers are used to enhance work.
16. This overall good teaching has a positive effect on learning. The successful characteristics which bring this about reflect the fact that there is effective planning for most teaching brought about by sound schemes of work and clear learning objectives. The large majority of teachers manage their classes well and through this management and good relationships lessons are conducted with good order and in many cases a clear element of humour, which makes learning enjoyable. Girls respond well and work hard. The lessons are generally conducted with good pace and teachers use a variety of strategies to maintain concentration, develop thinking and problem solving and to instil confidence amongst their teaching groups. Expectations are often high in many lessons, but particularly so in art, food technology, physical education and drama, effectively challenging the girls and enhancing their learning and achievement. Teachers often pose good questions which develop knowledge and understanding as seen in mathematics when the question 'Why' is posed to ensure that girls understand the approaches to solving problems. Through good questions and answer sessions, teachers display good subject knowledge which they use well. Where good use is made of computers, for example in science

and business education, this enhances girls' skills and their knowledge of how information and communication technology programs can be used to research and illustrate their findings. The good use of group work, for example, in English, in Years 10 and 11 in history and in drama, develop the sharing of ideas and team work. Girls enjoy these opportunities as they develop their self-esteem and social skills. In the best lessons, teachers inspire their girls and the enthusiasm adds to the pace of learning, as seen in physical education and business education. The best lessons conclude with sessions which discuss the work that has been done in the lesson; this checks for learning and understanding to inform future planning. Nevertheless this practice is not always consistently used. A further strategy that improves learning is the good use of homework. This is set by many teachers although a minority of teachers do not conform to the homework timetable. Where it is regularly set and marked, the girls benefit from developing good work habits and taking responsibility for their own learning. Where teaching is satisfactory and occasionally unsatisfactory, the learning is less effective because strategies do not challenge sufficiently and girls' interest flags. In a minority of instances work in pupils' books is incomplete, the tasks set are similar for the whole group and, thus, the differing needs of the pupils are not taken into account sufficiently.

17. The quality of marking shows some variation, but there are many examples of good marking. This, too, contributes to effective learning, because the girls are made aware of good achievement but also how they might further improve their work. Unfortunately, there is some marking which is less effective. Work receives cursory ticks, without comment, and thus the quality of work eventually suffers over time as girls do not bother to complete work and do not give of their best. The good progress that has been made in developing effective assessment procedures has improved target setting and pupils' subsequent attainment. There are, nevertheless, shortcomings in that the procedures are not consistently operated. Thus, the progress that pupils are making is not sufficiently clear and strategies and planning for future work does not take previous levels of learning into account.
18. Overall the teaching of girls with special needs and English as an additional language is satisfactory. Good practice occurs in English, where group work is well used to provide good opportunities for shared understanding and there is good awareness of how to provide for individual girls' needs. In mathematics, smaller groups again support teaching and learning and lessons are inclusive, although even more development of strategies to match the differing learning needs is required. This is also the case in science. In other subjects some good practice occurs but overall the planning for meeting individual learning needs requires consistent development. The special needs register is issued to all staff, as are copies of individual education plans. Their use is not consistent and whilst targets are addressed for literacy they are not always subject specific. Learning support assistants are appreciated by girls and staff and they are well-informed and effective, knowing when and how to offer support. In support lessons, teaching on an individual withdrawal basis is effective and teachers relate well to the girls and provide good role models. They improve the quality of learning by supporting and challenging individual girls, helping to raise attainment. Comments in girls' individual support files show that they and support staff can identify when teaching styles and methods are not meeting the differing needs in lessons. Occasionally, the work of learning support staff is not directed sufficiently towards increasing girls' independent learning skills and increasing responsibility for resources and their own learning. There is no forum at present for the support team to inform the teaching of subjects on a regular formal basis. Even so, the progress achieved by identified pupils for both special educational needs and English as an additional language is often good.

Sixth form

19. The quality of teaching is good. In virtually all lessons inspected, teaching was at least satisfactory and, in nearly eight out of ten, at least good; in three out of ten it was very good. Only one unsatisfactory lesson was observed. Inspection evidence shows that the quality of teaching is good over time. Students benefit in the best lessons from the same style of teaching as in Years 7-11 reported above. However, teachers develop strategies more suited to the age of the students. In the best lessons the students are involved in good discussions. They are encouraged by effective questioning to apply concepts that they have encountered in previous work and to bring their overall knowledge and understanding into play. This occurs in English,

mathematics and science, although some students find this approach difficult. To develop independent learning, students are encouraged to be adventurous and use their own ideas, as in art and history. In a minority of lessons there is too much teacher direction which limits the development of higher order thinking skills of critical analysis and students become too reliant on guidance from their teacher.

20. Overall, the good quality of teaching supports the standards and achievement well across all year groups and contributes significantly to the added value seen in examination results.

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

21. The learning opportunities offered are good overall and support the development of the girls well. Access and equality of opportunity in the curriculum and for learning opportunities are good. The curriculum is broad and balanced and satisfies National Curriculum requirements in all subjects except music. This reflects the limitations for information and communication technology and the coverage of the various aspects of the subject in sufficient detail. Overall, the curriculum provides a good range of learning opportunities and, in Years 10 and 11 there is good continuity from subjects studied in Years 7-9. Girls have an appropriate choice of option subjects, augmented by the addition of business education, although other alternatives are limited.
22. Overall provision for the teaching of literacy and numeracy is sound. This reflects the variation between the main subjects of English and mathematics, which provide well, and the practice in other subjects to support this work. The opportunities for information and communication technology are not consistently planned for across subjects and this limits the development of skills and applications. Generally, schemes of work are well structured and take account of strategies to meet the differing needs of the girls. Their use is well illustrated in the comments in this report on the quality of teaching.
23. The special needs department promotes inclusion and has established a caring ethos, equally applicable to support for English as an additional language. All girls identified for support have equal access to the curriculum and, in modern foreign languages, a minority are disapplied so that they may be given additional support. The withdrawal of girls in Years 7 to 11 provides effective accelerated learning for literacy. The responsibility for literacy and basic skills needs is not formally shared between the special needs coordinator and the heads of the core subjects and this is an area for improvement to enhance progress. Information and communication technology is available in the learning support room, which will be improved by networking in the new room allocation. The school has very recently purchased Successmaker, a dedicated interactive learning package installed on three computers in the library. Staff and girls are still becoming familiar with the way it works and it has the potential to add significantly to the learning opportunities and subsequent achievement. Learning support assistants are careful to be aware of gaps in girls' learning and language achievement when girls leave lessons to go to the library. Where girls have access, they make satisfactory use of the programs and make gains in core skills.
24. Personal and social education is provided through a weekly lesson taught by all full time staff. It was not possible to observe any lessons during the week of the inspection due to the organisation of the timetable. Inspection evidence indicates that the provision is good, although pupil response indicates that there is some inconsistency in the teaching. The curriculum covers Personal Development, Lifestyle, Relationships and Citizenship, which include appropriate coverage of sex education, drug and alcohol abuse. Careers education advice is satisfactory and is very well supported through the selection of options at the end of Years 9 and 11. There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities which add to the social and cultural development of the pupils and students. These activities include school productions, choir, visits nationally and internationally for exchanges, skiing and general expeditions. There is a good range of sporting fixtures in which girls achieve very well. Links with the local community are good, enhancing work experience placements and drawing on them for resources. The community and surrounding area are well used for topic work in subjects such as geography, art and music.

25. Provision for pupils' and students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. The overall judgements on the spiritual and moral development will be made by the inspectors from the Brentwood Diocese in their report. In many aspects of the curriculum, opportunities for spiritual development are very good and fully consistent with the ethos and mission statement. In drama, for example, Year 7 pupils were learning about gestures, symbolism and ritual. An important part of the lesson involved comparing gestures and thinking about the gestures that the priest makes during and at the most important part of the mass. In art, history and English, opportunities are taken to consider values and beliefs. In science, the awe and wonder of life is well taught. Provision for moral development is also very good. Behaviour expectations are clear and there is an effective system of merits and commendations. Pupils wear their merit badges with pride. Across the curriculum, moral concepts are linked with the spiritual dimension, for example the Russian revolution and the repression of women during the Taliban regime. There is a real concern for the wider community that is reflected in their charitable giving every year. This is reinforced both through lessons and in such ways as posters on notice boards promoting respect and justice.
26. Relationships between pupils and staff are very strong and the provision for social development is very good. It is enhanced through tutorial time, extra curricular activities and through teaching. In group work, girls relate well to each other and, in work which involves problem solving and investigations, they share ideas and resources well. Social development is provided through a range of curriculum activities, including visits to art galleries, school journeys and understanding the workplace. In the sixth form, students have a range of "Worthwhile" opportunities in which they can and do become involved. The role of the school council also adds to social development and leadership for those girls who have opportunities to serve on it.
27. Provision for cultural development is good. Not only is the cultural heritage of pupils taken into account but also multicultural awareness. Good links exist with moral development as pupils consider those who are less fortunate than themselves. Aspects of multicultural diversity are covered in subjects and pupils are made aware of the differences in cultures in their own school and in the world at large. This is achieved through art, drama, English, geography, history, modern languages and music. For example, in art work on the local area and the unit on Aboriginal art. In English, the study of literature provides effectively for an understanding of cultural change through the study of poetry and literature.
28. Overall, the provision has been well maintained and effectively enhanced since the last inspection. It effectively helps the girls mature and accept responsibility and contributes effectively to the high expectations which exist in the school and which help to realise the good academic standards achieved.

Sixth form

29. The quality and range of subjects offered generally meet the needs and aspirations of the students. It mainly comprises a range of established AS and Advanced level subjects which follow on from GCSE in Year 11. They have been augmented by provision for performing studies, business education, sociology and GNVQ health and social care. This is good improvement since the last inspection. A minority of girls choose to pursue their studies at alternative schools and colleges, for example, with a local boys' Catholic school, but there is also an intake, including a small number of boys, to take advantage of the post-16 courses. In some subjects, group sizes are small and, occasionally, this limits the viability of the course and limits students' opportunities. As in the main school there is a very good range of extra-curricular activities which are well supported. Personal development is good and the students organise their own council which is effective in raising issues with staff. Support for higher education is good, but the overall provision of careers education is mixed, with students reporting that advice on programmes and work based progression opportunities being underdeveloped. Year 13 pupils have to seek advice, rather than it being offered in a structured programme of guidance activities. There is a very well established prefect system and the Head Girl is elected by the pupils which adds to the overall development of personal responsibility.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

30. St Bernard's is an inclusive school. Respect and care for all underpin the school's ethos and the development of the individual is central to the Catholic philosophy that permeates the school's aims.
31. Procedures for ensuring pupils' welfare are a strength of the school, as was the case at the time of the previous inspection. Teachers and staff have high expectations of pupils and act as very good role models. They have a good understanding of pupils' personal development, and are effective in developing pupils' confidence and in promoting concern and respect for others and very good standards of behaviour.
32. The procedures for assessment are good and show significant progress since the last inspection. There is a good policy, which sets out principles and procedures and gives clear guidance. In Years 7-11, pupils are encouraged to record their targets and performances in their planners, and many do so. Pupils enjoy this work and comment that it has helped them to improve their performance. Tutors are required to review planners and, whilst there is good practice, not all do so consistently. The use made of the assessment information to guide curricular planning has shortcomings. In good practice, the use of the procedures is very beneficial, for example, through the effective analysis of differing groups of pupils, to ensure that they are making the maximum progress. The introduction of mentoring is further improving assessment practice. Where there are shortcomings, it is because practice varies in and between subjects and senior managers are not rigorous enough in monitoring to ensure that all aspects of the policy and procedures are being followed. Whilst the special educational needs of girls are understood and identified appropriately, there are some shortcomings. Relevant information and data is used to identify girls' needs on entry and monitoring through reviews and feedback from subjects is generally good. Annual reviews are carried out as required. Individual education plans often relate well to personal organisation, behaviour and general literacy. They are not always sufficiently subject specific so that targets can be set and monitored. Where plans are not sufficiently used, subject teachers do not monitor the progress of these pupils. This was an area highlighted in the last inspection and progress is only satisfactory. Weekly meetings between the headteacher, the special needs coordinator and pastoral staff monitor girls' progress and achievement, which is effective practice. Those who have English as an additional language are correctly identified and effectively supported. Pupils who are particularly gifted and talented are identified and benefit from an enrichment programme. The school uses assessment of pupils at different stages of their school life to track how well they are doing and, in particular, they check to make sure that the small number who are admitted as a result of selection tests are not advantaged compared with the comprehensive intake.
33. Staff know pupils well. Relationships with the primary schools are very good and this ensures that there is effective continuity and progression. The monitoring and support of pupils' personal development are very good and, combined with targeted support, contributes to the standards attained and ensure that all pupils have an opportunity to benefit from the educational opportunities offered. Pupils feel that they are well supported and speak highly of the commitment and dedication of staff who give freely of their own time to provide support, guidance and encouragement. The very good relations between staff and pupils ensure that pupils are confident in approaching staff with any problems.
34. The procedures for monitoring and promoting behaviour are very good and there is a clear stance to ensure that pupils understand the difference between right and wrong. This is based upon high expectations and individual responsibility and pupils respond very well. The effectiveness of the procedures and strategies and the response of pupils, have a very positive effect on both attainment and progress. There is an appropriate policy for the use of restraint to prevent pupils from harming themselves or others and appropriate procedures are in place to ensure that any incidents are properly recorded. Whilst bullying or other oppressive behaviour is not a significant problem, the school is rigorous in resolving problems and mediating in the case of difficulties which may arise in friendships. Tutors generally operate well so that they provide a consistent structure for supporting girls.

35. The procedures for monitoring attendance and punctuality are good, effectively ensuring that good levels of attendance are achieved with the support of pupils and parents. There is very effective liaison with the education welfare officer, who visits the school regularly to provide support in addressing attendance and welfare issues. Good child protection procedures are based on those of the local area child protection committee. The designated child protection officer, the headteacher and the headteacher's secretary have all undertaken training and school based programmes have been used effectively to raise the awareness and understanding of all teachers and support staff. The school is vigilant and sensitive in exercising its responsibilities. Good links exist with the relevant outside agencies who provide support when necessary. The links within the community are effectively developed. The health and safety procedures are satisfactory. Day-to-day management is good and pupils are taught safe practices. Equipment is checked regularly and departments carry out regular safety assessments and, on a whole school basis, evacuation procedures are regularly practised and any identified issues addressed. Accidents are recorded although there is insufficient detail to allow any analysis to identify any potential risks for minor accidents.

Sixth form

Assessment

36. Diagnosis and provision for individual student learning needs are good. The overall school procedures apply to the sixth form. Staff and students combine well together to ensure that assessment information is effectively used to support learning. Personal tutors operate well and this provides the majority of students with skills to evaluate their own progress.

Advice, support and guidance

37. Arrangements for health and safety, child protection and first aid in the sixth form reflect those for the main school. Students feel that they are well supported and advised by their teachers but that the quality of overall support and guidance could be enhanced. Inspection evidence confirms this view. As outlined in the above paragraph, there is effective subject assessment. For more general support and guidance, the arrangements and quality of relationships lead to shortcomings. The school recognises that this is an issue to be remedied through better accommodation for independent learning and improved structures, whereby students are more confident in the formative discussions with sixth form staff.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

38. The school has a very good partnership with parents and seeks to involve them in its work and life for the benefit of pupils. This partnership was recognised as a strength at the time of the last report. The partnership between school and home is promoted through the provision of good communications and satisfactory information on pupils' learning. This partnership is reinforced by the home/school agreement which has been completed by the very significant majority of parents.
39. Parents have very positive views of most aspects of the school, of the education provided and the strong Catholic ethos. There was a good response to the pre-inspection questionnaire and a small minority of parents attended the pre-inspection meeting. Parents are particularly pleased with the high expectations of the school, the progress which pupils make, the quality of teaching, the good attitudes, values and beliefs that are promoted by the school and the leadership and management of the school. However, a significant minority of parents have concerns about the arrangements for homework and the information which they receive about their children's progress. Inspectors firmly agree with the positive points made by parents, although inspection evidence suggests that there is some room for improvement in some aspects of management. Homework is effective and reporting to parents meets requirements. The views of parents of students in the sixth form are very good and generally reflect those expressed by parents of pupils in the main school.
40. Parents' support for pupils' learning at school and at home and their wider activities is good. This is demonstrated by the good support which parents provide for pupils' homework and the

high attendance at consultation evenings. The members of the small, but hardworking, committee who run the Parents' Association and those who support its work provide good support for the school through fund-raising activities, such as running a car park at the time of the May Bank Holiday air show in Southend, organising race nights, a Christmas Fayre and organising a trip to the Dickens Christmas Market in Rochester as well as providing refreshments at school events. The support of parents is appreciated by pupils and staff and makes a positive contribution to pupils' progress and attainment and to the resources and facilities available to support pupils' learning.

41. The information provided for parents about the life and work of the school is good. Reports on pupils' progress are satisfactory overall. They are written with great care, valuing pupils' work, providing good encouragement and detailing their knowledge and understanding, relating comments to attitudes towards work, but do not consistently identify, to parents, what pupils need to do to improve their standards. Parents are provided with a grade report and a full report together with full details of end of Key Stage tests. Parents support consultation evenings well and the attendance at these meetings is monitored to enable staff to follow up those parents who do not attend. It is clear from looking at pupils' files that staff seek to ensure that parents are involved in their children's learning and development and staff seek to involve parents at an early stage in the event of any concerns being identified. Staff and the headteacher are readily accessible to parents.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

42. The mission statement is to 'Love one another as I have loved you' and the aims which flow from this statement are very well fulfilled. The headteacher leads the school very well and has a clear vision for its development. She provides a clear focus for the Catholicity of the school. Overall there is a shared commitment to improvement and this is apparent since the last inspection and shown in this report in standards, quality of teaching, procedures for assessment, and accommodation. The governors are effectively involved in the overall leadership and management of the school, being generally aware of the strengths and areas that could be improved. They operate through a clear set of structures and have a good professional relationship with the headteacher. There is an appropriate range of whole school policies which provide effective guidance to staff. Statutory responsibilities are met in all areas, save that of ensuring that the National Curriculum is fulfilled in music for pupils in Years 7- 9.
43. Since that inspection, there have been changes in the membership and structure of the senior management group and in the leadership of subjects and whole school responsibilities. Most staff in these positions provide effective leadership and management and this is reflected in the quality of teaching and standards. Monitoring and evaluation have improved and, whilst there are appropriate structures, there is inconsistency in the way that some roles and responsibilities are carried out. For example, the leadership and management of pastoral care is good. The link meetings between some senior staff and heads of departments are not always rigorous enough to set and monitor targets. The management of the good procedures for assessment, the coordination of information and communication technology across the curriculum and in the leadership and management of a minority of subject areas are not effective enough. This limits the rigour and quality of education, even though standards in Years 7-11 are often good and, in external examination, results are often high in comparison with national averages. Leadership and management of special needs are satisfactory. The coordinator has been in post for just over a year and has ensured that the code of practice is in place. Learning support assistants are used strategically, to reflect funding and pupil needs.
44. The school development plan provides good direction and is well structured. It is strategic with emphasis over a two-year model and priorities are related to raising pupils' and students' self-esteem and standards of attainment. The plan is effectively monitored and evaluated and financial demands are appropriately linked to the plan. Financial planning and control are good, through liaison between the headteacher, senior management team, heads of department, the bursar and governors. Financial procedures and controls are operated with a high degree of efficiency. The very prudent budgeting reflects the loans which the school have taken out to make significant improvements to the accommodation, for example, in facilities for the teaching of science. The apparent surplus in the budget is to meet loan repayments and facilitate

improvements arising from further building developments which are about to begin, following the completion of a multi-purpose hall, for example, the conversion of the school hall. The governors make a good contribution to the planning process by maintaining a strategic overview and bringing to discussions a wide range of experience and expertise. Good procedures are in place to ensure that the school obtains best value for money before committing itself to expenditure. Assessments are made of the cost effectiveness of proposed expenditure and emphasis is given to evaluating the subsequent impact of the expenditure on agreed policies. The school carefully accounts the funds and grants which it receives and, in all cases, they are used for the purposes designated. Overall, in terms of its level of expenditure, the quality of education provided and the achievement of pupils in relation to their prior attainment, the school provides good value for money.

45. Overall, there is very good use of staffing, accommodation and other resources to support pupils' learning. There are generally sufficient staff to meet the needs of the pupils, students and the curriculum. Recruitment of additional music staff has been very difficult and this has exerted a detrimental effect on standards. The procedures for staff professional development are satisfactory the requirements for performance management are in place. Day-to-day administration is unobtrusive but efficient and supports the work of the school very well. Resources are broadly satisfactory and have been augmented by improvements for information and communication technology. Satisfactory use is made of new technology to support teaching and learning and in administration.
46. The accommodation is unsatisfactory, although significant improvements have been made since the last inspection. Further improvements are about to come to fruition, starting with the opening of a new multi-purpose hall. This will then allow for the re-design of other areas of the school to facilitate improvements for other subjects. Accommodation has limitations, particularly for textiles in design technology which is taught in temporary accommodation, for art and for physical education, for which playing fields three miles from the school are used. Accommodation for science and drama is good. Because of the age and design of much of the accommodation, with narrow corridors and staircases, most of the buildings are not accessible to those with physical disabilities. Dining facilities have significant limitations, but, because of the good behaviour, they function well. Displays are used effectively to celebrate pupils' work and achievements and to link to areas of the curriculum and extra-curricular activities. The library facilities and those for information and communication technology are sound, but access to the latter is limited by the nature of the accommodation.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

47. Leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory overall. There are a number of strengths. These include the leadership of the tutor team. Meetings are regularly held with agenda and minutes. The management of the sixth form prefects in their roles in the school is comprehensive and there is a developing cycle of the monitoring of teaching and learning. However, the vision for developing the sixth form is not clear enough. The responsibility for the development of the curriculum, linked to recruitment of Year 11 pupils to post 16 courses, needs to be clarified. Opportunities for marketing the success of the sixth form are underdeveloped. Students in their questionnaire responses indicated that they did not always feel that they were treated as adults or listened to. Inspection evidence confirms that the quality of relationships is an issue which is not being addressed. Overall, there is not enough rigour on the part of the senior staff to ensure that the leadership and management of the sixth form is enhanced.

Resources

48. As with the main school, the accommodation is unsatisfactory, overall, for delivery of the curriculum. Limitations for the teaching of design technology, art and physical education impact on standards, although significant improvements have been made for science since the last inspection and further improvements which will benefit teaching and learning, are taking place. The accommodation available to students in the sixth form for socialising and independent work

is just satisfactory for the numbers on role, although facilities, such as computers, to support independent learning are inadequate.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

The governors, headteacher and staff now need to promote the further development of this good school by:

Developing the consistency of monitoring and evaluation to ensure that:

- whole school initiatives and subject link meetings are effectively monitored and evaluated so that targets are set and achieved and good practice is shared;

Paragraphs 4, 18, 23, 32, 43, 58, 59, 67, 99,102, 108, 124

- procedures for assessment are consistently used so that they effectively support teachers' planning, and inform pupils of their progress and achievement.

Paragraphs 32, 57, 74, 88, 93, 127, 135

- the setting of work consistently meets the differing needs of the pupils, with particular reference to individual education plans;

Paragraphs 5, 18, 51, 69, 73, 85, 91, 127

- the use of information and communication technology is used appropriately in all subjects.

Paragraphs 4, 22, 52, 63, 108, 114, 141

Meeting the statutory requirements for music.

Paragraphs 21, 116 -122

Continuing the good planning and implementation to improve the accommodation.

Paragraphs 44, 46, 48, 88, 169

Sixth form

Addressing the issues relating to the leadership and management of the sixth form to enhance:

- the provision within the curriculum;
- access to computers and opportunities for independent learning;
- the quality of support and guidance.

Paragraphs 29, 152, 161, 166, 174, 180, 187

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7-11	112
	Sixth form	38
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		150

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7-11							
Number	5	24	45	30	8	0	0
Percentage	4	22	40	27	7	0	0
Sixth form							
Number	0	11	19	7	1	0	0
Percentage	0	29	50	18	3	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	694	104
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	55	

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	10	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	95	0

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	42

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	30
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	24

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.8
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	0	123	123

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	N/a	N/a	n/a
	Girls	107	104	97
	Total	107	104	97
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	87 (67)	85 (77)	79 (66)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	52 (33)	52 (45)	45 (32)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	N/a	N/a	N/a
	Girls	109	104	114
	Total	109	104	114
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	89 (78)	85 (80)	93 (75)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	51 (48)	49 (53)	46 (30)
	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	0	126	126

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	0	0	0
	Girls	102	126	126
	Total	102	126	126
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	81 (69)	100 (99)	100 (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	53.8
	National	39.0

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

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

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	1	38	39

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	1	38	39
	Average point score per candidate	18	11.4	11.5
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	18	17.5

		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	1	38	39	0	0	0
	Average point score per candidate	18	11.4	11.5	n/a	n/a	n/a
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.9	17.4	9.8	11.4	10.6

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	12
Black – other	5
Indian	1
Pakistani	3
Bangladeshi	3
Chinese	5
White	452
Any other minority ethnic group	27

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	1	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	5	0
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 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	39.0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.1

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	14
Total aggregate hours worked per week	376

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	79.8
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 2	n/a
Key Stage 3	26.4
Key Stage 4	21.7

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/01
	£
Total income	2225446
Total expenditure	2139923
Expenditure per pupil	2805
Balance brought forward from previous year	174454
Balance carried forward to next year	259977

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	13.2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	16.4
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	3
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	798
Number of questionnaires returned	211

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	51	43	3	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	52	43	1	2	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	46	48	2	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	32	55	10	2	1
The teaching is good.	35	61	1	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	35	48	15	2	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	53	39	6	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	65	33	0	1	0
The school works closely with parents.	32	54	9	2	2
The school is well led and managed.	59	38	0	1	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	56	37	4	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	40	45	6	3	5

Summary of parents' and carers' responses

The relationship with, and overall support from parents, is very good. There was a good return to the pre-inspection questionnaire, but only a small minority of parents attended the pre-inspection meeting. Inspectors firmly agree with all of the points that please parents most, although inspection evidence indicates that there is room for improvement in some aspects of management. Homework is effective and reporting to parents meets requirements.

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- High standards.
- Quality of teaching.
- Leadership and management.
- Pupils' positive attitudes to the subject and their enthusiasm for learning.

Areas for improvement

- Further development of the Year 7-9 (Key Stage 3) Literacy Strategy.
- Target setting and consistency in marking.
- The use of computers.

49. The results in 2001 National Curriculum tests at age 14 were well above the national average. Achievement at the higher levels was very good, with more than half achieving well above national standards. In comparison with similar schools, these results were well above average. The number of girls achieving higher grades A*- C in 2001 in English Language GCSE was very high at 81 per cent, compared to a national average of 61 per cent. Results for English Literature were even better with 90.5 per cent of girls achieving higher grades compared to 56 per cent nationally. The high level of performance at top grades A* and A for both examinations was impressive. Furthermore, the inclusion of all girls in the entry for both examinations points to the high expectations of success underpinning these very good results.
50. Work seen during the inspection confirms these high standards. In Years 7-9, girls are provided with a challenging curriculum, which has been strengthened by the development of the Key Stage 3 National Literacy Strategy. For example, girls' understanding of spelling patterns and sentence structure has been improved by the use of individual whiteboards. A very good example was a Year 7 lesson where girls were identifying similar sounding words involving different spellings. The well managed use of these resources challenged girls to think quickly and to make very useful connections in their learning. This visual and active learning of basic skills is helping girls with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language to participate, receive prompt support and to make good progress. A good range of writing is evident in their work. Girls are required to produce and respond to both fiction and non-fiction texts in ways which extend their analytical skills and their knowledge of structures in language. They show good understanding of how to draft their work according to its purpose and intended audience. This involves, for example, summarising key points concisely and offering more extended written responses. In both cases, written work across the ability range shows good standards of fluency and technical accuracy. It is also invariably well presented.
51. In Years 10 and 11, provision is also good and contributes to the high standards achieved in GCSE. At this level, girls show increasing resourcefulness and independence in response to teaching which, at its best, challenges them to think for themselves and to justify their ideas with examples and close reference to the texts studied. Lower attaining girls make satisfactory progress and are well supported. In a minority of lessons in Years 10 and 11, girls identified as having special educational needs do not always have sufficient guidance on selecting relevant information. In most respects though, the work sampled illustrated a broad and balanced curriculum with appropriate expectations in its planning and teaching. Consequently, girls are producing good descriptive, imaginative and analytical writing. This writing shows high standards of presentation.
52. Some good examples in the use of information technology to present written work, especially coursework, occur in Years 10 and 11. There was also evidence of girls in Years 7 and 9 using

the internet for research. Nevertheless, the planning and use of information and communication technology is inconsistent across the department.

53. Girls' attainment in reading in both key stages is generally good. In one Year 8 lesson, for example, girls read fluently and showed very good comprehension skills when drawing out alternative viewpoints from different versions of fairy tales. In a Year 10 lesson, girls showed high level reading skills when responding to the character of the Nurse in 'Romeo and Juliet'. In this and other pre-20th Century texts studied, they can identify themes and characters' motivation with clarity and knowledge of detail which further confirms the high attainment profile in Years 10 and 11. All girls make good use of the library for independent reading. In lessons, personal reading is given high status by teachers. Girls respond well to these expectations, reading a range of interesting and often very challenging texts.
54. Throughout the school, attainment in speaking and listening is very high and a variety of well-structured activities are provided to extend girls' speaking skills further. For example, a Year 9 class studying Caribbean Poetry can discuss dialect and imagery with clarity and a perceptive use of detail both in groups and in whole-class discussion. Significantly, the organisation of these lessons enables lower attaining girls and those with English as an additional language to make perceptive contributions to both forms of discussion. In a Year 9 lesson, girls preparing for an essay requiring alternative viewpoints on a social issue, evaluate in detail and provide extended, well-reasoned justifications for their opinions, both for and against. In a Year 10 lesson based on 'An Inspector Calls', girls read a key scene with impressive dramatic effect. They responded to questions in-role as chosen characters. This demonstrated a very good understanding of character and motivation in the play. They also showed high levels of vocabulary and ability to articulate complex responses, especially the more able girls.
55. Girls' attitudes and responses in class were nearly always either good or very good in English lessons. They responded well to opportunities to show initiative in their learning and worked very well together in different groupings. They listened attentively to each other and to the teacher in a variety of whole-class, group and paired work. Overall, lessons were characterised by very positive, purposeful relationships at all levels. These provided a very good basis for effective learning. There is also good support for the effective range of extra-curricular activities. For example, an English Society, co-run by sixth formers and teachers operates regularly and has recently bought half-sets of texts to extend its work. Curriculum enrichment is also well-managed. A theatre-in-education company presented 'Romeo and Juliet' last summer to Year 10 girls preparing for GCSE and are due to return early in 2002 to present 'Macbeth' to Year 9 as preparation for National Curriculum tests. A further example of enrichment is the pupil newspaper which provides a very good forum for the writing of the most able girls and illustrates the additional opportunities provided for them, for example working with a professional writer.
56. Teaching is good. It is a strength and in a significant number of lessons is good and often very good. Lessons are well-planned, including different levels of provision to meet girls' individual learning needs. In the best lessons seen, objectives were displayed at the start of the lesson, shared with girls and then used as a systematic point of reference for what was being learned. The most effective teaching also showed good pace and a range of appropriate strategies to engage girls' interest. For example, girls were required to use overhead transparencies to annotate texts projected onto the whiteboard and present their ideas to the class. Teachers' subject knowledge is very good and enables them to guide girls in making creative and thought-provoking links between the content of different kinds of texts and the forms of language used in them. For example, teachers helped girls to compare writing which made use of longer, complex sentence structures and other texts which required more direct, simple expression. Significantly, this understanding of matching style to content in writing was, in turn, evident in girls' own written responses, especially those of higher attaining girls. Work is effectively planned at different levels to ensure the inclusion of girls with special educational needs, most notably at Years 7-9. In addition, opportunities to work in different groupings and the use of frameworks and appropriate visual prompts enable lower attaining girls to make progress which is at least satisfactory and often good. Support for girls with more specific learning needs is also effective. For example, individual learning support for girls with dyspraxia and related difficulties in

organising written work, enables responses to be developed and included in the lesson. The needs of other girls with hearing impairment were also well managed. Girls with English as an additional language make good progress. In those lessons where teaching was satisfactory rather than good, it was due to insufficiently high expectations of girls as independent learners.

57. The department is well led and managed. Development planning is effective, in setting clear and relevant priorities. There is systematic monitoring and sharing of good practice, a key whole-school issue in the last inspection. The last report presented no specific areas of weakness. Nevertheless, the department has improved its provision as it has adapted well to the challenge of introducing the National Literacy Strategy in Years 7-9 and improved the focus of teaching and learning, as a result. Standards have improved. The marking of girls' written work is inconsistent across the department. In the best examples, girls are provided with helpful guidance on ways to improve their work, but in other instances teachers' written comments are too general to assist girls in dealing with specific weaknesses. Marking does not focus systematically on assessing what has been taught. The use of individual or group curriculum targets, to help girls monitor their own progress in improving specific areas of their work, is underdeveloped. Access to resources to improve the regular, planned use of information technology is an area for further development.

Literacy across the curriculum

58. The development of Literacy across the Curriculum has been effectively managed by the head of English as the literacy co-coordinator. Training has been provided for all staff in selected National Literacy Strategy materials, especially to improve writing and for reading non-fiction. Additional literacy lessons have been provided on a fortnightly basis for girls in Year 7 and 8 who study only one modern foreign language. This enables targeted teaching of Literacy Progress Units aimed at girls operating below expected levels in the early years of secondary school. In most respects, work is well matched to the girls' learning needs. Staff administering the Units have not yet had sufficient training in their use to ensure that the pace and expectations of lessons are always conducted at an appropriate level. In most English lessons in Years 7-9, opportunities for girls to develop their literacy skills have been enhanced by teachers making good use of the kinds of active approaches to literacy teaching and learning recommended in the Key Stage 3 Strategy.
59. In other subjects in the curriculum, the development of literacy skills is not yet sufficiently systematic. In science, some good examples were noted of girls using 'key words' with accuracy and a clear sense of purpose. In drama at GCSE level, girls' knowledge of specialist terms was again systematically and effectively developed. Some good practice exists in geography. Where shortcomings occur there is random marking of spelling errors, and insufficient attention by teachers to what girls need to understand across the curriculum to both respond to and produce different kinds of writing.

MATHEMATICS

The overall provision for mathematics is **good**.

Strengths

- The quality of leadership and management.
- The good quality of teaching.
- Attitudes to work are very good, contributing to the quality of their learning.

Area for improvement

- The use of computers.

60. The proportion of girls reaching the standard expected for their age in the 2001 National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 was above the national average for all schools and average in relation to similar schools. The percentage gaining higher levels was average in

relation to all schools. Results were somewhat lower than those in English, but matched those of science. In 2001, the proportion of girls gaining a GCSE grade A*-C was above the average for all schools. Every girl earned a grade. Performance was below that of English and science. The trend in performance in recent years is above the national trend. There was a dip in the results in 2000 caused by significant staffing difficulties in the Easter term that year. The upward trend returned in 2001.

61. The standard of work in Year 9 is above average, reflecting the results of 2001. Girls are achieving well in relation to their average standards on entry to the school as a result of good teaching. Girls with special educational needs and English as an additional language achieve well. High attaining girls in Year 9 have a good understanding of straight-line graphs. They know the definitions of gradient and intercept and can apply them appropriately in their work. They are encouraged to look for quick methods of solving percentage problems by good teaching methods. Average attaining girls produce some very neat work in their study of similar shapes. They solve problems involving speed, distance and time graphically and by calculation. Lower attaining girls find the application of scale difficult to understand. They work well, know their tables, can add simple fractions and draw accurate graphs of distance and time.
62. The standard in Year 11 is above the national average and above that seen in the results of 2001. All girls achieve well in relation to their standard on entry to the school. High attaining girls have good algebraic skills, factorising quadratic expressions with confidence. They have some difficulty with problem solving in trigonometry, though formulae are well known and applied correctly. A small minority of the gifted and talented girls complete their GCSE course early. Gifted and talented students are given every opportunity to further their interest in mathematics through school competitions and the Mathematics UK Challenge and so make good progress through the school. Average attaining girls have completed their GCSE coursework successfully. The work is neat, with detailed calculations and appropriate writing, although sometimes lacking in algebraic extension. Girls can evaluate simple percentages accurately. There are some errors in their work when correcting numbers to two decimal places. Lower attaining girls can evaluate the area of a circle correctly and draw neat scatter diagrams in their work on statistics.
63. The provision for girls with special educational needs is good as the teaching arrangements enable the teachers to support them effectively. Low attaining girls also benefit from the smaller teaching groups and extra support within the classroom. By the end of Year 11, assessment evidence shows that they make good progress during their time in school. They know the formula for the area of a rectangle and can use it accurately to find the surface area of a cuboid. They draw accurate pie charts in statistics. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and with English as an additional language also make good progress, inclusive with other girls of similar attainment. Standards of numeracy in mathematics are very good, due to the recent innovations in the curriculum in Years 7 to 9 and the very good teaching of basic skills. Standards of literacy and information and communication technology are average. Access to the school's computer rooms is restricted; the department's six computers are now old and seldom used.
64. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Approximately half the teaching is good and one fifth is very good. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. A strength lies in the very good teaching of basic skills and the very good management of the girls. In Year 7, detailed teaching is such that too much time is spent on consolidation of previous work in some lessons, particularly with the higher attaining girls. The attitudes of all girls to their work are very good and occasionally excellent, contributing well to their learning through the good use of homework and neat presentation of work. In lessons where the teaching is very good overall, the initial extensive oral work focused well on girls' knowledge. The question, "Why", ensured that knowledge was soundly based. Overall, the good planning in the teaching often includes time-limited exercises, which maintain concentration well. Subject expertise is good and explanations to girls are clear and understood. Teaching methods are good, as a result of the good monitoring by the head of department, but lack the visual learning stimulus of computers, particularly in the teaching of graphs. Calculators are used appropriately and correctly in many lessons. In a lesson on

fractions in Year 10 with low attaining girls, for example, it was the responsibility of one of them to check the teacher's answers occasionally, using fractions on the calculator. The direct methods used in that lesson were very effective in girls' learning. Overall, the marking of girls' work is good with written comments to aid learning.

65. The quality of leadership and management is good. National Curriculum requirements are met. The clear and good direction in the leadership has secured a good improvement since the last inspection. Standards and the quality of teaching and learning have risen because the monitoring of the subject's performance by the head of department is good and action has been taken as a result. The evaluation and development of teaching are good, with formal processes in place on a termly basis. The two teachers new to the department have become part of a good team committed to improving standards and reflecting the school's aims in its work.

Numeracy

66. Standards of numeracy overall are above average. The quality of teaching in the basic skills in mathematics is very good, raising standards as a result of new initiatives nationally. Standards are very good in art, exploring the idea of three dimensions using card, for example, with line, shape and form. This contrasts sharply with spatial standards in graphics, underdeveloped, as teachers have not done the required drawing work in resistant materials. Standards are good in science and design and technology. Measurement is accurate in textiles, less secure in measuring volume in science. Data handling is a strength in science and homework encourages the use of mathematics. Standards are average in business studies, geography and history. Standards are below average in information and communication technology and music.
67. Strategies for teaching numeracy are very good in art and mathematics and good in business studies. There are many opportunities to use number and all types of graphical representation of data in business studies, exploited well by the head of department. Up-to-date statistical information is retrieved from the Internet and used very well, for example. Strategies are average in design and technology, geography, history and science.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Good teaching.
- Pupils make good progress, particularly in Years 10 and 11.
- Very good accommodation and resources, including the use of computers.
- Effective leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

- Curriculum planning to support individual learning needs.
- Teaching experimental and investigative skills in Years 7-9.
- Consistency in marking and use of assessment, especially in Years 7-9.

68. The standards attained by pupils at the end of Year 9 in the National Curriculum tests were above the national average for girls and in line with those found in schools in similar circumstances. Since the last inspection, test results have improved and have been consistently above national expectations. GCSE results in 2001 were very high compared with national average and with schools in similar circumstances. Since the last inspection, there has been a significant rise in standards. All pupils gained a GCSE in science and the number of pupils attaining the highest grades in 2001 was impressive.
69. The standards reached by pupils in Year 9 are average overall and do not quite reflect previous test results, indicating the slight differences between the prior attainment of different year groups. Higher attaining pupils are achieving standards that are well above the average for their

age. For example, in top teaching sets, pupils demonstrate very good knowledge and understanding of all aspects of their work. Lower attaining pupils know some of the diseases associated with smoking and, with support, can explain the effects of illnesses they cause on the body. As pupils progress through Years 7-9, they build on prior learning, openly bringing knowledge and understanding to their discussions with each other and the teacher. Pupils are interested and make good progress. By Year 9, pupils take part in small group discussions with each other, share ideas about endothermic and exothermic reactions with confidence and then present hypotheses to the class. When concepts are difficult they strive to understand. They delight in extending their knowledge and take responsibility for their own learning as they persevere in completing set tasks. They work hard during lessons and beyond – taking particular pride in work completed, using the computer suites, or at home. For a small minority of pupils, the learning demands are inappropriately challenging. For example, a few pupils arrive in school with very well developed experimental and investigative skills and are insufficiently challenged by activities such as plotting a line graph. Other pupils struggle to use results involving decimal places as they work out appropriate scales or plot points on the graph. Although nearly all pupils' books are very well presented, in some groups much of the work is copied from the board and pupils struggle to recall it or explain the content.

70. The standards reached by pupils in Year 11 are well above average. They make good progress in Years 10 and 11 and standards reflect previous GCSE results. Pupils in the top set are achieving very high standards compared with the average for their age. For example, they demonstrate very good knowledge and understanding about the role of energy intake and output in chemical reactions and distinguishing between endothermic and exothermic reactions. Pupils can recall previous work on ionic and covalent bonding, use models of atomic structure confidently and explain the effect of atomic number on the structure of molecules. Pupils show good experimental and investigative skills and carry out practical experiments skilfully, with good knowledge of safe working. All pupils know that copper oxide and carbon dioxide are produced as copper carbonate is heated and go on to calculate the molecular mass of the copper oxide with skill and enthusiasm. Pupils understand data produced using computer sensors and can explain the falling pH and rising temperature levels during neutralisation reactions. In middle sets, pupils show good progress as they distinguish between strong and weak acids and alkalis with some being able to identify positive and negative ions in equations. Pupils in the lowest sets learn about the speed at which objects fall to Earth by considering good computer modelling programmes and know that such objects accelerate as they fall. On rare occasions, learning is limited by insufficient specialist teacher knowledge resulting in questions asked by pupils not being answered with confidence.
71. Standards of literacy are good. Many pupils speak clearly and precisely with the teacher during class discussions. They also utilise good debating skills during small-group discussions with each other as they consider a range of ideas and possible theories to explain their observations. Overall, standards of numeracy are good. By Year 9, pupils in top groups use a range of formulae well and can gather repeated time measurements, calculating speed and then average speed during experimental work. Pupils in lower sets demonstrate the skills required to measure angles as light hits a glass block and most can calculate other angles in their diagram. In Year 11, pupils in a higher set work interactively with the teacher to calculate molecular mass following experimental work, and recall previous work involving formulae. Although they can complete the calculations accurately, some lack confidence and rely on the teacher to give them solutions to other problems that are well within their capability, such as an appropriate scale for a graph.
72. Pupils in all year groups have a very positive attitude towards learning. They exhibit very good behaviour during lessons, co-operating well with each other and the teacher. Pupils work collaboratively, demonstrating good social skills in practical situations. When given the opportunity, pupils express empathy with others, for example, through the newspaper reports produced to focus attention on the problems caused by deforestation. They demonstrate good moral development and have a strong sense of fair play as they take turns, gather equipment and wait patiently, where necessary, during activities. Pupils' spiritual development is enhanced as they consider mathematical connections within chemical reactions as new compounds are produced.

73. Overall, teaching is good. It has a positive impact on pupils' learning. Features contributing to good teaching include very good relationships with pupils incorporating humour, challenging questioning, mutual respect and teaching approaches that build self-esteem and confidence in learning. Teachers generally show very good knowledge of their subject. Most use creative models and analogies to help pupils visualise difficult ideas, such as relating electrical current flow to a central heating system or light travelling through air then glass to cars moving through sand. They apply learning to everyday issues of relevance to pupils, such as the nature of paralysis resulting from spinal damage and the potential of the human genome project in understanding genetic disease. Overall, lesson planning is satisfactory, with identified learning objectives, good use of computers to promote learning, and clear risk assessments. Although the curriculum provides a good range of theoretical and practical activities, planning for the teaching of specific skills required for successful experimental and investigative work in Years 7-9 is underdeveloped. Very good questioning skills result in highly interactive question and answer sessions. Teachers maintain a good balance between giving time for pupils to express ideas verbally and keeping the class interested. Teachers are enthusiastic about science and present learning as enjoyable and accessible – and this is picked up on by pupils who exhibit a thirst for further knowledge and understanding. Teachers have high expectations of all learners, and pitch work at a challenging level. For most pupils this is highly motivating. Homework is a strength of teaching as it is set regularly by all staff, extends learning well and is reviewed productively during future lessons. Through this effective teaching, pupils make good progress from Years 7 to 11. They work co-operatively with each other and their teachers, so that they learn and achieve effectively. The youngest pupils learn practical skills well and benefit from 'Cognitive Acceleration in Science Education' (CASE) lessons in which they search for patterns in results and try to explain them. Pupils enjoy the challenges presented to them and respond positively to interactive class discussions. Very occasionally, teaching is unsatisfactory and lacks focus. Insufficient guidance on meeting the differing needs of the girls and use of support staff results in a small number of pupils with special educational needs making insufficient progress.
74. Assessment is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11, but at Years 7-9 there are shortcomings. Regular testing at Years 7-9 is used to identify how well pupils are acquiring knowledge and understanding and science investigations are assessed during set practical activities. As new work is introduced, some teachers ask probing questions to determine what pupils already know, although this is not common practice. Where staff do identify prior learning, this results in adaptations to planned work to ensure that pupils are challenged. In the best practice, teachers set clear targets for pupils, provide positive feedback and follow up unfinished work, but this practice and marking is inconsistent. On-going feedback to pupils about their progress, focused on what to do to improve knowledge and understanding, is unsatisfactory.
75. The department is well managed. Throughout, there is a strong learning ethos and both staff and pupils show commitment to learning. Adherence to common topics ensures that all pupils have a similar experience of learning. The improvement plan reflects school aims and identifies appropriate areas for future action, but procedures for monitoring and evaluation are underdeveloped. Recently developed curriculum planning provides a sound framework for future development. Since the last inspection, there has been good improvement. Standards by the end of Year 9 and 11 have improved significantly. Departmental meetings are now used to share good practice and this is effective in raising the quality of teaching and the progress by pupils. Recent training, completed by a core of science staff, has reaped huge benefits in the use of information and communication technology. Further work is required to ensure that there are planned opportunities for the teaching of numeracy skills.

ART AND DESIGN

The overall quality of provision for art is **good**.

Strengths

- Outstanding GCSE results.
- The quality of teaching.
- Girl's attitudes and behaviour.

Areas for improvement

- Monitoring and evaluation.
- Accommodation and resources.

76. In 2001 teacher assessments, standards in Year 9 were above the national average. Inspection evidence confirms that girls are working above levels expected for their age. Achievements are very good in relation to girls' prior attainment. Girls experience a wide range of media, including two and three dimensional studies. They are introduced to the formal elements of art work through well-structured and innovative teaching, for example, in a Year 7 class, when girls were introduced to line, shape and form through an activity which involved drawing lines to create shapes, which are then moulded into forms. This work is well developed across Years 8 and 9.
77. By the end of Year 11, standards are above average and achievement is good. GCSE examination results in 2001 were well above national averages at A* - C grades and inspection evidence confirms that standards remain well above national averages. Girls build on skills learnt and develop their ideas. They work on their own individual responses to the units set. Year 11 girls can explain their work, for example talking about the unit "Collections". Girls can effectively brainstorm ideas, explore the theme through artists who have painted collections, extend this through thinking about their own collections and realise their work in two and three dimensions. They can use the Internet to access material, which further develops research and evaluative skills. However, the computer in the department is not networked and so, in school, access has to be well planned.
78. Girls' attitudes and behaviour are very good. They enjoy the challenging activities. In a Year 8 discussion, following a visit to the National Gallery, they listen to one another during the critical analysis discussion. They behave well, because they are interested in their work and inspired by the quality of the teaching and the exemplar work displayed in the art rooms. Girls know how to improve their work. There is a good contribution to the personal development of girls, especially cultural development, through the study of different artists.
79. Teaching and learning are very good. About a half of the lessons seen were very good or better. The strength of the department is the teachers' subject knowledge, their enthusiasm and the challenge they provide to girls. Questioning is very effective and well structured to meet the differing needs of the girls. The good range of activities meets individual learning needs and the inclusion of all girls is good. Skills' teaching is consistently good. For example, in Year 9, girls are focusing on observational drawing of bark collected in the local woods. There is challenge in the approach of introducing a unit on Surrealism and girls are encouraged to play consequences. Girls' learning is good because the teaching gives them the necessary skills and the confidence to try. Girls learn through their mistakes. In Year 11 a strength of the teaching is the assessment of girls' work, setting targets for improvement. Across Years 7-11, the pace of lessons is vigorous and the planning is effective. Sketchbooks are well used to encourage independent research and extend girls' learning.
80. Leadership and management are satisfactory, overall. The head of department has a good vision, but aspects of the management require further development. A strength of the department is the comprehensive schemes of work, which support teaching and explore innovative ways of addressing skills, knowledge and understanding. The handbook is a useful document, which supports departmental practice. Opportunities are provided for girls to attend galleries and there is a weekly art club. Girls' work is labelled and well displayed in the art rooms and corridor and creates an immediate visual effect. Areas for development include the need to create a systematic cycle of monitoring of teaching and learning to disseminate good practice

and share individual teacher strengths. The procedures for assessment in Years 7-9 are new and developing. In Years 10 and 11 they are very good. The accommodation is small and spread out across the site, although there are advanced plans to bring the department together in a purposely adapted site. The departmental development plan does not have timescales and identified persons responsible for tasks and these additions would make the plan a more powerful tool.

81. Progress since the last inspection is very good. There has been much hard work, evidenced in the improvements in the quality of teaching and learning. Schemes of work are linked to the National Curriculum and the GCSE requirements. Pupils make good connections between the work of chosen artists and that of their own work. Assessment procedures have been refined and there is good evidence in Years 10-11 that they are used to target improvements.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

The overall quality of provision for design and technology is **good**.

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outstanding GCSE results in Food and Textiles. • The quality of teaching in Food and Textiles. • Girls' attitudes and behaviour. <p>Areas for improvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards and quality of teaching in resistant materials and graphics. • Accommodation for textiles. • Resources for graphics and computer aided designing and making.

82. Teacher assessment of girls aged 14 shows that attainment was well above the average expected for pupils of their age in 2001. Inspection confirms this overall assessment, but recognises that attainment is much higher in textiles and food than it is in resistant materials and graphics. GCSE results in 2001 were well above the national average in design and technology. However, standards varied widely within the subject. The number of girls achieving A*-C grades in food and textiles was very high compared with the national average. Standards in these subjects have consistently improved over the last three years, as has the proportion of girls achieving the highest grades. Results in resistant materials have varied, reflecting some difficulties in recruiting staff. In 2001, the number achieving A*-C was well below the national average.
83. By the age of fourteen, most pupils achieve well and their standards are above average overall. The standard of practical work is good in all aspects of the subject. The girls take great care with their work and they aim for a high standard of finish. In resistant materials, girls have concentrated on practical work to the detriment of designing and evaluating, and standards are below average. Their folders contain very little work and their understanding of relevant background information is limited. Graphics has only recently been introduced and the girl's lack formal drawing skills. Their sketches are competently produced. In food and textiles, standards are high. Girls work hard and demonstrate a thorough understanding of the design process. Their research and evaluation skills are well developed and they have a good understanding of relevant industrial processes.
84. In Year 11, inspection evidence supports the previous results at GCSE, but, by the age of 16, there is variation in the different aspects of the subject. In food and textiles the quality of girls' coursework folders is above average. They cover their course work very well and very good use of information technology ensures a high standard of presentation. Very good use of the Internet to support their research and effective use of a data handling package has enabled them to present their survey results clearly, using a range of techniques. Digital cameras have been used to show practical outcomes and great care has been taken to ensure a high standard of finish. Pupils receive much helpful advice from teachers, enabling them to improve the quality of their work. Girls report that they find teachers' suggestions extremely useful and are quick to follow any advice given. This has a positive impact on the standards achieved. In

resistant materials, standards are below average overall, although the quality of practical work is above average and the girls competently use a broad range of tools and machinery. Coursework folders lack the necessary detail and contain relatively little work. Marking is limited and consequently the girls are unclear about what they need to do to improve.

85. Girls with special educational needs and English as an additional language receive extra teacher support in lessons and make satisfactory progress. On some occasions, progress is limited because the work is insufficiently structured and does not meet the differing needs of the girls sufficiently. Teachers in textiles and food know their pupils well and this enables them to ensure that they provide extension work for gifted and talented pupils. As a result, they achieve very high standards.
86. The quality of teaching is good overall. It is significantly better in food and textiles and much of the teaching in these subjects is very good. In these lessons, the teachers have a very good relationship with the girls and they are enthusiastic and work very hard. Teachers have high expectations of the quantity, depth and presentation of girls' work. The teachers provide detailed guidance which pupils find easy to follow. Their subject knowledge is very good and enables them to provide competent demonstrations of new skills and techniques and to respond confidently to unexpected problems. As a result, the girls produce work of a very good standard. These lessons are conducted at a lively pace and use a wide range of interesting teaching strategies. Consequently, the girls enjoy the lessons and do their best to achieve good results. These teachers mark work frequently and their written comments tell the girls very clearly what they have done well and how it could be improved. The higher attaining pupils are challenged to achieve appropriately high standards and lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs are targeted for extra teacher support. This ensures they are able to tackle the work and are fully included. However, the department is aware that there are occasions when the lower attainers would have benefited from more structured worksheets or a different approach. Teaching in resistant materials is less secure and recruitment problems have caused a lack of stability over the last two years. It is satisfactory overall. The teachers have a secure understanding of the subject and practical skills have been taught well. The design and evaluation elements of the subject are underdeveloped and pupils' work has remained unmarked. Consequently, pupils have achieved standards below those of which they are capable. Improvements in teaching are beginning to take place, but are not yet consistent. The recently appointed resistant materials staff are planning lunchtime coursework lessons in order to raise standards. The girls are keen to take advantage of this offer. In all aspects of design technology, the girls benefit from the very efficient and helpful technicians. They provide competent help during lessons and ensure that all the materials and equipment are to hand, so that best use can be made of the time available.
87. The curriculum model for Years 7-9 is undergoing change and the timetable is being augmented. The girls gain a reasonable balance over the course of the three years. Imbalance in the continuity and progression, which combined with the difficulties in recruiting resistant materials teachers, have been significant factors in the standards achieved in the various subjects within the curriculum. The school is aware of the need to resolve this issue and to consider a variety of options to overcome this problem.
88. The department is effectively led and managed. The head of department has a clear and realistic view of the strengths and weaknesses in the subject. The department development plan's objectives are realistic and achievable, but action plans are not sufficiently precise, particularly in terms of evaluation. The use of assessment to inform planning is not yet consistent. Accommodation remains an issue, particularly for the teaching of graphics and textiles. Resources are generally adequate, but developments in the use of computer aided designing and making are being held back by a lack of appropriate hardware.
89. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. The problems with hygiene in the food technology area have been overcome and a new room has been provided. Storage remains a problem throughout the department and the rooms used to teach textiles are unsatisfactory. When textiles is taught in a resistant materials workshop, it has a detrimental impact on the standards achieved. Resources for the teaching of graphics are inadequate and contribute to the low standards achieved. There is now far greater inclusion of information

technology in the curriculum. Activities are no longer too tightly prescribed and there is a balanced range of activities offered by each aspect of the subject. Work on structures, control technology and electronics is being developed. All current teachers have a secure understanding of the subject.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- The use of information technology to enhance teaching and learning.
- Developments in assessment.

Areas for improvement

- Standards of achievement.
- The quality of teaching.
- Opportunities for fieldwork.
- Leadership and management.

90. Teacher assessments for pupils at the age of 14 show that standards are average. Inspection evidence confirms this assessment. GCSE results in the 2001 examinations were in line with the national average for pupils achieving grades A* to C. However, the results were significantly below the average for all other subjects in the school. The trend over the past four years shows wide fluctuation, but there has been an improvement since the last inspection in 1996.
91. Pupils make satisfactory progress from their time of entry to the school and, by the end of Year 9, they have acquired a satisfactory foundation in the subject. Pupils in Year 7 develop their skills of map work, demonstrating the use of scale through the mapping of land use in Milton Road adjacent to the school. In Year 8, pupils extend their mapping skills in their investigation of the Hamlet Court Road shopping area. By the end of Year 9, the pupils have acquired sound skills of investigation and presentation of geographical data in statistical form. Pupils in Year 10 investigate urban issues and relate the problems of planning in reconciling differing land use conflicts. In their study of natural hazards, they learn to empathise with people less fortunate than themselves. There are no pupils taking the course in Year 11 and so no judgements can be reached for pupils at the age of 16. Pupils with special educational needs and with English as an additional language make satisfactory progress when support is provided and generally achieve well. The progress of gifted and talented pupils is hampered as there is insufficient attention given to ensuring that they are consistently challenged.
92. Most pupils have a positive attitude to their work and behave very well. The subject has less of an appeal to a significant proportion of the pupils and this affects the number who choose this option for further study. This is reflected in that there are no pupils currently in Year 11.
93. The quality of teaching seen during the inspection was good overall, with no unsatisfactory teaching. However, in some lessons it is not made clear what the learning objective is, nor is there a plenary session to evaluate what learning may have taken place. Consequently the pupils make less progress in these lessons than would otherwise be the case. Practical activities such as the mapping of land use in Milton Road by Year 7 pupils, generate interest and enthusiasm. Lessons are well planned with sufficient activities to keep the pupils fully occupied throughout the sessions. In a Year 10 lesson, pupils were given opportunities to express their own opinions on the morality of international corporations in employing children in factories. They showed perceptive thinking in their evaluations. Independent learning is encouraged, as in the Year 9 lesson in which pupils created games based on an aspect of the study of a country of their choice. Over time, there are some shortcomings in the quality of teaching, evidenced by the fact that marking is inconsistent and work is incomplete. The marking does not show pupils how they might improve their work and is often cursory ticks and comments. Pupils do not enthuse about the subject.

94. The leadership and management of the department are satisfactory overall. Whilst there is good team work between the members of staff, with effective planning of the work, the monitoring, evaluation and departmental direction are underdeveloped. Good use is made of resources which are supplemented by up to date materials such as newspaper reports of natural hazards occurring in different parts of the world. Methodical assessment is carried out at the end of each unit of study and good records of pupils' attainment are kept in a portfolio for each pupil's assessment. However there is insufficiently high esteem of the subject amongst the pupils and this affects recruitment and retention for GCSE and Advanced level courses. The provision of fieldwork is limited. There is lack of effective liaison with senior management in planning and decision making, to reflect whole school policy.
95. Improvement since the last inspection has been broadly satisfactory. Pupils are confident in discussing geographical concepts and applying geographical skills to interpret and explain geographical phenomena. The quality of teaching has improved as a result of the adoption of new techniques and changes in planning. The teaching of key skills and the use of information technology have enhanced teaching and learning. Schemes of work have been updated to reflect the requirements of Curriculum 2000. However the inconsistency in continuity of groups from year to year is a concern.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- GCSE results.
- Good quality of teaching overall.

Areas for improvement

- Pupils' enquiry skills in Years 7-9.
- Development planning.
- The procedures for assessment.

96. In the end of key stage assessments at the age of 14, results in 2001 show that a majority of pupils attained above average standards. In the 2001 GCSE examinations, results were well above national average at grades A*-C, and this has been generally consistent in past years.
97. By the end of Year 9, standards are broadly average, being slightly below the previous year, reflecting a difference in prior attainment between cohorts. Pupils demonstrate sound knowledge and can use this effectively to analyse events or developments. For instance, pupils know that different groups demanded or opposed extension of the franchise in 1832 and can use this to explain why they thought and acted in different ways. However, pupils' historical thinking is not always fully extended. Year 8 pupils studying events leading up to the Civil War understand the tensions that existed, but see these as part of a narrative rather than as factors, long or short-term, contributing to a causal explanation. The best work on causal reasoning was observed in a Year 7 class. Pupils sorted various factors explaining Boudicca's revolt according to what aspect of the revolt they were being asked to explain. They were then able, under each aspect, to argue the relative importance of different causal factors. Evidence-handling skills are slow to develop. Despite promising early work in Year 7, few opportunities are available for pupils to develop higher order skills of source evaluation. This is because insufficient attention is paid to issues of provenance, encouraging pupils to see source content as information to be 'mined', rather than as evidence to be interpreted. Consequently, many pupils emerge from Years 7-9 with limited understanding of the processes of historical enquiry.
98. By the age of 16, standards are well above average. More rapid progress in understanding is reflected in evidence of the higher order thinking skills. For example, pupils in Year 10, use their knowledge about developments in the struggle for women's rights to assess the relative importance of suffragette activity and women's war work in achieving the vote in 1918. Pupils in Year 11 can, by analysing rates of progress in different aspects of medicine in the 19th century, explain why conditions in hospitals were so bad until the end of the century. Similar advances

are evident in pupils' evidence-handling skills. They can research, select and critically deploy source material to examine differing reactions to medical advances in the 19th century. Moreover, the pupils can explain the criteria they use - content relevance, reliability and corroboration - for selecting particular sources. This acceleration in standards in Years 10 and 11 can be partly explained by GCSE assessment objectives, which provide a clearer structure for teaching and learning than is evident in the scheme of work for Years 7-9.

99. In general, pupils write and speak well. Standards of spelling and grammar are good and progress towards the ability to produce well-structured pieces of extended writing is clearly visible across all key stages. Developments in numeracy are less systematic, but occur in the use of graphs, tables and statistics, for example a table comparing demand and yield from royal taxation prior to the Civil War. Increasing and effective use is made of computers, particularly in Year 7, where pupils illustrate personal projects, using visual images taken from the Internet, and answer questions about the Norman Conquest, using website material adapted by the department.
100. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are very good. All aspects of work make a valuable contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils as they study such a wide range of relevant topics and issues.
101. Teaching is good overall. It is satisfactory in Years 7-9 and good in Years 10 and 11. On occasions, teaching is very good and no unsatisfactory lessons were observed. A particular strength is the subject knowledge displayed by teachers and the confidence and clarity with which they communicate this to pupils. Relationships are very good in all classes. The best practice is in Years 10 and 11, where teaching is informed by a careful matching of objectives, classroom tasks and learning outcomes. Objectives are challenging and the tasks take account of the differing learning needs of pupils, ensuring that all achieve well. Teaching at Years 7-9, is more limited in variety and scope and generally less challenging. Typically, lessons begin with teacher exposition, followed by tasks requiring pupils to transfer information in various ways from textbooks to exercise books. Relatively few opportunities exist for pupils to solve problems or think for themselves and the focus on teacher direction undermines the development of pupils' enquiry skills and critical thinking. This reflects weaknesses in the scheme of work for Years 7-9, which describes lists of topics to be covered in some detail, but does not show how these topics can be linked to specific learning objectives through classroom activities. Day-to-day assessment practice is effective and helpful to pupils. Pupils' work is thoroughly and consistently marked, using annotation devised by the department. However, insufficient attention is given in the scheme of work to assessment planning - in particular, the identification of precise assessment objectives - and, consequently, to the use of assessment as a means of driving up standards. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. Effective use is made of individual education plans in teaching and the quality of learning support by both teachers and support assistants is good. Although there is provision for extension work through more challenging teaching in Years 10 and 11, no separate provision is made for talented and gifted pupils. Due attention is given to both gender and cultural diversity issues in the teaching of the subject, for example in lessons dealing with the development of women's rights and in project work on Native Americans. The range of learning experiences, however, is limited. No examples of paired or small group learning were observed. In most lessons, pupils' learning is productive, but largely passive.
102. The leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. Lines of communication in this small department are necessarily informal, but effective and working relationships are very good. The style of leadership is collaborative and inclusive, day-to-day working is efficient, purposeful and productive and outcomes in the form of GCSE results are successful. Good practice is shared by lesson observation. The department has benefited from its involvement in the school's Performance Management scheme, but links with senior staff for the implementation of whole-school policies have been otherwise tenuous. The main weakness lies in formal planning. The departmental development plan briefly identifies targets for the coming year but does not indicate in detail how they are to be achieved. The scheme of work provides insufficient direction for the planning of teaching and learning. This has limited the level of improvement since the last inspection.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The quality of provision is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Standards in basic skills.
- Quality of teaching in specific information and communication technology lessons.

Areas for improvement

- Coordination as a whole school initiative.
- Use of computers in subjects across the curriculum.
- Assessment.

103. Standards on entry into Year 7 show a large range of prior attainment and experience of information and communication technology. Progress is good and teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 show that the large majority of pupils achieved the national target level, showing an increase over the previous year. Results in the short GCSE course were better than the national average.
104. The standards by the end of Year 9 are above average. There is a specific information and communication technology lesson once per fortnight. The girls all meet the expected range of hardware and software and most are fairly adept with keyboard and mouse, menus and windows. Girls can use a word processor, enter text into a document; can print and save, as well as highlighting and adding special effects, such as colour and shapes. Most can insert a clip art picture into the document and some can insert text or pictures from the Internet. Some girls encounter difficulties in tailoring their word processed documents for specific audiences, for instance with an appropriate style and size of typeface.
105. Standards by the end of Year 11 are average. The girls in Years 10 and 11 also have a specific lesson once per fortnight. Many of them are reasonably adept with the keyboard, often typing effectively with both hands. Where there are weaknesses, it is because of limitations in the effective use of word processor editing tools, such as cut and paste, spelling/grammar checking or formatting tools like text boxes, paragraph indent and bullet lists. Too often, they do not use an appraise case when typing. When using spreadsheets, almost all can enter data into cells, most can enter a very simple formula and the majority can produce simple graphs, although there is some uncertainty as to which is the most appropriate graph from to use.
106. Girls have positive attitudes towards their lessons and in the use of computers. They care well for the resources and some take advantage of accessing computers outside of lessons.
107. The quality of teaching in specific information and communication technology lessons is good and, in subjects across the curriculum, satisfactory. Most of the teaching in Years 7-11 is carried out by the teacher in charge of the subject and the remainder by non-specialists. The best lessons are effectively planned with appropriate use of resources. Learning objectives are set, but are insufficiently shared with the girls. The pace of lessons is good and there is effective support as the teacher moves between individual pupils. The lack of learning staff support inhibits the progress of pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language. Work set is not always sufficiently designed to meet the differing needs of the girls. The allocation of time to the subject limits continuity and progression. It is not on the homework timetable, so there is, as yet, little set. The lessons do not end with focused tasks for the girls to complete before the next lesson, using either the school's computers out of lesson time or those at home. Assessment procedures are underdeveloped.
108. The weakness in developing skills and application of information and communication technology is because they are not being effectively and consistently used in all subjects across the curriculum. Leadership and management are overall unsatisfactory, because there is insufficient co-ordination and this leads to the limited application of computer technology skills to support the development of girls' knowledge and understanding. The monitoring and evaluation at cross-curricular level is underdeveloped. In some subjects, there is good practice. For example, good

use occurs in science where staff have undergone training. Here, computers are used for recording, modelling and sensing. Good use is made of computers in geography and in art and food technology, the Internet is well used to acquire research information. In other subjects across the curriculum there is insufficient planned use of computers to support skill development. This partly reflects the access to computers, although, where planning is effective, subjects take appropriate advantage of the resources. In a minority of lessons where computers were being used, teaching varied between outstanding and satisfactory.

109. Since the previous inspection, the quality of teaching, in both dedicated and separate subject lessons, has improved. The appointment of a technician has enhanced the resource maintenance. The development of information and communication technology as an integral part of departmental work has been unsatisfactory overall, and procedures for assessment in relation to the use of information and communication technology across the curriculum are still underdeveloped.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Overall the quality of provision in modern foreign languages is **good**.

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good GCSE results in both French and German. • Good teaching. • Leadership and management. <p>Areas for improvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schemes of work. • The use of information and communication technology.

110. Teacher assessments show that standards at the end of Year 9 are above average in all four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Inspection evidence confirms this view. Pupils can conduct lively exchanges with partners to describe themselves and their families and recount details on school life. Speaking skills in German classes are particularly good. In both languages, pupils develop their vocabulary and improve their pronunciation skills through the good range of activities. Grammar is well developed through the various activities which are well linked to every day life, for example tourism and sporting activities. By the end of Year 11, achievements in recent years at GSCE have shown a significant trend of improvement. GCSE results in 2001 were above the national average in both French and German. In both languages, higher attaining pupils have well-developed skills and express themselves well in a range of tenses as well as produce good pieces of accurate writing. In a very good German lesson, groups of pupils had developed their speaking skills to a high level and confidently gave a presentation to the whole class on their future plans. They used their topic books well to produce accurate answers and the lesson improved the fluency of their language.
111. Girls have very good attitudes towards their work. They behave well and contribute effectively in pair and group work, enjoying their achievements. Relationships are good.
112. The quality of teaching overall is good, with a small proportion of unsatisfactory teaching. Overall lessons are carefully planned with a wide variety of activities including grammar drills, pair and group work, regular assessment and games. Games were used well in both French and German lessons to encourage and motivate young learners. Teachers insist on high standards of presentation for both class work and homework. Homework, for the most part, was corrected in line with the departmental marking policy and contained references to the national curriculum level achieved by the pupil and further suggestions as to how to improve. Good use is made of information and communication technology in homework tasks.
113. A key strength of the teaching in both languages was the careful planning to involve a wide range of relevant activities to develop all language skills. Of particular significance was the constant use of foreign language in the classroom by teachers which resulted in good speaking skills by the majority of pupils. Assessment is regular and supported by informative, recently

developed print outs on each year group detailing the achievements of each pupil in the 4 language skills. The analysis of this information on developing skills levels has yet to feed into lesson and curriculum planning.

114. Subject leadership is good. The new head of modern languages has made an effective start in building a strong team ethos. A new departmental handbook contains valuable advice for staff. Monthly-minuted meetings are held at which good practice from staff development is shared and curriculum developments are discussed. The head of department is working on targets for improvement, which reflect the whole school development plan. Schemes of work are largely satisfactory, but further planning is needed to document fully the use of new materials and successfully integrate ICT into the modern language curriculum. The department is in need of greater access to IT hardware in the form of headphones and the facility to use language CD ROMs which support the full use of the new course materials purchased and add to students' independent learning. Banks of shared resource materials have been developed for staff; accommodation is good and there are good displays of posters and student work. Good use is made of exchange visits.

115. There has been a considerable improvement in GCSE results since the last inspection, especially in German, and resources for teachers are now well developed and shared. Staff offer additional lunchtime language sessions for pupils and these are appreciated

MUSIC

Provision in music is **unsatisfactory**.

Strengths

- Success at GCSE.
- Pupils' enthusiasm for instrumental lessons and extra-curricular music-making.
- The high standard of singing in the Chamber Choir.

Areas for improvement

- Standards by Year 9.
- Quality of teaching.
- Use of information and communication technology.
- Meeting National Curriculum requirements.

116. In teacher assessments in 2001, a large proportion of pupils in Year 9 reached the expected level. However, the method used to assess work was not reliable owing partly to the long absence of the head of music. Pupils have had interruptions to their learning as a result of the head of department's absence and the school's difficulty in recruiting another music teacher. In the last three years, the girls who took GCSE gained an A* - C grade. Numbers entered are too low for national comparisons to be made but achievement is satisfactory.

117. In Years 7-9, standards are below the national average and achievement is unsatisfactory. Pupils make too little use of technical language. They can explain and demonstrate dynamic levels, as observed in a Year 7 lesson on rhythm patterns and maintain their own part in an ensemble. Where singing was heard it was tuneful, often in parts, and used to help with other learning, such as in a Year 9 keyboard lesson, but the level of work produced was below that normally expected for 14 year olds. There is no evidence of pupils who have additional instrumental lessons doing anything extra; conversely lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs do as well as the rest of the class.

118. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are average. In Year 11, pupils are working on composition, proving themselves to be competent in notating their ideas. Development is restricted to what they can play and although the department has a computer with a very good composing programme it is not used. This restricts progress. The computer is regarded as a means of printing a finished score rather than a very useful tool for developing and refining work. All pupils are instrumentalists or singers and performance, especially in the Chamber Choir, is above average. However, pupils do not transfer what they learn about music through performance to

other areas. Some key words and concepts are not clearly understood, such as the construction of scales and chords and precise definitions for musical forms. A very accomplished singer, learning a piece from 'The Marriage of Figaro' did not know the word 'aria'.

119. An outstanding feature of the music department is the Chamber Choir. Led by the visiting singing teacher, girls from Years 9 to 13 are auditioned for a much sought-after place and they reach a standard comparable with some of the best youth choirs in the country. The main choir, unlike the Chamber Choir, is open to all pupils and students and is effectively supported.
120. Behaviour in lessons is never less than good and pupils are ready and willing to do as they are asked. Work done in groups is the result of co-operation and sharing of ideas. The teacher closely controls most lessons so pupils do not stretch out to pursue their own learning.
121. The head of department's absence has contributed to teaching being unsatisfactory over time; although there is good musicianship, it is not used sufficiently to give pupils a clear model for their own work or to provide exciting musical experiences. Lesson objectives are not always clear and pupils do not know what is expected of them. Planning does not consistently link the three activities of listening, composing and performing to ensure that girls have a rounded understanding of musical elements. Pupils are allowed to continue with activities after they have ceased to make progress, one reason for their unsatisfactory achievement. Activities are often not sufficiently challenging to meet the differing needs of all levels of attainment, including girls with special educational needs and English as an additional language. The lack of rigour in the planning also means that work is not assessed thoroughly. Opportunities are missed for pupils to find things out for themselves in homework.
122. The department has been without clear leadership for several months because of the illness of the head of department. The school is also experiencing problems recruiting a second musician to cover a small number of classes in the lower school. However, since the head of department returned there is readiness to tackle the issues of tighter planning and assessment. The handbook is being revised and now needs completing. Further development in the scheme of work is needed to provide the basis for lesson planning, showing how skills and understanding studied are linked to ensure full coverage of the National Curriculum and examination courses. Assessment procedures are unsatisfactory. There is no clear link to lesson or medium-term objectives. Data about pupils' prior attainment is not used to plan a range of activities, which will help every pupil to achieve her best. Resources for music are unsatisfactory. The department has only one computer, which restricts the opportunities pupils have to work with up to date techniques in music technology and does not allow the National Curriculum or examination requirements to be met in full. Although there is a full set of keyboards, the lack of tuned percussion instruments further inhibits the sound sources available to pupils. The school is well serviced by instrumental teachers and these pupils meet weekly to form the school orchestra. There is no departmental development plan to show how areas for improvement will be addressed. Standards at the last inspection, particularly in the quality of teaching, have not been maintained and the department has not taken into account the issue of developing a system for assessing pupils' work. Progress has been made since the last inspection and interest in GCSE and A Level had grown, with viable group numbers.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The overall provision for physical education is **good**.

Strengths

- GCSE results.
- Standards by the age of 14.
- Good consistent teaching.
- Very good behaviour and attitudes in lessons.
- Very good extra curricular provision.

Areas for improvement

- Procedures for assessment.
- Schemes of work.

123. Overall, the results of the 2001 GCSE examinations are above the national average. In the higher A*-C category they are well above the national average. There was a 100 per cent success in pupils achieving passes in the range A*-G.
124. Standards achieved at the age of 14 are above the national average. Attainment on entry is slightly below the level expected nationally and, in relation to this prior attainment, achievement is good for most pupils by the end of Year 9. Pupils make good progress from Years 7 to 9 due to effective teaching and the commitment, attitudes and behaviour. In lessons, pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language also make good progress to achieve the standards expected. Gifted and talented pupils achieve good standards through a very good enrichment programme. Through Year 7, pupils achieve well in games. They focus on how to use the basic principles of attack and defence to plan tactics and use their skills and understanding within a game context. In a Year 7 hockey lesson, it is evident that good progress is made in the pupils' ability to choose and use a combination of skills. They show confidence, accuracy and understanding of the principles of play when planning their approaches to the game. Pupils in Year 8 and 9 increase the range and complexity of techniques in netball and use strategies effectively. They work well in groups to plan for, organise and take part in competition within lessons. Overall the pupils' ability to analyse and monitor their own and others play is less well developed. Even higher standards and achievement will be possible if pupils have specific targets, based on clear assessment criteria, across the strands of the attainment target in physical education. All pupils need to have defined criteria to know where they are in order to take action and improve their planning and evaluation of performance. Standards overall in games are higher than in dance. In dance, standards are at least satisfactory and, at times, good in relation to composition and the pupils' ability to develop ideas. There is insufficient focus on the teaching of basic skills and quality movement to ensure individuals can perform with high levels of expression, fluency and accuracy in a range of dance techniques prior to composition of complex dances. Girls can identify strengths and weaknesses in their own and others' work. They react well to suggestions about how to develop a group dance and show an awareness of musical structure, rhythm and phrasing to dance with appropriate control. They can choreograph and use ideas in groups to compose complex dances.
125. Inspection evidence shows that the standards achieved by pupils aged 16 in the core physical education programme are at least average with a significant minority above the standards expected nationally. Attainment by pupils taking GCSE examination in the current Year 11 is above national expectations. Pupils in this course are making good progress in their practical components. Some pupils are achieving high standards in their practical activities, especially games. A minority of pupils are achieving less well in their theory, mainly because of difficulties in writing fluently and analytically. The academic profile and literacy levels of some pupils demonstrate that standards are not as high as in the previous year. Overall skill acquisition and application in games is good. Pupils can choose and apply complex skills that are suited to the actual activity. In the GCSE course, the skills and techniques are used fluently and precisely. They can plan and adapt team and individual tactics, varying them as the need arises. Pupils

take a leading role in lessons and prepare appropriately. In a Year 11 lesson, students had the knowledge and understanding to give them the confidence to lead and direct others.

126. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. The manner in which the girls conduct themselves is a feature of the work and is to be commended. The quality of relationships is the key to the very good ethos for learning observed in every lesson. In all years, pupils work hard, concentrate and take an obvious pride in their performance. The department contributes positively to the personal development of pupils. There is a clear moral code and the teachers are a committed group of professionals who endeavour to promote principles which clearly distinguish right from wrong. Pupils are provided with a range of opportunities in lessons as well as very good extra curricular provision to develop and express moral values. The programme includes competitive fixtures with other schools, which extends girls' personal and social understanding of physical education and sport. Their spiritual development is enhanced by the work. It helps them to gain a sense of achievement, develop a positive attitude towards themselves and others. There is a supportive culture of success and teachers also work sensitively to help the girls when they have to cope with limitations in their performance. Cultural awareness is developed through sport and dance. Pupils are given a sense and awareness of how the activities can transcend cultural boundaries and identities to give a sense of cultural identity.
127. The quality of teaching and learning in all years is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and have high expectations of the pupils in terms of work and behaviour. In all lessons class management and discipline are very good. It is the key to the good learning which occurs. Where teaching was at its best, teachers provided pupils with clear objectives for the lesson. Progress is better in lessons where teaching focused on learning points. In the best lessons teachers explained the purpose of the learning activity, gave feedback about where pupils were in their learning and what they need to do to improve. The teachers work hard to provide a supportive environment for learning. They are enthusiastic, plan well and inspire pupils. Demonstration is used well in most lessons to support the learning. Teachers use their knowledge to engage and enthuse students. The quality of relationships is very good and teachers have built a culture of mutual trust and respect. Learning and standards will be improved by more effective planning and sharing of clear assessment objectives with the pupils. The girls require learning targets to evaluate how well they are progressing in more than performance. They do not fully understand where they are now in relation to their levels of planning, evaluation and understanding of health and exercise. Teachers' exposition, in the main, refers to performance and skill acquisition. The current schemes of work and assessment procedures are not a firm basis to improve standards further. Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to practise, refine and adapt the range of skills in activities. There is very little evidence of task modification and different approaches to meet the needs of all abilities to ensure progression for all pupils in planning, performing, evaluation and health related exercise.
128. The leadership and management of the department are both good. The head of department was appointed at the start of the academic year following a period of considerable change in staffing. A good start has been made and there is effective support for colleagues to ensure good standards, organisation and consistently good teaching. There is a clear vision and understanding of the areas for improvement. There is a good team spirit and a real commitment to provide a range, breadth and balance within the curriculum. The current departmental development plan does not fully address the needs of pupils and staff, but shows that the department has good plans to target improvements in timetabling, curriculum design, assessment and schemes of work to raise standards further. There is a commitment to further improvement supported by the headteacher. The difficulties of the playing fields being at a distance from the school do create timetabling problems. The department works positively to find solutions in planning to ensure good learning and standards.
129. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Assessment procedures have been introduced and consideration is being given to learning through display. Standards have improved and there is consistency in the quality of teaching throughout the programmes. The facilities have been significantly enhanced with the building of a new multi-purpose hall. Overall accommodation and resources are adequate. The changing rooms are small for the groups at

present. Pupils are achieving excellence through their involvement in local, regional and national competitions in many sports.

DRAMA

The overall provision for drama is **very good**.

Strengths of the subject are:

- Pupils achieve well and standards are rising over time.
- Teaching is very good.
- Leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

- Use of assessment criteria.

130. The GCSE results in 2001 were well above the national average, with over 90 per cent attaining a grade A*-C. Although there is a fluctuating trend, results have been higher than the national average for the last three years.
131. Standards of work by 14 year olds seen are well above the national average. They achieve very well in their first three years in the school and acquire a quite sophisticated understanding of drama terms and techniques. They are introduced to the idea of creating role through a variety of methods, not least of which is taking part in whole-class simulation exercises.
132. Standards by Year 11 are above average. Work seen during the inspection indicates that current Year 11 pupils are on target to attain GCSE grades that are above the national average and that they achieve well through the course. They can employ a variety of dramatic and theatrical techniques to portray character, show emotion and tell a story. Course work shows a very good, perceptive understanding of drama skills that can be used to create roles, such as 'freeze-frames', 'hot-seating' and 'spot-lighting'. Pupils' writing displays a well-developed ability to analyse how such techniques as lighting, costume and special effects are used in the theatre. Higher and middle attaining pupils can write extended pieces, using technical language confidently and appropriately. Lower attaining pupils still express their ideas well, but their writing is less developed and there are more inaccuracies in expression. Pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language are effectively included and they achieve well through making as good progress as other pupils. In practical work, all pupils can show character and role confidently and they use their voices to express emotion and mood quite successfully. The most talented pupils get the opportunity to show their best work and they perform successfully, with poise and assurance in lessons.
133. The teaching is very good. Teachers challenge pupils to think deeply, to analyse their work and to use a range of dramatic and theatrical methods to convey character, emotion, plot and atmosphere. In an excellent lesson, the pupils made great strides in learning how to create atmosphere through drama, by experiencing a simulation of a memorial service to commemorate people who died in war. The teacher's use of music and lighting and the creation of role helped the pupils to have a quite profound experience. The uses of dramatic techniques were later evaluated by the whole class and the teacher helped to move the learning on by helping them to analyse the features of the simulation that had made it so successful. The lesson also made a powerful contribution to pupils' spiritual understanding of how we remember people whom we have been close to after their death and how we cope with grief. Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning, brought about by the quality of teaching. They enjoy the subject and take it seriously. They work well independently, with one another in groups, and show mature attitudes to the subject. In one very good Year 10 lesson in which pupils were working on a scene from 'Twelfth Night', they were enthusiastic about the work and listened very well, both to one another and the teacher. There was a climate of positive respect that helped to promote very good learning. Pupils' written work also shows that they enjoy the subject. They take pains with it and produce well researched and considered pieces.
134. The department makes a very good contribution to extra curricular activities. There are opportunities every year for pupils to take part in productions and regular theatre visits help to

enrich the pupils' experience. The subject contributes very positively to the ethos of the school and many lessons allow pupils to develop their spiritual and moral understanding very well. In a Year 7 lesson, pupils were exploring symbolism and ritual through a topic about the rainforest. The teacher linked the idea of religious ritual to symbolic gestures made by the priest in the Mass, and the pupils' understanding of such issues developed very well.

135. The head of department provides very good leadership and management. He has a reflective, considered approach to how well pupils are doing and how attainment can improve even more. Procedures for assessment are satisfactory. Teachers encourage pupils to analyse their own work and evaluate one another's performance and day-to-day marking of written course work is helpful and analytical. Specific assessment criteria are not yet used to assess work in Years 7 to 9, which results in pupils having rather vague ideas about how well they are doing and what they need to do in order to perform at a higher level. GCSE grades are not regularly used in assessing both performance and written work in Years 10 and 11. This results in pupils being unclear about the GCSE grade at which they are currently attaining and their targets.
136. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Standards by the end of Year 9 have improved and GCSE standards have been maintained. The quality of teaching has risen from good to very good and the department has continued to develop its schemes of work and assessment procedures. Drama is popular among pupils and the subject has a high status, greater than its relative size. Productions are a real strength and the subject's contributions to extra curricular activities and work in other curriculum areas makes an impact across the school. They are well placed to develop even further.

VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business Education

Provision for business education is **good**.

Strengths

- Good teaching which leads to good levels of progress and achievement.
- Good opportunities for pupils to become involved in real projects.
- Good assessment systems.
- Very good attitudes and behaviour.

Areas for improvement

- The provision of information and communication technology.

137. The GCSE Business Studies course is an option in Years 10 and 11. It is very popular, with a far greater proportion of pupils choosing the subject than is found nationally amongst girls. Recent GCSE results at A*-C level have been just above average for girls and were so in 2001. Very few pupils have attained the highest A* grade. The majority of pupils attain or exceed their target grades in Business Studies and achievement has been good, in relation to pupils' prior attainment.
138. Attainment across the two current groups in Year 11 broadly reflects the nationally expected range. This broad spread of attainment also includes, this year, a minority of pupils whose work is at the highest level. Pupils' achievement, judged against their underlying attainment levels is good, with most on target to achieve their predicted grades, or better. Written work often shows higher levels of attainment than pupils' oral contributions in some lessons suggest. A similar picture of attainment emerges across the groups in Year 10 where standards are also average.
139. Most pupils learn well during lessons and many retain information to apply to subsequent work. This applies to groups of all prior attainment and includes those with special educational needs or English as an additional language. A lesson in Year 10, for example, showed pupils remembering terminology and concepts involved in the nature of businesses well, which they will later use in their project about business start-up. Their own curriculum experience of

developing “Mini-Enterprises” last term, where they researched, developed, resourced, made and sold small items, provided a very good context to which to apply these concepts. A parallel Year 10 class, in a lesson about market research to identify a gap in the market, were able to interpret given data well enough to establish comparative household spending on various items and trends in demand. In the current Year 11 project about production, some pupils’ attainment is above average in their understanding of how to assess the value of different locations in which to establish a business. Their oral responses include a good level of technically accurate use of business vocabulary. Other pupils in both years have greater difficulties in understanding, retaining and applying terminology and concepts to new work. Most pupils use computers well for the presentation of work and for research. However, access to sufficient computers for the large groups in these years is difficult, so pupils do not develop an automatic understanding of information and communication technology as an everyday tool for use in their work.

140. The quality of teaching is good overall, with examples of very good teaching. Teachers recognise the value of “experience” learning, and often include exercises which demonstrate key features of concepts to be learned. Such an example was seen in the Production project in Year 11, where teams used construction bricks to recreate a given car model. This demonstrated very effectively the main concepts involved in teamwork in certain areas of production. Using this variety of methods, teachers ensure that pupils remain interested and engaged, creating enjoyment in the subject and in their lessons. Lessons are well planned and take account of girls’ differing needs. A particular strength is the high quality of resources developed by the department to cover the curriculum programmes of study. These include a commendably wide range of glossaries, “games”, revision exercises and many other devices to facilitate the acquisition, retention, development and revision of knowledge and skills. These are one factor in pupils’ successful progress, contributing to their achievement and successes. In addition, the variety of published sources used is also good and lessons are planned very effectively to provide a variety of activity which moves pupils at a good pace through their learning. Although assessment is good, teachers are not using it sufficiently to provide more incentives and extension work for the very highest attaining pupils, for example by identifying A* as a target and planning pupils’ work to achieve this where they can. The high quality of teaching contributes well to establishing and maintaining the very good attitudes to the subject. Girls do homework and research for projects diligently, in ways which significantly enhance their own achievements.
141. Department management is good and the department has improved well since the last inspection. This assessment of pupils’ work and of their achievement is a strength of the department. Teachers and pupils, therefore, have a clear view of where they are in relation to their target grades. Marking and oral feedback inform them effectively about what to do to improve, or alert pupils, if their teachers have concerns. The high quality of provision has been maintained and in some aspects, especially the use of computers to provide highly relevant resources, has improved, although better access and use is still required. Results at GCSE, then below average, have improved and are now just above average.

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

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

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

GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	1	0	15	100	62	1.0	1.5

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-B		% gaining grades A-E		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	10	20	46	90	98	5.0	6.6
Biology	14	14	34	71	88	4.0	5.3
Business Studies	5	0	32	100	92	3.2	5.5
Chemistry	2	0	43	50	90	2.0	5.9
Communication Studies	10	0	31	80	93	3.4	5.5
English Literature	19	11	37	100	95	4.8	5.9
French	3	0	38	33	89	2.0	6.0
Full Design Technology	3	0	30	0	91	0	5.4
Geography	5	80	38	100	92	7.6	5.7
History	7	0	35	86	88	4.8	5.5
Mathematics	1	0	43	100	87	4.0	5.8
Music	2	0	35	50	93	3.0	5.7
Other Social Studies	9	0	34	56	87	2.0	5.3
Religious Studies	6	33	38	83	92	4.3	5.8
Sociology	7	43	35	100	86	5.7	5.3
Sports/PE Studies	3	67	25	100	92	8.0	5.1

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

The focus of the inspection was mathematics, biology and physics.

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Students' attitudes are excellent and they achieve well.
- Teaching is good.
- Leadership and management are good.

Areas for improvement

- The number of students completing the A-level course.
- Standards of numeracy in the key skills courses on the application of number.

142. The inspection covered modules in decision and discrete and pure mathematics, mechanics and statistics. In addition, the teaching of application of number leading to the key skills qualification was also inspected.
143. In recent years the number of students completing the GCE A-level course has been too small for national comparisons to be reliable. In 2001, two students completed the course with GCE grades D and E. Seven students completed the A/S-level course at the end of Year 12 in 2001 and three continued into Year 13. The full range of grades was seen in these results, with one student earning the higher A/B grades.
144. The standard of work seen in the inspection is above average in Year 13. One student is on course for two GCE A-level subjects in mathematics at the higher A/B grades, a very good achievement. The other two students are achieving well, given their average standards at the start of the course. They compute probabilities with confidence, but have more difficulty with the concept of expectation. Algebraic skills are secure in module three of pure mathematics. Learning in work with algebraic fractions is proceeding well. Year 12 students have completed their first module in pure mathematics and are currently at the start of statistics and decision and discrete modules. Algebraic skills are good. They calculate measures of spread accurately in statistics and have begun to solve simple network problems. Achievement is good, in relation to their average standard on entry, for an A-level course.
145. Students studying application of number on the key skills course are achieving as expected, given their standard on entry to this course. Students' confidence in the use of fractions has increased during the course. Some students have yet to apply their knowledge of percentages in the accurate solution of problems and find difficulty with problems involving scale and the perimeter of circles. Other students found the end of unit test straightforward. Computers are appropriately used.
146. Teaching is good overall and is the reason for the good learning on the AS and A-level courses. Teachers' provide well for individual learning needs, always on hand outside normal lessons for extra help and support. Subject expertise is good and lessons are planned well. This ensures that basic algebraic skills and appropriate formulae are introduced effectively. Students in Year 12 work together very well as a group, one student taking the lead, resulting in the crosschecking of work and a debate on the methods used. This adds some humour to the lesson and clear gains in understanding. The marking of students' work is good, with written and oral comments helpful to students in their learning. Students have excellent attitudes to their work, which contribute significantly to their learning. The teaching of the application of number group is satisfactory and provides appropriate advice to students in preparing work for their portfolio. Teaching lacks the direct methods required to raise standards further.
147. The department is well managed. Teachers are committed to improvement and work well as a team. Appropriate professional development preceded the introduction of the module on decision and discrete mathematics. Assessment is used well in the monitoring of standards by the head of department. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory as achievement has improved and student numbers are growing.

Biology

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching.
- Learning resources.
- Technician support to the subject.
- Students' attitudes and behaviour.

Areas for improvement

- Developing teaching strategies to extend independent learning.
- Retention of students at the end of Year 12.
- The use made of information technology in teaching.

148. Standards in GCE A level examination in 2001 were close to average when compared with national figures. However, the number of students taking the A-level courses over recent years has been low and to make a statistical comparison is unreliable. In relation to value added data, most students achieve well. There was a good uptake in 2001 for the subject at AS level in Year 12, but a significant number dropped out at the end of the year when their choices of subjects to study at A-level were guided by their AS results. This year, 18 students are currently studying biology at AS level. Indications are that twelve students would like to continue into next year to complete the A-level course. Taking into account the added-value data available, results should show a significant improvement when measured against the national average.
149. In Year 13, standards of attainment are above average. Students have a good knowledge of topics covered during the course and bring this knowledge to current situations. They are less confident in applying knowledge to unfamiliar situations. Their understanding of concepts is good. In a lesson on respiration they demonstrated a clear understanding of aerobic and anaerobic respiration and of the role of ATP in controlling the temperature within a cell. They responded confidently to questioning as they learned about glycolysis and the Krebs cycle. They were less confident when asked to describe what is happening at each stage of the relevant flow diagrams and in handling the chemical formulae involved. They are confident with number. Students compile their own notes, keep their files in very good order and are developing well as independent learners. They are making good progress towards achieving their target grades in line with their prior attainment. Standards in a Year 12 lesson where students were studying mitosis, occasions when it is necessary for a cell to replicate itself and the process involved in the production of a clonal line of cells identical in every way, were good. Students listened well and were focused throughout. All students compiled their own notes and most were able to recall knowledge of their previous work on cells. A significant number of students, including the one male present, responded positively to questions posed by the teacher. By the end of the lesson, most of the students had successfully bridged the gap between GCSE and AS-level. They had secured a good understanding of the process and were using terminology at an appropriate level.
150. Students' learning is good and they reflect well on their studies and what they do. Most are enthusiastic and their positive attitudes to learning are significant to their making good progress, although a minority are rather passive in their learning. Most show initiative, take responsibility, are interested in the work of the department, take part in any planned activities, look after books, equipment, and take a pride in the quality of the learning environment. Relationships with one another, with their teachers and with technicians are constructive. They respect other peoples' differences, support each other and are developing well the attitudes and skills necessary to maintain lifelong learning, including the capacity to work independently, to study and to work with others.
151. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers have very good knowledge and understanding of the subject. Teachers' expectations are very high. Lessons are well planned; the result being that very good use is made of time, support staff and resources. In the best lessons, good questioning probes for knowledge and challenges students to think scientifically. However, in

some lessons, there is less emphasis on questioning to develop understanding than there is for testing knowledge. Teachers generally support students' learning well, developing work which meets differing needs to include all individuals, setting homework regularly and guiding their independent studies. Good support is given where students are underachieving. The teachers' enthusiasm for the subject stimulates interest and curiosity. There is a good balance between theory, practical and demonstration. Very good teaching occurred in the Year 12 lesson on mitosis. The use of a computer simulation and a short clip from a video was effective in significantly raising the students' level of attainment and in securing good progress. Students acquire a good level of skills, knowledge and understanding as they progress at a good pace through the units of study. In one lesson, good advice was given to students about written answers to questions and the relative expectations of the A-level examination and the requirements of courses at university. They encourage students to use appropriate and accurate terminology. Their management of the students is very good.

152. Where teaching is satisfactory, lessons are not tailored to meet individual needs efficiently. There are always learning objectives for lessons, but, occasionally, they are not spelt out assertively at the beginning of the lesson with a plan as to how they will be achieved, or the outcomes fully checked at the end of the lesson to gauge understanding. Good, ongoing assessment of work gives students knowledge of their learning and allows for them to set targets to secure good progress appropriate to their individual levels of attainment. Marking of students' work is carried out frequently. It is significant to learning in that it corrects inaccuracies and offers advice. There is satisfactory teaching of the basic skills and this assists students in their learning, although information and communication technology is under-used, given that the students' level of competence, demonstrated elsewhere, is good.
153. Good teaching and learning result from work in the subject being well led and managed. There is a strong commitment to attracting more students to take up the course, to raising standards and a clear direction for the work and development of the subject. The decision to drop human biology from the curriculum is sound. This will assist students when making option choices at 16 and will enable the biology team to put all of their energy into the teaching and learning of one subject; into monitoring, evaluation and into sharing good practice. Teachers in the department support each other well. The teaching handbook is clear, informative and sets high standards. The department development plan appropriately addresses areas for development in line with the school development plan. Refurbished laboratories and a very good level of learning resources allow for the curriculum to be taught effectively.

Physics

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

Strengths

- Quality of teaching.
- Leadership and management.
- Key skills teaching.
- The use made of information and communication technology in teaching.

Areas for improvement

- Recruitment to post 16 courses.

154. The number of students taking the GCE A level course over recent years has been very low and national comparisons for standards are unreliable. Students generally achieve a pass grade. There are no students studying physics in Year 12 this year. However, indications are that there will be an improved uptake for the subject in September 2002 and that there will be an increase in the number of higher attaining students from a very good Year 11 cohort.
155. In Year 13, standards of attainment are good. Students have a good knowledge of topics covered during the course and use their previous knowledge and understanding well, although they are occasionally less confident in applying it in unfamiliar situations. Their understanding of concepts is good. This was demonstrated in a lesson on electro-magnetic induction when students clearly understood the concept of rate of change of flux. In these lessons, they used

computers well to enhance their learning and their level of understanding of mathematics assisted them well. Their practical skills were good and they worked safely, taking into account the sensitive nature of the equipment being used. Students compile their own notes, keep their files in very good order and are developing well as independent learners. They are making good progress towards achieving their target grades.

156. Students' learning is good and they reflect well on their studies. They are keen and their positive attitudes to learning are significant to their making good progress. They show initiative, take responsibility and have good relationships. They respect other peoples' differences, are supportive of each other and are developing well the attitudes and skills necessary to maintain lifelong learning, including the capacity to work independently, to study and to work with others.
157. The quality of teaching is good and, on occasions, very good. Teacher expectations are very high and, linked with good subject knowledge, well used to extend students thinking. Lessons are well planned and very good use is made of time, support staff and resources. Teachers' enthusiasm for the subject stimulates interest and curiosity. Learning objectives are clear and generally well met, but there is a need to ensure that the quality of learning is rigorously checked at the end of lessons. Models, analogies and simulations are used, with students being aware of the limitations as well as the advantages. There is a good balance between theory, practical and demonstration. The teaching of the key skills is good. The good use of questioning probes for knowledge and challenges students to think scientifically. Students acquire a good level of skills, knowledge and understanding as they progress at a good pace through the units of study, developing and accurately using appropriate terminology. The good management of the students' learning is enhanced through the use of different strategies and materials to meet differing needs. Good, ongoing procedures for assessment ensure that students' knowledge of their learning is good and targets are set and achieved. Marking of students' work is good and regular.
158. There is very effective leadership and management within the science department. There is good vision and a strong commitment to attracting more students to take up the course, and to raising standards. The new physics course being followed reflects this having been chosen because of its emphasis on the practice of key skills and its use of computers. There is good monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching skills. The teaching handbook is clear, informative and sets high standards. The department improvement plan appropriately identifies area for development in line with the school development plan. Refurbished laboratories and a very good level of learning resources allow for the curriculum to be taught effectively. Progress since the last inspection has been good, but the overall judgements are affected by the low uptake at A level.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

Design technology was sampled. Last year's AS level results were disappointing. It is not possible to compare the results to those achieved nationally as the small number of pupils involved renders such a comparison unreliable. However, inspection evidence indicates that standards have improved considerably this year. The students are keen and well motivated. They take on board any advice offered and work hard at both the theoretical and practical aspects of the course. The standard of some of the work is very high and all students are on target to achieve a pass this year. Teaching is good. The standard of work in the current sixth form is now better than satisfactory.

BUSINESS

Provision for business education is **good**.

Strengths

- Good teaching.
- Good use of students' own work-place experience to contextualise learning.
- Good participation in Young Enterprise in Year 12, including good use of ICT.
- Good assessment procedures.

Areas for improvement

- Developing independent learning.

159. The school's provision of AS level business studies in Year 12 and A2 A level in Year 13 is appropriate. Access to these courses is open and not all students in Year 12 have had prior experience of business studies at GCSE level. A minority join the subject in year 12 from other schools. Recent examination results at A Level have shown few students with higher grades. Numbers on courses are small so results are statistically insignificant, but in 2001 all students gained a pass grade at the lower levels. In recent years, most students achieved their target grades based on nationally valid predictions, but in 2001 they did not. AS Level results, while relatively low, showed more students achieving at or above their target grades than below them, and they achieved well in relation to prior performance at GCSE.
160. Attainment on entry to both years of the sixth form is lower than average for these years nationally and achievement is broadly good. It varies between Years 12 and 13 and broadly reflects the standards achieved in previous years. In Year 13, numbers are small and the range of attainment is wide, although students are on target to achieve the grades predicted. Students are developing a sound awareness of the theories relating to the business world, for example in relation to marketing, accountancy and management techniques. The secure, accurate marking and assessment systems ensure that progress and achievement are very well tracked, so that both teacher and students know where they are and what to improve to boost attainment. In Year 12, all students are currently on target to achieve predictions and they are achieving standards which are at least average and above those in Year 13. Their oral work shows a higher level of competence and confidence as they discuss issues well in relation to advertising and to changes in the business world, for example, the Marconi company. They introduce aspects which relate to business decisions as well as ethical and employment issues. They record notes well in workbooks and these form a useful frame of reference for students to contextualise their learning. The involvement of Year 12 students in Young Enterprise is effective in developing a range of skills, providing a "holistic" overview of the elements required for businesses to succeed. All students in the sixth form use ICT well in all their work. They use their access to the Internet highly effectively in research and for many other uses, for example to access work done at school from home.
161. Teaching is good. The difference in response from Year 13 and Year 12 classes is very noticeable. Year 13 are a much less interactive group, orally, making it difficult for the teacher to get responses from them in question and answer sessions even when some may know the answers. Students are relatively dependent on the teacher and much less independent than the department would wish. Year 12, by contrast, is mature and relatively articulate. Their learning has been good, from a wide range of start-points in attainment. Most plan to continue into Year 13. The group is benefiting greatly from their Young Enterprise experience in which all are currently involved. Students appreciate the amount of preparation and planning which lessons incur and value the very good resources they acquire from the teacher for reference, revision and on which to base their homework.
162. The department is well managed and has made good improvement since the last inspection. The quality of accommodation, including access to computers has improved. The quality of teaching is better and this has enhanced learning with clear value-added in students' achievements.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

This subject was sampled. The advanced courses were introduced in 2000 and success in the AS level examinations was average. These results were good, bearing in mind it was the first year of entry, the group was large, and some of the students did not start with high prior attainment. In Year 12 and Year 13 the students are attaining standards which are average. Most are competent in word processing and Internet access software and their files show that they have met a wide range of computer applications. There is sufficient contact and private study time for the advanced students to extend and develop their grasp of the subject and its demands, while the new key skills programme for all the sixth-formers is developing well. Resources, including textbooks, printers, scanners, multimedia systems, CD-ROM writing facilities and data projectors are limited.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The focus of the inspection was health and social care, although physical education and sports studied were sampled. In 2001 three students sat the A level examination in physical education and sports studies and all achieved pass grades. Inspection evidence shows that the 10 students in Years 12 and 13 currently studying for the AS level are producing work which is above average. Most of the students have made good progress since they started the course last September and they are achieving well. The highest attaining students have developed their analysis of performance in sport. They demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of the social and historical factors within sport and society. Their writing demonstrates commitment to achieving high standards. The teaching of AS level is good. There are high expectations, good planning and support for students to deepen their knowledge, understanding and skills across their chosen practical and theoretical areas. At times, the quality of learning is slightly hindered by a limited range of teaching styles. The level of challenge is good, but a less direct and dominant style to allow opportunities for problem solving and independent work to use higher order skills would benefit achievement. The students use their skills, knowledge and understanding to coach younger pupils in the school. The introduction of the Community Sports Leaders Award to accredit formally the good work of the students generally in the post 16 phase is a potential development. Leadership and management are good. They are well organised and there are good plans to develop, promote and extend the opportunities for students in relation to sport in the school and community.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Overall quality of provision for Health and Social Care (GNVQ) is **good**.

Strengths

- Above average standards.
- The teaching is very good.
- Students make good progress.
- Good use is made of information technology.
- There is good use of external resources.

Areas for improvement

- The structure of the timetable to ensure continuity and avoid clashes.
- The provision of better study facilities.

163. The small groups taking the intermediate level GNVQ in health and social care make it difficult to compare standards with national averages, but results in the 2001 examination show that students make good progress. They achieve grades that are above those predicted from their GCSE results. The retention rate is good, with all students completing the course last year. Numbers are steadily growing.
164. The standards of work seen in the current Year 12 group are above average. Students are on target to achieve grades that are well above those predicted by their GCSE results. They have a very good understanding of the care value base which underpins health and social work. In a discussion, students were able to relate theory to the practical work they have been doing on work experience visits. Their written work is well organised, with standards of presentation being particularly good. They were preparing some display work on healthy eating which demonstrated a good understanding of the importance of a balanced diet. Their portfolios of work contain some very good examples of the use of computers. In particular, they have used desk top publishing to produce some high quality projects.
165. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. The standard of work seen and the discussions with students all point to a challenging learning environment which encourages high standards. Students are attentive and lively and have a very positive attitude to work. In a group discussion, all of the students talked enthusiastically about the course and expressed their satisfaction with the progress they are making. The teachers have a good knowledge of the subject and use a variety of teaching methods to produce lessons that are interesting and enjoyable. In one lesson, the students had produced a video which helped them to analyse the various stages of child development. The resulting discussion revealed a sound knowledge of

the subject. Students are set challenging tasks which are well structured to meet their needs and given help with study skills to make the most use of their free time. Assessments are well organised, with students having clear targets and good feedback.

166. The overall management of the subject is very good. There is a strong commitment to raising standards. Staff are suitably qualified, with a recent appointment adding greatly to the strength of the team. Resources are efficiently used with good use being made of external agencies. Visiting professionals come into the school and the students visit a number of caring organisations. In one lesson, a visiting midwife was able to use her wide experience of child development to help students understand the early stages of foetal development. Although at times there is a lack of clear communications between the team of teachers this does not overly detract from the high quality of provision. Timetable problems create difficulties for some students and pressure on the computers in the study area means that students find it difficult to obtain easy access to computers for their private study. The school is aware of these problems and is hoping to resolve them shortly. Plans are in hand to introduce the advanced course. As there was no provision at the last inspection no judgements on standards and teaching are appropriate, but the introduction of the course has been very beneficial in widening students' choice.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The main focus of the inspection was the performing studies. Art was sampled and the provision is good. Students achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. Teaching is very good and provides an effective challenge to the students who make good progress. The school has recognised the need to improve accommodation and new art rooms are due for completion in May 2002 to support the further development of this good subject.

PERFORMING STUDIES

Provision in performing studies is **good**.

Strengths

- Teaching is very good.
- Students are committed to doing well.
- The course is very popular at AS level.

Areas for improvement

- Accommodation for dance.

167. The first students took AS level in this new course in 2001 and gained high grades, doing well in comparison with national averages. Standards being achieved by the current students are above average. In the contextual studies module, students make close links between established pieces in dance, drama and music and their own practical interpretations. In a Year 13 dance lesson, students created a short improvisation based on Matthew Bourne's 'Swan Lake', establishing their understanding of parody and humour. The work of Brecht is the basis of Year 12's improvised Chalk Circle with one group applying their knowledge of physical theatre to create a circle. Singing is the basis of performance in music and there is a strong influence from the work in Chamber Choir evident in their close-harmony interpretation of popular songs. Students are not specialists in all three art forms, but they are quickly learning how to transfer techniques and recognise patterns across the disciplines. Achievement is very good.
168. Teaching is very good. Teachers build very well on the strengths of the students and use their own expertise very well. Year 13 was clearly enthused by their teacher's readiness to take part in their dance when absentees reduced the performers to four. Planning is very good and, guided by the requirements of the course, integrates practical performance with established works. An accurate assessment is made of students' ability and work is prepared accordingly. When working in groups, students are self-sufficient and they appreciate teachers' willingness to stand back and let them develop their ideas. Consequently, they have a clear idea of their achievement and only need the teacher to confirm this. A high degree of motivation greatly assists learning and teachers are ready to support this with challenging activities. In lesson

planning and in the marking of student's work key skills are identified and this supports learning. All students are encouraged to word-process their written work so that they can incorporate sections from the three areas into final work. Digital cameras, video-recordings and sound and light systems are all used to give students further experience with information and communications technology.

169. The head of drama nominally leads the course, but, in practice, everything is done by all three teachers working as a team, making for very good leadership and management. By working closely together, progress of students is closely watched. The teachers are able to help students make links between the art forms because they visit each other. There is however no formal monitoring of teaching and learning in the department, partly because of the newness of the course. The individual disciplines draw from their host areas for most of their resources. Accommodation for music and drama is very good, but there are problems in dance from being nomadic and this is most apparent in the large Year 12 class, which requires a large space to work in. The decision to move from theatre studies to performance studies has clearly been a good one in view of the standards achieved and the enthusiasm the course has generated.

HUMANITIES

The focus of the inspection was sociology, but history was sampled. There are no geography courses in the sixth form at present, although the results for the students in 2001 were good. Results in 2001 A level history examinations were average. Standards in Year 13 are above average, reflecting a different cohort of students and the quality of teaching is good. Students enjoy their work and are developing the critical skills and understanding to develop their overall understanding of the subject. They enjoy discussions in which they bring to bear their previous knowledge and understanding and pose good solutions and suggestions to each other, often delving well. They have a good understanding of provenance and can compare and contrast and evaluate well. The subjects are effectively led and managed.

Sociology

Overall quality of provision for sociology is **very good**.

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of teaching. • Students are interested and highly motivated. • The progress that most students make. • The increasing popularity of the subject. <p>Areas for improvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accommodation.
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170. Sociology is taught at both AS and A2 levels. The most recent examination results at both levels are above the national average. They have been steadily improving for the last two years. Last year, three quarters of the entry passed the AS level and all passed at A 2 level.
171. Comparison with the attainment that students achieved before entering the sixth form show that most students have made very good progress in subsequently achieving grades that are above those predicted. A small minority of students who took the AS level course in Year 13 did not make such good progress. Those students had opted to take the subject after failing to obtain the grades they had hoped for in other subjects during the previous year. They were poorly motivated and despite repeated requests did not make the effort to improve the quality of their work.
172. The standards of attainment in the work seen during the inspection was well above national expectations at both AS and A2 levels. Year 12 students have a sound understanding of the main theoretical frameworks that underpin sociological research. They use specialist language well and understand the research methods used in sociology. In a discussion, students compare and contrast the functionalist and Marxists views of the family in a confident and well informed manner. Year 13 students have coped well with the more complex nature of the work in the A2

level course. They have a good understanding of the units they have covered and describe in detail the studies and arguments that support various theories. In an enjoyable lesson, they draw out the arguments for the secularisation of society from a video of the Simpson family. They have a good understanding of the various research methods used in the subject and are confident in using complex terminology.

173. Students at both levels organise their work well. Their files suggest that they use their study time efficiently, demonstrating good research skills. In discussions, they are orally confident, using specialist language well. Their use of computers in both presentation and research was extremely good. They are competent at analysing the media to illustrate the subjects they are studying and use specialist journals well.
174. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. The teacher has a very good knowledge of the subject which she uses effectively to give clear explanations and guidance. She is particularly good at relating the theoretical studies to modern relevant situations. Using a variety of teaching methods, lessons proceed at a good pace. She creates a very positive and supportive learning environment which students respond to with enthusiasm. The lack of access to computers does mean that this aspect of teaching could be improved upon.
175. The subject is very well managed. There is a strong vision for development which is supported by the school. The recent rise in numbers reflects not only the commitment and enthusiasm of the teacher, but also a growing confidence in the quality of learning and the improving standards of attainment. Plans are in hand to improve both the standards of accommodation and the need for better access to computers.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The overall provision in English is **good**.

Strengths

- The quality of teaching at AS, A Level and for Key Skills.
- Increasing expectations of independent learning.
- Students' positive attitudes and their enthusiasm for learning.

Areas for improvement

- The use of computers.

176. English in the sixth form provides a challenging, well taught curriculum which is also well matched to the learning needs of students in Years 12 and 13. Results in 2001 for GCE A Level were disappointing when compared to the attainment at the end of Year 11. Although all pupils passed the examinations in both English and English Literature, the grades do not reflect the high profile of attainment in Year 11. The majority of pupils, fourteen out of twenty entered, achieved lower pass grades D and E.
177. Inspection evidence for both English AS and A Level courses confirms the view that standards are improving and that more pupils are now working within the range of higher grades for both examinations in Years 12 and 13. The work at AS level, for example, generally showed good understanding of the social and historical contexts of literature studied. Most written work reflected good personal response well supported by close reference to the text, although the work of those pupils who entered the course with Grade C at GCSE has some weaknesses in expression. Standards of work in the English Language/Literature course were above average, and particularly good. Here students showed extensive knowledge of language frameworks and relevant linguistic terms when evaluating a wide range of texts. Their written work showed understanding of how, for instance, formal 18th Century writing involved complex sentence structure and vocabulary choices in order to achieve specific effects. This understanding of the writer's intention and the ability to identify its structural features on the page is a particular strength in the work of the higher attaining students in this course.
178. Those students studying English Literature show comparable knowledge of structure in their

study of set texts. Students in Year 13 studying a sonnet by Keats can comment on the particular features of the form, using appropriate terms and illustrating the link between the fourteen-line pattern and the shifts in meaning which it contained. They can also make links with other sonnets and draw on their wider reading in describing the poem's effect. In each of the courses, across both years, students showed very well developed oral skills. They listened well to each other and to the teacher. They were highly motivated and came to the lesson, having undertaken the necessary homework in preparation.

179. Provision for Key Skills in Year 12 is good. Objectives for the programme are shared with students and they all have a clear understanding of the requirements of the course. Opportunities are taken to identify the use of communication skills across the subjects studied by each student. This process then leads to an integrated, coherent programme to demonstrate and extend these skills in practice. Inspection evidence shows that students prepare effective presentations and simulated interviews. These show good understanding of what information to select and of some features of the language used. They apply this knowledge in their own work, writing a speech with different levels of formality. Attainment in this work was in most cases at the expected standard for their ages.
180. The quality of teaching is good overall. It was most effective where students were expected to show initiative and independence in their approach to the work. A good example was a Year 13 lesson where students were presented with a range of texts dating from the 17th Century to the present day. In pairs, they analysed the linguistic features of each text and were then provided with a transparency to project onto the whiteboard and annotate with their findings. This lesson involved whole-class discussion, paired work and shared presentations. Very effective use was made of the time available; the pace and expectations of learning were high and the students had valuable opportunities to learn from each other, as well as from the teacher. Teachers show very good subject knowledge. They plan the work in a way which challenges students to think for themselves while providing appropriate guidance and structures to support their learning. This balance between direct teaching and expectations of independent learning was very well judged in the majority of lessons. Teaching of Key Skills is good. The work is well-planned to meet national standards. Regular assessment is effectively organised and gives useful direction to students on how to improve their work and to meet the requirements of more formal, timed assessments. There is insufficient use of information technology to further support these requirements for independent study.
181. The overall provision is enhanced by a range of extra curricular activities in which students are invited to participate, for example monthly meetings of the Debating Society. Students are also expected to contribute to extra-curricular opportunities for younger pupils, for example by supervising the English Society, which meets regularly at lunchtimes.
182. The leadership and management are good. There is a good vision for the development of the subject and the head of department and the team of teachers involved provide a good, well managed programme of AS and A Level studies. This provision is well suited to the students' needs, a point well illustrated by the significant increase in numbers for each of the courses offered in both current Year 12 and 13. The syllabus requirements are well managed and expectations of students in terms of completing work and meeting deadlines are high.

Modern foreign languages

183. The focus of the inspection was on French offered in Year 13 as an A2 programme. German was sampled in Year 12 as an AS programme. Overall the provision in German is good. It has only recently been taken up as a sixth form subject. Only 3 students entered and passed AS level German in 2001 and, thus, there are no developing trends of standards. Inspection evidence confirms that students are achieving above average standards. Teaching is very good. It is enhanced by good subject knowledge and by use of interesting resources and integrates the Catholic ethos of the school. In a carefully structured lesson on racism, the experiences of immigrant workers in Germany was fully discussed in the language by the students and this included the underlying causes of racism and the rights and wrongs of events at the time. The

lesson was conducted almost entirely in German and students coped well with a wide variety of relevant activities, using audio and text resources. Students display a mature attitude to the subject and display good study skills, noting new vocabulary and structures and offering explanations in German rather than English. Curriculum leadership of the subject is good with teachers benefiting from strong support and newly developed shared resources. The head of modern foreign languages is working on targets for improvement, which reflect the whole school development plan. Improvement in the use of computers is an area for development.

French

Overall the quality of provision in French is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Good use of the foreign language throughout the lessons.
- Good subject knowledge displayed by teachers.

Areas for improvement

- Students study skills are underdeveloped.

184. French was introduced as a sixth form subject in 1997 with the first student entries to examination and, since that time, only a few students have entered for the examination and not always in consecutive years. Results have been below national averages. The coursework of students is satisfactory, but students' portfolios seen during the inspection contained a small amount of work which was not always well organised. The results at AS level in 2001 were good, but any comparison with national figures is unreliable. Results at A level in 2001 were below the national average with no high grades.
185. Evidence from work seen in lessons and in students' files shows that students are achieving standards broadly in line with expectations. The standard of speaking and listening in Year 13 is broadly average. Most students speak with confidence and express opinions clearly and confidently. Students cope very well with lessons conducted entirely in French and, as a result, they display good listening and speaking skills, contributing well in class. Students produce a variety of written work in class and some have been on revision weeks and benefited from the experience. They have a developing knowledge of grammar and at this stage of the course some structures still present difficulty.
186. Students display a good attitude to work and are very attentive. They ask questions when they do not understand and make a good effort to clarify their understanding in French before resorting to English translations.
187. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. All lessons are prepared with an appropriate range of activities and skilful questioning promotes development of listening and responding skills. Good use is made of resources with video players, cassettes, reading materials, but the use of IT is at an early stage of development. Students have been provided with a list of useful web sites, but access to these in school is constrained. Lessons are conducted at a relatively slow pace, but students remain on task. Teachers praise students for the contributions they make in class sessions. Some opportunities are missed to provide challenging opportunities for the more able students. Teaching occasionally failed to reinforce study skills and students missed opportunities to note down new vocabulary.
188. There is good leadership in the subject. The head of department is new in post and is putting in place strategies to promote peer observation as a means to disseminate best practice across the department. Opportunities exist for students to participate in a French exchange through an established partnership. The department does not have a foreign language assistant to provide support for students.