

INSPECTION REPORT

LANGLEY PARK SCHOOL FOR BOYS

Beckenham, Kent

LEA area: Bromley

Unique reference number: 101668

Headteacher: Mr R Northcott

Reporting inspector: Ian Stuart
19298

Dates of inspection: 11 – 15 March 2002

Inspection number: 192297

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	11 - 18
Gender of pupils:	Boys
School address:	Hawksbrook Lane South Eden Park Road Beckenham Kent
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr C A Grimble
Date of previous inspection:	3 – 7 March 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities (sixth form)	Aspect responsibilities (sixth form)
19298	Ian Stuart	Registered inspector		The school's results and students' achievements; How well are students taught? How well is the school led and managed?
9391	Dr Norma Ball	Lay inspector		Students' attitudes, values and personal development; How well does the school care for its students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
11508	Chris Griffin	Team inspector	English	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students?
22691	Ray Woodhouse	Team inspector	Mathematics	
10385	Keith Hopkins	Team inspector	Design & technology; Computing	
13122	Stephanie Matthews	Team inspector	History	
31685	Valerie Girling	Team inspector	Art; Graphics	
25748	Roger Moyle	Team inspector	Sports studies	
11751	David Sutcliffe	Team inspector	French	
32080	Brian Dutton	Team inspector	Media studies	
18447	Ron Cohen	Team inspector	Business studies; Politics	
8361	Mac Burley	Team inspector	Chemistry	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Langley Park School for Boys is a comprehensive school with 1336 pupils, including 301 in the sixth form, of whom seven are girls. It is much larger than most schools. It is situated in the Eden Park area of the London Borough of Bromley; nearly all pupils come from the area closest to the school or have brothers in the school. It is heavily oversubscribed with over three applications for each available place. The pupils come from a range of backgrounds and circumstances, which, overall, are more favourable than average. The attainments of pupils on entry have varied over the years; at present they are above average, but, in some years, especially for present older pupils, have been well above average. The proportion of pupils with special needs is broadly average, though the proportion with a Statement of Special Educational Need is above average. The percentage who speak English as an additional language is low; most pupils are white with only 39 coming from non-white backgrounds, though a larger number comes from white backgrounds outside the United Kingdom.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good school with many outstanding features. Standards are well above average and pupils at all levels achieve very well. The school provides a very effective education for the vast majority of its full range of pupils, from those reaching the highest academic standards to those needing special help. It is a highly civilised and well-ordered place; pupils and adults are proud of their school and wish to associate themselves with its values and distinguished history. The school is also becoming increasingly well equipped to meet the needs of pupils in the 21st century, skilfully embracing the need for change whilst upholding high quality relationships and an emphasis on hard work. Sixth formers are particularly good role models, and the large sixth form considerably enriches the overall life of the school. Teaching is very good overall, and is particularly good in the sixth form. The school provides very good value for money, and now has the potential to develop still further.

What the school does well

- Very good teaching and learning in a large number of lessons enable pupils to reach high standards and achieve very well.
- Excellent leadership and management by the headteacher and senior staff are now enabling the school to make rapid progress with clearly identified priorities for development.
- Pupils' personal development and relationships are very good, with excellent provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The quality and range of learning opportunities for older pupils are very good, and provision for extra-curricular activities, including sport and the arts, is excellent.
- Provision for pupils with special needs is very good.
- Teachers are highly enthusiastic, committed and caring.

What could be improved

- The very successful expansion of the use of computers in computer courses means that there are now problems of access to computers in subjects across the curriculum.
- Despite many very good displays, the poor quality of many of the buildings and their furnishings means that pupils and adults often work in sub-standard conditions and surroundings; some toilets and changing rooms are unpleasant.

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 March 1997. Since 1999, development and action planning has been considerably strengthened; management structures now enable the school to monitor rigorously its performance and take effective action. As a result, the school has a clear view of its priorities and how they can be achieved. There have been very significant improvements in provision for using computers. Results have improved at a faster rate than national results, and the quality of teaching has improved in

Years 7 to 9. However, increasing difficulties in recruiting suitably qualified permanent teachers are resulting in some disruptions to continuity in teaching, despite imaginative steps by the school to alleviate staffing difficulties. The requirement to hold a daily act of collective worship for all pupils is still not met, though the quality of assemblies seen during the inspection was high. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been good.

STANDARDS

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

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

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

Over the last four years, the results of the national tests at the end of Year 9 have been well above average in each of the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. They are also well above average when compared with similar schools, with the results in mathematics in 2001 being very high in relation to those in similar schools. Results have been rising at a faster rate than the national trend. Standards in work seen during the inspection by the end of Year 9 are also well above average in all areas of the curriculum with very good achievement as pupils make rapid progress in developing their knowledge and understanding as well as making equally good progress in improving their literacy, numeracy and computing skills.

GCSE results over the last four years have also been well above the national average, rising faster than the national trend; they are above the average of similar schools. In 2001, all boys obtained at least five A*-G grades, a remarkable achievement for a comprehensive school. Indeed the very good achievements of pupils across the whole ability range are notable strengths of the school. Work seen during the inspection by the end of Year 11 shows a similar picture. Very high standards are being reached by the highest attainers in most subjects and overall achievement is very good. These high standards are seen in all types of work from English literature to art, science and design & technology. As in Years 7 to 9, the school is in line to meet its demanding targets for GCSE.

AS and A-level results were well above average in 2001 as they have been in recent years. Most students attained grades in line with or better than would be expected from standards on entry. Work seen during the inspection is also well above average overall, with very good achievement from most students. Some of the best work is of a very high intellectual order.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils like their school very much. Always interested in their work, they show real motivation, especially when the teaching is challenging.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Nearly all pupils behave very well in lessons and around the school. Some pupils can be challenging but poor behaviour is generally very well managed and does not disrupt other pupils' learning.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. These qualities are very well promoted by teachers who show a deep commitment to their teaching and provide excellent role models for their pupils.
Attendance	Very good and above the national average. Punctual arrival at school and

	for lessons is a very good feature of the school.
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The very positive attitudes, very good behaviour and personal relationships are great strengths of the school. Any problems, including instances of bullying, are dealt with very effectively.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching is very good overall in the main school and the sixth form. There are no significant differences between the quality of teaching in different years in the main school, but teaching is stronger in the sixth form where it was judged very good or excellent in nearly two-thirds of the lessons seen. At this level, there is consistency in the depth of teachers' knowledge and understanding, their enthusiasm and love of the subject, and in the highest expectations and challenge they have for the students. These characteristics are also found in much of the teaching in the main school, but the quality is more variable. In some lessons, teachers are less secure in their subject knowledge and in their management of pupils; as a result, the structure, pace and teaching methods are not as good as is found in the best lessons. Nonetheless, teaching in nearly 85 per cent of lessons in Years 7 to 11 was judged good or better, and virtually no unsatisfactory teaching was seen. The quality of learning mirrors that of teaching very closely; pupils are keen to learn and respond very well to stimulating and challenging teaching as they develop their intellectual skills, knowledge and understanding. Occasionally, pupils' particularly positive attitudes mean that their learning is even better than the teaching, and, occasionally, less positive attitudes by a minority of pupils means that teachers have to use very good teaching skills to maintain a reasonable quality of learning. The teaching of literacy and numeracy skills is very good and a major strength of the school, and the quality of teaching and learning in the information and communication technology (ICT) courses is particularly good. Teaching is equally well matched to meet the needs of all pupils, including those with special needs.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. The good provision in Years 7 to 9 leads to a very wide range of courses in Years 10 and 11 which successfully meet the needs of all pupils.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good provision is confirmed by the high success rate in examinations of pupils with special needs. They also participate fully in the life of the school, encouraged by learning support staff.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Very good. The success of the small number of these pupils is similar to other pupils, and the school carefully monitors their progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Excellent. The richness of provision in all these areas of personal development contributes significantly to pupils' development as worthy citizens of the 21 st century. There have been notable improvements in provision for spiritual development and in preparing pupils for life in a multi-cultural society.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. The school provides a very caring environment in which all pupils are valued. The quality of pastoral care is very high, and there are very good procedures for child protection and welfare.

Although the overall quality and range of the curriculum are very good, provision for religious education in Year 10 is not sufficient to meet the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent. The outstanding leadership at very senior level is very successfully taking the school forward whilst maintaining its traditional strengths. The implementation of the excellent development plans is being very well managed.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. Governors share the strategic vision for the school's future needs, and they provide a wealth of experience and expertise for the school's benefit.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The school has very good systems for collecting data and evaluating its performance. Teachers have comprehensive information to monitor pupils' progress and to use with pupils to set targets, based on pupils' prior attainments.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Development plans are fully costed and regularly evaluated. There is good use of resources, including specific funding and special grants.

The school has faced increasing problems recently with recruiting new teachers when others have left or become ill. It has taken imaginative steps to alleviate these difficulties as far as possible. Good financial management ensures that the principles of best value are well applied. Self-help schemes, such as the refurbishment of a science laboratory, have saved money. Whilst accommodation is satisfactory overall and does not have a negative impact on standards, pupils and teachers have to work particularly hard to overcome the drabness of the life-expired condition of many parts of the building. The caretaking and maintenance staff work very effectively, but some parts of the building are sub-standard, and some toilets and changing rooms are unpleasant.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school's high expectations of the work pupils will do • The school's approachability when problems arise • The way the school helps pupils become mature and responsible • The good progress pupils make • The leadership and management of the school • The good range of activities outside lessons • The pupils' enjoyment of school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The way the school works with parents • The quality of information provided by the school about how individuals are getting on • The amount of homework set

Most parents are very supportive of the school in their responses. Inspectors agree with the parents' assessments of the school's strengths. Despite some inconsistencies, homework is generally well used and appropriate for most pupils. Many of the criticisms about the school's working with parents and of the quality of information about progress relate to the organisation of parents' evenings and communications between some teachers and parents. The inspectors are not able to judge the extent to which these concerns are justified, but suggest it is an area for review by the school in consultation with parents.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form has 301 students, of whom seven in Year 12 are girls. This size is nearly twice the national average for sixth forms. A number of students enter the sixth form from other schools, as well as about 80 per cent of the previous Year 11 in the school. The 16+ examination results are well above average, so most students take courses leading to AS and A-level examinations in a very wide range of subjects; a small number take one or two year courses leading to vocational qualifications in business. Few students fail to complete their course, and most continue into higher education, sometimes after a gap year.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form is very effective. Standards are well above average, and the young men and women in the sixth form are delightful people; it is a pleasure to be in their company. They enjoy being members of the sixth form. Overall, students achieve very well in relation to their starting points in the sixth form, though there are variations between subjects in the amount of progress students make. The quality of teaching and learning is very good with nearly two-thirds of the teaching being judged very good or excellent. Leadership and management of the sixth form are very good; efficient use is made of the resources available to the sixth form and it is very cost effective. The curriculum is well matched to the needs of the students. The attitudes of sixth formers to their work and personal development are excellent, and they are very good role models for younger pupils.

Strengths

- Standards are high because of very good teaching and the excellent attitudes of students to their work.
- The wide range of advanced courses is well matched to the needs of students.
- Relationships are excellent, with students displaying considerable maturity, coupled with a pride in their work and successes and those of the school.
- Leadership and management are very good, especially the systems to monitor and track students' progress and to analyse examination results.
- There are some outstanding opportunities for students to participate in extra-curricular activities, including educational visits, sport and the arts.

What could be improved

- There are some weaknesses in what is available in the curriculum to supplement and enrich the main examination courses.
- Because the equipment is already being used to capacity, there are some difficulties for some students to gain access to computers when they need to do so.

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Very good. Teaching is very good and students are achieving very well. Mathematics is a popular option at AS and A-level; though standards were lower than normal in 2001, results are usually above national averages.

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Chemistry	Good. Teaching is good and students achieve well. Standards are above average, with the very good relationships between teachers and students contributing very positively to the quality of learning.
Design & technology	Very good. The very good leadership and management, with very good teaching by experienced and dedicated teachers, ensure that students achieve very well. Standards are well above average.
Business	Good. Teaching is good. Students show very positive attitudes, and have good experience of business based activities. Standards are above average.
Computing	Excellent. The subject is excellently led and managed; teaching is never less than very good, and often outstanding. As a result, learning is very good, with very high standards and achievements.
Sports studies	Good. Teaching and learning are good. Standards are above average, with students achieving well. Provision of extra-curricular activities is particularly good.
Art	Very good. Standards are well above average with very good teaching and learning. The subject makes excellent contributions to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
Graphics	Very good. Graphics is a popular choice for students who learn very well with the very good teaching. There is very good use of ICT by students.
Media studies	Excellent. Results are well above average. Teaching is very effective leading to very high standards of practical work. Students are highly motivated and relationships are very good.
History	Very good. Standards are above average; teaching is very good, with excellent subject knowledge of the teachers. The subject is very well led, and high quality visits are a notable feature of the provision.
Politics	Very good. Standards are above average with students achieving very well. They respond very well to very good teaching, with a strong intellectual flavour to their work.
English	Very good. Standards are well above average, with very good teaching and learning. Students show very positive attitudes, and make particularly good progress in developing independent learning skills.
French	Very good. Standards are well above average, with students often showing excellent attitudes and achieving very well. Students speak French very well, discussing contemporary issues to a high standard.

Nearly all other sixth form courses were sampled. Standards are similar to subjects inspected in depth; all are above or well above average. Teaching and learning are good or very good, and an excellent film studies lesson was seen.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Very good. Personal interviews and the efficient exchange of information between teaching and pastoral staff mean that students are very well supported. There is rapid intervention for students who experience difficulties, and the excellent relationships greatly enhance the level of care and guidance.
Effectiveness of the	Very good. Most subjects are well or very well led, and leadership and

leadership and management of the sixth form	management in some are excellent. Overall leadership and management of the sixth form are very good, with effective systems to monitor and evaluate performance developed over many years. There is a clear view at senior level of future priorities.
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STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They enjoy being in the sixth form. • They are well taught and challenged to do their best. • Their teachers are accessible when difficulties arise. • The range of subjects meets their needs and aspirations. • They are encouraged to study and research independently. • The school helps them to settle easily into the sixth form. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is not enough advice on future options after the sixth form. • Aspects of provision outside their main subjects are not as good as provision for their main subjects. • Some students have difficulties accessing computers at times.

Inspectors spoke to large numbers of sixth formers during the inspection and agree with their positive views about the sixth form. They were impressed with the openness and maturity displayed by students, and endorse the views of most students about the wide range of opportunities available within subjects and in extra-curricular activities. Most students spoken to expressed satisfaction with careers information and guidance, although the questionnaire did indicate some dissatisfaction. Inspectors agree that there are some weaknesses with enrichment provision outside the main subjects, and they acknowledge that expansion in the use of computers in the school may have created some problems of access for students. In the questionnaire, some students felt that the school did not listen and respond to students' views and did not treat them as responsible young adults. In detailed conversations, these views were not supported by most students who were very positive about their involvement in the life of the school and the sixth form; most believed that the school got the right balance between individual freedom and independence on the one hand and appropriate monitoring and control on the other hand. Inspectors are also of that opinion.

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

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Very good teaching and learning in a large number of lessons enable pupils to reach high standards and achieve very well

1. Teaching and learning are very good overall, although they are better in the sixth form than in Years 7 to 11. This is because there are more variations in the quality of teaching in Years 7 to 11, whereas there is more consistency in the sixth form. The characteristics of the best teaching both in the main school and in the sixth form are teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subjects, their high expectations of what pupils will do and their management of pupils. Where these characteristics are found in abundance, the quality of pupils' learning is very high as they rapidly develop their intellectual skills as well as their knowledge and understanding. In some lessons, teachers are less secure in their subject knowledge and in their management of pupils; as a result, the structure, pace and teaching methods are not as good as is found in the best lessons.
2. In Years 7 to 11, teaching in nearly 85 per cent of the sample of lessons seen was judged good or better, and virtually no unsatisfactory teaching was seen; nearly half was judged very good or excellent. Consequently, pupils' learning moves forward very well. In nearly all lessons, they have much interest and a genuine desire to take their learning forward. They respond particularly well when they are given opportunities to think for themselves and take responsibility for their own learning. For example, a class of high attaining Year 9 pupils in geography was engaged in high quality research work on energy resources: there was a buzz of conversation as they discussed their findings in pairs, and they were able to draw on a range of knowledge to develop their ideas and draw conclusions. They were intellectually curious, and the teacher very successfully kept the pace of the lesson going with a clear structure of sharply timed activities with some whole class interventions to stimulate the learning further. A very challenging research homework was set which would extend the most gifted in the class. All pupils were reaching high standards and were achieving very well.
3. The lesson described above was very successful because the teacher created opportunities for pupils to develop their skills and knowledge largely through their own efforts. Other lessons are very effective because the teacher's own input is inspiring. In a Year 11 English lesson at the end of a very wet Thursday afternoon, a young teacher taught a traditional whole class lesson that engaged every pupil at the highest level in the analysis of a poem by Robert Browning. There were thoughtful contributions from all over the room in a very detailed analysis of the poem's language and message. Pupils were highly articulate and enjoyed being in a linguistically rich environment. In the last ten minutes of the lesson the teacher brought things together very skilfully, briefly checking and reinforcing the main points in preparation for the homework. When the homework was set, one boy asked, without irony, whether the teacher really did only want 400 words of writing.
4. A further example illustrates excellent teaching in a very different context. A Year 9 science lesson about chemical reactions covered difficult and potentially dangerous work. However, the very effective organisation and the highly structured teaching led to high levels of understanding and achievement. Very confident teaching involved an excellent demonstration within the confines of the fume cupboard, but with all pupils able to see. The discussion about the reactivity of the chlorine with hot iron filings was at a high intellectual level. Other features of the lesson included short video extracts, watched intently by the pupils, and written work by the pupils using their own words to write sentences incorporating some key words. The final, inspired part of the lesson linked the science work with work in English and history, and made a powerful contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development. The teacher used a moving poem from the First World War to link the work of the lesson to chemical warfare and the moral responsibilities of science.

5. The high quality of much of the teaching is a major factor in the high standards reached by most pupils and their good or very good achievements. The methodical arrangements for the observation of teaching by line managers and senior staff are increasingly contributing to the raising of the quality of teaching, but not all teaching yet matches that of the best. In a few lessons, teachers' expectations are not high enough, often because pupils are not well managed. In these cases, there is often too much casual conversation and the lesson is not well structured to develop methodically and build on earlier experiences. Occasionally, teachers rely too much on the school's setting arrangements to separate different groups of pupils and do not cater sufficiently well for significant variations in attainment within their teaching groups. A major challenge for the school is to continue in its strategies to improve teaching when faced with considerable difficulties in filling all teaching posts with suitably qualified teachers. The school is, indeed, taking imaginative steps to fill all its teaching posts, but, inevitably, there have been many breaks in continuity in teaching which have affected pupils' achievements. Whilst more of the less successful teaching occurs in lessons taught by temporary or less experienced teachers, some of the best lessons are also taught by such teachers and some of the less successful lessons are taught by experienced teachers. However, it is the case that there is more weaker teaching in Years 7 to 11 than in the sixth form; there is much pride in teaching in the sixth form and the quality of teaching in the sixth form is more consistently high. There are a few occasions when pupils in Years 7 to 11 achieve remarkably well because of their very positive attitudes despite weaknesses in the teaching, and there are also a few occasions where teachers have to work particularly hard and use high order teaching skills to get satisfactory achievement from some reluctant learners.
6. High standards and high levels of achievement are also the result of the emphasis the school places on the development of the key skills of literacy and numeracy. There has been a very positive response to the national literacy strategy, including a strong focus in the present school improvement plan, and many examples of good practice in developing literacy skills were seen in lessons throughout the school, including the sixth form. As a result, literacy levels are high. Similarly, standards of numeracy are well above average, with much sophisticated work involving numeracy seen in lessons across the curriculum. Standards and achievements in ICT are also high and have seen very considerable improvement since the previous inspection. The quality of teaching in ICT lessons is very high, as is the management of ICT in the school. As a result, pupils are achieving very well, though the cross-curricular use of ICT skills is not as strong in putting those skills into practice.

Excellent leadership and management by the headteacher and senior staff are now enabling the school to make rapid progress with clearly identified priorities for improvement

7. The previous inspection report was critical of several aspects of the management of the school, especially a lack of consultation and weaknesses in development planning. The first key issue was to improve development and action planning. There is little evidence to indicate that any progress was made in taking the school forward for some time after the previous inspection and the lack of progress was compounded by financial difficulties. However since 1999 under, firstly, the leadership of the acting head (now the senior deputy head) and, subsequently, under the present headteacher, progress in key areas has been rapid and the school is now providing an extremely effective education for its pupils and has the structures, processes and people to make it responsive to the many challenges it faces.
8. The essential qualities of the leadership of the present headteacher and his deputies have been to retain the best of the school's proud traditions and virtues, to build the trust, respect and confidence of teachers and governors to create a climate for change, to identify the new dimensions the school needs to take on, and to have the management skills to enable the vision for the future to be implemented. The headteacher and senior staff have been very successful and are providing excellent leadership, coupled with first rate management, to ensure that these new dimensions are developed. Amongst the priorities have been developing a more inclusive school, including important aspects of multi-cultural education, a broadening of the curriculum, a focus on teaching and learning, and an embracing of new technology in the classroom, in the monitoring of pupils' progress and in the school's administration.

9. The 1999/2000 Development Plan, drawn up under the leadership of the acting head, was a first rate document that contributed to progress in some crucial areas that had been neglected, such as ICT. It clearly identified internal and external issues, addressing the fundamentals of changing management styles and teaching and learning. The impressive clarity of its self-evaluation systems has been carried through into the present school improvement plan. The present plan is also first rate. The two overarching aims correctly relate to teaching and learning and to strategic planning, with clear objectives and action plans. The plan is highly focused, very clear and a powerful agenda for progress. Particularly strong is the forward planning and strategic thinking, including the identification of likely objectives for 2003 and 2004. The review processes will lead to a rolling forward of the improvement plan to cover the next three year period.
10. The management structure has been radically changed and is now sharply focused on line management and areas of responsibility. This is giving more sense of accountability as well as real responsibility to managers, particularly those responsible for key stages and for subjects or year groups. Indeed, the bringing together of academic and pastoral aspects of the school in ways that concentrate on pupils' progress and achievements is a vitally important aspect of the new structures. Middle managers are responding well to their new responsibilities, with some important new appointments giving weight to the success of new structures; overall, the leadership and management of heads of subject and heads of year are very good. Methodical programmes of lesson observations, using, in part, a former deputy head, have been established, and are now integrated into performance management arrangements. These observations, the high quality of self-evaluation, and the methodical involvement of governors in the evaluation of the school's performance have given the school a powerful platform on which to build on its strengths. Although there is still some way to go before everything is firmly embedded, very considerable progress has been made, and other management issues, such as staffing difficulties, are being imaginatively tackled.

Pupils' personal development and relationships are very good, with excellent provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

11. The very strong and positive relationships between pupils and between teachers and pupils are a feature of the school. Very good personal development is well promoted by teachers who show a deep commitment to their teaching and provide excellent role models for pupils. Pupils are consistently encouraged to show responsibility for their work and conduct and have a careful regard for others. They have a very clear understanding of the high expectations for work and behaviour in the school, and most rise to meet these expectations very well. Courtesy, respect and care are evident in every area of the school. Bullying is rare, but, when incidents do occur, they are dealt with quickly and sensitively.
12. The very caring environment in which all pupils are valued is an important factor contributing to pupils' personal development. Teachers give high priority to their pastoral responsibilities. A well structured pastoral system is very effective in providing a secure framework within which the care and development of pupils is well recorded and monitored.
13. The outstanding provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is seen in all aspects of the school's life, both planned and arising naturally through school activities. Although the school does not meet the requirement to hold a daily act of collective worship for all pupils because of limitations of space, there have been notable improvements in provision for spiritual development, including high quality assemblies, and there have been other significant improvements in preparing pupils for life in a multi-cultural society. The following examples illustrate the richness of the provision: many others would be equally appropriate.
14. There is a dignified but unequivocal emphasis on the history and the traditional values of the school. No pupil can be unaffected by a sense of pride in the school's distinguished history, celebrated in style at its centenary last year. During the inspection week, each Year 9 form group, for example, received a very good illustrated presentation on the school's history. This

presentation took place in the 'Quiet Room', which is used at times for displays such as one to complement the outstanding drama production on the First World War. The room is also available at appropriate times for Moslem boys to use.

15. A very wide range of cultural activities and visits take place. One of the most notable was the African Dance Project which included an African Dance Group spending a week in the school. On the same theme, there is a strong link with a mission school in Africa, and the school has hosted two African teachers from Kenya. As part of Black history month, the school engaged a black actor who worked with pupils on performance poems. Outstanding work takes place in art that contributes to pupils' spiritual and cultural development, and the Artsmark Gold award is indicative of raising aspirations in the arts, and is indicative of the high standards in the school.
16. The excellent provision for extra-curricular activities is described elsewhere and they provide very impressive opportunities to foster many aspects of pupils' personal development. The commitment to equal opportunities is very well illustrated in the successful integration of pupils with special needs into the life of the school, and this is also described elsewhere. The sporting and arts related activities of the school do more than provide opportunities for pupils to excel and reach their full potential. They provide very great opportunities for social and often cultural development, as well as experiences which will be part of pupils' life-long personal development. One example will suffice. All 210 Year 7 boys have experienced being a member of the choir singing at the school's concert in the Fairfield Halls in Croydon; their final rehearsal was a joy to witness. The boys' enthusiasm and commitment and the high quality of the performance will give great pride, a sense of achievement and a feeling of belonging to something beyond the mundane to the boys that will remain with them for a long time.

The quality and range of learning opportunities for older pupils are very good, and provision for extra-curricular activities, including sport and music, is excellent

17. The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is good and provides a broad and balanced range of experiences which are built on in Years 10 and 11, and, subsequently, the sixth form. The extensive range of advanced courses in the sixth form is discussed in the sixth form section of the report. Overall, from Year 10 onwards pupils are able to access a very good curriculum which is well matched to pupils' needs.
18. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 successfully blends a balanced range of compulsory elements with a sensible degree of choice. It allows, for example, some pupils to take three science subjects to GCSE, whilst others take the double science course, and a smaller number take only single science. Choices include drama, media studies and graphics, and GNVQ courses are available in ICT and leisure and tourism. Unusually, though both French and German are available, few pupils study both languages. Whilst religious education is taught to all pupils, the amount of time in Year 10 is insufficient to meet the demands of the locally agreed syllabus. Other provision enables enrichment of the curriculum in areas such as work experience, careers education and personal, social and health education. The range of learning opportunities for pupils, therefore, matches their needs very well. The quality of learning opportunities is very good. There are some problems with setting which means that some groups are not as homogeneous as might be desirable, but, overall, arrangements for grouping pupils work well, enabling teaching to be matched to the group. Parents are broadly supportive of the grouping arrangements, and there is no evidence that particular groups, for example lower attaining groups, are treated less favourably than others.
19. The excellent provision of extra-curricular activities gives abundant opportunities for pupils of all ages to extend their experiences, to develop their talents, and to enjoy many social and cultural contacts. The school prospectus gives full details of what is available: the list is extraordinarily extensive and there is a high rate of participation. Clubs and societies range from chess to drama, bible study and debating. Leisure visits include skiing, water sports and an annual trip to Italy. There are exchanges, theatre visits and history trips to the world war battlefields and Paris. Particularly notable is the school's own outdoor centre in the Peak District; it is used by field study groups and for form visits with tutors. There is an annual school camp in the Lake

District and an annual summer school. Pupils are able to participate in the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme and activities such as Young Enterprise. A highlight of the centenary celebrations was an expedition to Kilimanjaro. The school is renowned for its drama and musical productions. Indeed, the arts, including dance, are particularly strong in the school, and the school has some of the most extensive provision for the arts and sport of any school in the country. As many as 12 sports teams will turn out on a Saturday morning covering many sports, with rugby, hockey, cricket, tennis and athletics being particularly strong. A rugby tour of Canada and a hockey tour of South Africa have taken place within the last year. The range of musical groups is equally impressive, and over 170 pupils have instrumental lessons. Groups range from the full orchestra to brass and wind bands and various choirs. One of the highlights of the arts provision is the annual musical concert in the Fairfield Halls; final rehearsals during the week of the inspection showed the high standards being reached.

Provision for pupils with special needs is very good

20. While the school achieves well above average academic standards, it also makes very good provision for its pupils with special educational needs. These pupils achieve very well in relation to their previous standards. Their very good progress is confirmed by the high success rate of all pupils in GCSE examinations. For example, in 2001 all pupils achieved at least 5 passes at grades A*-G; all entered successfully English language, English literature and mathematics. This is a remarkable achievement.
21. The pupils participate fully in the life of the school. Their involvement in clubs, teams and other events is encouraged and monitored by learning support staff. They respond positively to the school's strong traditions and high expectations. One Year 7 pupil captains the hockey side. During the week of the inspection, he was busy preparing a speech, ably supported by the special needs coordinator, to present to 300 guests at the school's annual hockey dinner.
22. In lessons those with special needs are positive and hard working. A small number with behaviour difficulties respond well to the firm but understanding in-class support. Subject teachers are very well-informed about the nature of need of each pupil. The excellent individual education plans provide subject teachers with specific guidance and advice. Learning support assistants and personal tutors keep the plans under review, amending them as appropriate when circumstances and needs change.
23. The pupils also benefit from specialist teaching from experienced and well-qualified teachers. Learning support staff have taken the initiative to implement the National Literacy Strategy teaching programmes to help pupils in years 7 to 9 'catch up' in their language skills. The organisation and teaching of the programmes are excellent. The thorough planning and purposeful teaching helped Year 8 pupils make excellent progress in their writing and reading during one lesson. They quickly identified key information, recorded it accurately and used the text effectively to make accurate and independent deductions about the preferences of different characters. In another lesson, Year 7 pupils made good progress in setting out dialogue accurately because of very good planning and excellent teamwork between the teacher and learning support staff.
24. Other pupils who require more individual tuition receive very good teaching through specific reading and spelling programmes. Support for older pupils continues into the sixth form. The support member of staff for one AS history student is taking the same course and is therefore able to enhance her support for him. During Years 10 and 11 pupils choose from a range of courses that match their needs such as a GNVQ leisure and tourism course. Those for whom a full range of GCSE subjects is not suitable take fewer subjects and have additional support in the extra time available.
25. The effectiveness of the provision owes much to the first class leadership of the special educational needs co-ordinator. She receives highly professional commitment from her team of teachers, support assistants and personal tutors. Records are meticulously kept, there is a highly effective liaison with a range of outside agencies and there are very good contacts with

parents. The school has a clear and comprehensive policy that sets out its vision and effectively guides the work of specialist staff and subject teachers alike. There is a long-standing link with a governor responsible for special educational needs which helps to ensure the area is given the appropriate whole school importance and emphasis.

26. The cumulative impact of the provision is a learning environment in which the pupils make very good academic progress while being full participants in the life of the school. The arrangements ensure equality of opportunity within a fully inclusive environment.

Teachers are highly enthusiastic, committed and caring

27. Implicitly and explicitly, one theme running through all sections of this report is the high calibre of the school's teachers. The school is well served by its teachers who show highly commendable dedication to the school and its pupils. Nearly all the teachers go that extra mile in their teaching, in their support for pupils, and in the generous giving of their time for extra-curricular activities which so enrich the life of the school and contribute to its high standards. What they do is valued by nearly all pupils and parents.
28. Their enthusiasm and commitment have helped maintain and often enhance standards despite very considerable staffing difficulties in recent years. For example, between July 1999 and January 2002, 38 teachers have left the school for various reasons; over half of these have been for promotion or to join the private sector of education. There have also been significant increases in illness which has put further pressures on the teachers. The school has been very positive in its strategies to cope with teacher shortages, and its 'can do' culture has gone a long way to minimise some of the difficulties. Nonetheless, there have been difficulties and the impact has been greater in Years 7 to 11 than in the sixth form. However, the school has done all that it reasonably can do, and often much more, and the fundamental strength of the teaching staff as a whole has ensured that the school has continued to move forward and retain its values and ethos.
29. The teaching staff is also very well supported by other staff. All of them, including learning support assistants, technical, administrative, maintenance and other staff providing vital services, also contribute fully to the well-being of the school. The school community is strong; virtually everyone, from the longest serving teacher to the youngest pupil, clearly identifies themselves with the school and its values.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The very successful expansion of the use of computers in computer courses means there are now problems of access to computers in subjects across the curriculum

30. One of the major successes of recent years has been the rapid expansion of ICT courses in the school. Specialist accommodation and facilities have expanded as well, and much of what is available is of a high standard. The teaching of ICT is particularly good, as is the overall management of ICT in the school. However, to some extent, the school is now a victim of its own success, and there are increasing problems of access to ICT facilities for subjects in their day-to-day work when they wish to use computers as a tool in the learning processes. Not all subjects are sufficiently exploiting the potential of ICT and are not putting into practice the skills that pupils have learned in their ICT lessons.
31. There are few computers in subject areas so, if computers are to be used in a particular subject, it is necessary to book a suitable room and this is sometimes difficult because of regular commitments for teaching ICT in the rooms. Much very good and excellent use of ICT was seen in subjects across the curriculum, such as geography and science. However, much is done at home on pupils' own or family computers. This is commendable, but it does mean that not all pupils are able to do so either by choice or because they do not have access to a computer. It also means that, although some pupils make good use of the Internet for research purposes,

the use of computers in subjects across the curriculum is restricted mainly to presenting work rather than analysing or interpreting data or other information.

32. Whilst the ratio of computers to pupils is in line with national averages, the potential use of computers in the school has yet to be fully realised, and, particularly in the sixth form, there are a number of problems of individual access to computers, as well as whole class access in lessons across the curriculum.

Despite many very good displays, the poor quality of many of the buildings and their furnishings means that pupils and adults often work in sub-standard conditions and surroundings; some toilets and changing rooms are unpleasant

33. Some of the buildings provide a very good learning environment. The new block, which includes the library, is attractive and well built. Outdoor facilities for physical education and the spacious new fitness and weights room are very good; the outdoor centre in the Peak District is an excellent facility which few schools possess. However, much of the rest of the buildings are in poor condition because of under-investment over many years. Arguably this under-investment results from the very good way the building has been treated by successive generations of pupils. Despite the presence of more than 1300 pupils plus adults, there is little damage and the buildings are treated with respect. The buildings are very considerably enhanced by many fine displays both in classrooms and in corridors, where, again, they are treated with great respect. The caretaking and maintenance staff are vigilant and thorough and do a very good job in keeping the building as attractive as possible. Overall, because of the way the accommodation is treated and because of the very great efforts of teachers, maintenance staff and pupils to make the buildings as pleasant as possible, the accommodation is satisfactory. However, there are serious warning signs of potentially very major problems if there is not a high level of investment, and some parts of the building are so run-down as to be sub-standard and unpleasant.

34. In the previous financial year, the proportion of the school's budget spent on the buildings was similar to the national average. This year, a proportion twice the national average is being spent. However, with other pressing demands on the budget, resources are limited, and a site tour reveals a deteriorating environment and evidence of accumulated neglect which will inevitably have a negative impact on standards eventually. Much of present expenditure is on patching up where immediate problems occur, but there have been some notable 'self-help' improvements, which have been very good value for money. One science laboratory, for example, has been refurbished to a high standard by the school's own maintenance staff with a saving of many thousands of pounds. This refurbishment does, however, bring into sharp focus the life-expired nature of the furnishings and fittings of all the other laboratories. There are aspects of the furnishings and fittings of the building which the school can tackle relatively easily, such as blackboard and whiteboard refurbishment. Other problems of the accommodation are more fundamental. Among the worst are the condition of the sports hall floor and water penetration in several toilets. The first means poor facilities for teaching indoor aspects of physical education, the second results in unpleasant toilets where the smell is unacceptable. Cloakroom and changing facilities are male staff are also inadequate, as are some other changing rooms. Whilst things like water penetration through life-expired windows does not necessarily have an impact on a day-to-day basis, the build up of problems is cumulative and most of the buildings need extensive refurbishment; some of the older 'temporary' classrooms would appear to be beyond refurbishment and are very costly to maintain at present.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

35. In addition to implementing the present school development plan, to improve further, the school should give consideration to the following issues. Both in the main school and in the sixth form, all are already identified as areas for review. The numbers in brackets after each key issue refer to the relevant paragraphs in the report.

- (1) Improve access to computers in subjects across the school by:
 - a. identifying current and future requirements by each subject;
 - b. linking curriculum needs with the training needs indicated in the school improvement plan;
 - c. determining how the necessary facilities can be most satisfactorily provided in terms of equipment, software and accommodation within budget considerations.

(See paragraphs 6, 30, 31, 32 and relevant sixth form sections identified below.)

- (2) Review all possible options for improving the buildings and furnishings by:
 - a. ensuring that present strategies in the school improvement plan are fully implemented;
 - b. spending as much as is reasonable within the budget on improvements to the buildings and furnishings;
 - c. investigating, with other interested parties, all possible sources of funding outside the school's normal budget.

(See paragraphs 33, 34, 84 and 124.)

Sixth form

- (1) Review existing curriculum provision for supplementing and enriching the main examination courses and, subsequently, implementing a programme that meets the needs of the students by:
 - a. identifying present strengths and weaknesses in general studies and other provision;
 - b. identifying important areas of experience for which there is no current provision;
 - c. consulting widely, including obtaining the views of students.

(See paragraphs 37, 54, 55 and 68.)

- (2) Ensure that students can access computers whenever necessary for work in lessons and for their individual studies by:
 - a. identifying where teaching programmes are hindered by lack of access to computers;
 - b. consulting with students about where there are present difficulties for their individual studies;
 - c. implementing strategies to resolve any difficulties.

(See paragraphs 40, 73, 82, 93, 100, 108, 116 and 146.)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	46
	Sixth form	65
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		111

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 – 11							
Number	4	18	17	6	1	0	0
Percentage	8.7	39.1	37.0	13.0	2.2	0	0
Sixth form							
Number	5	36	24	0	0	0	0
Percentage	7.7	55.4	36.9	0	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1005	301
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	51	

Special educational needs	Y7– Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	37	8
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	185	14

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	18

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	4
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	22

Attendance

Authorised absence

%

Unauthorised absence

%

School data	5.7
National comparative data	8.1

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	209	0	209

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	191	188	188
	Girls	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Total	191	188	188
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	92 (93)	90 (92)	90 (79)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	56 (59)	74 (75)	64 (53)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	200	188	190
	Girls	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Total	200	188	190
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	97 (90)	90 (95)	91 (91)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	57 (46)	76 (80)	60 (57)
	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	185	0	185

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	126	185	185
	Girls	0	0	0
	Total	126	185	185
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	68 (77)	100 (98)	100 (98)
	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	49.8 (49.0)
	National	39.0 (38.4)

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	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	113	0	113

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	113	0	113
	Average point score per candidate	21.6 (21.2)	n/a (n/a)	21.6 (21.2)
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9 (17.1)	18.0 (n/a)	17.5 (n/a)

		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	113	0	113	0	0	0
	Average point score per candidate	21.6	n/a	21.6	n/a	n/a	n/a
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.9	17.4	n/a	n/a	n/a

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	7
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	4
Indian	18
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	5
Chinese	3
White	1212

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	2	0
Black – African heritage	2	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	22	0

Any other minority ethnic group	85
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Other minority ethnic groups	4	0
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This table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes**Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	78.1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.1

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	26
Total aggregate hours worked per week	486

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	77.2
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	25.7
Key Stage 4	22.0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	27
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	31

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	5
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/1
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	£
Total income	3,603,132
Total expenditure	3,596,572
Expenditure per pupil	2,792
Balance brought forward from previous year	157,837
Balance carried forward to next year	164,837

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out

1336

Number of questionnaires returned

430

Percentage of responses in each category (to the nearest whole number)

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	44	49	5	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	47	46	6	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	34	58	4	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	27	52	15	4	1
The teaching is good.	39	55	3	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	37	46	13	3	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	53	41	4	1	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	67	30	3	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	31	47	17	3	2
The school is well led and managed.	46	48	2	0	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	51	44	3	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	47	39	7	1	7

Summary of parents' and carers' responses

Most comments made by parents were very supportive of the school, with some elaborating on their responses on the questionnaire. The small number of criticisms related mainly to some communications between teachers and parents, the organisation of parents' evenings, and to the amount of homework set, evenly divided between those who thought there was too much and those who thought there was too little.

PART D: THE SIXTH FORM

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

36. Standards at GCSE at the end of Year 11 are well above average, so most students enter the sixth form having achieved well in their earlier education. Most are able to embark on AS courses; in most subjects, there is a range of prior attainment amongst the students, but, overall, the starting points of students on advanced courses is above the average found in these courses nationally. The starting points of the smaller number of students embarking on vocational courses is similar to that found nationally. In all recent years, including 2001, the average points scores achieved by students in A-level or AS examinations have been well above average, showing, overall, very good achievement. In work seen during the inspection, again, overall standards by the end of Year 13 are well above average and achievement overall in the sixth form is very good, continuing the successes achieved in Years 7 to 11.
37. Care is needed in making comparisons between subjects in the sixth form because the starting points of individual students varies from subject to subject, and, in some subjects, the numbers taking the subject are comparatively small. However, there are some important differences in attainment and achievement in different subjects, and a challenge for the future is to raise students' achievements in all subjects up to that of the best. The school undertakes detailed analysis year by year of actual performance subject by subject and student by student, and of the relative performances of subjects and students in all their subjects. In the last four years, art, computing, design & technology, drama, English, geography, geology, German, and media studies have added particularly good value, whereas biology, general studies, history, French, and physics have been less successful in adding value. Over the same period, students taking art, design & technology, drama, geology, graphics, media studies, music, and sports studies have done particularly well in these subjects, whereas those taking biology, French, general studies, history and physics have done significantly less well in these subjects. There are few significant differences in levels of achievement between high and lower attainers, showing that the school does equally well for students with different levels of prior attainment.
38. Students show very good researching and analytical skills in many subjects. This is very noticeable in computing; in politics students are able to analyse similarities and contrasts between different political systems. High technical and practical skills are evident amongst many students. In different ways these skills were seen in physical education, media studies, art and graphics lessons, where the use of ICT is of a very high order. Students' creativity is apparent in many areas, including design & technology where design solutions are often adventurous and innovative. The quality of students' writing is another strength. In English, much of the writing is assured and consistently evaluative, and examples of fine writing were seen in most subject areas. This often reflects the depth of students' knowledge and their wide reading. Where students are achieving less well, it is often because their interpretation and use of their knowledge is less secure, or because the presentation and organisation of their work are weaker.
39. Overall, literacy skills are well above average with very articulate students able and keen to express themselves orally and in writing. Levels of discussion are very high, and the higher attainers are able to use their knowledge to produce creative work of the highest order. The drama production about the First World War seen during the inspection was a notable example. Speaking and listening skills are also of a very high standard in foreign languages.
40. Whilst key skills are not now taught in separate timetabled lessons, there is ample evidence that students' numeracy and ICT skills are strong enough to meet the demands of their subjects, and some outstanding use of ICT, including the internet, was seen, even though its development and use as a learning tool in some subjects are more limited. An important contributory factor that raises students' standards and enables them to achieve very well is their

willingness to take responsibility for their own learning. Those who are able to do this successfully are pushing themselves to very high levels and expanding their intellectual and scholarship skills.

41. The well above average, and often very high, standards reached by many students reflect the skills and intellect described above. Many are reaching their full potential and achieving very well, including particularly gifted and talented students. Where achievement is not so good, it reflects less rigour and depth in the work completed, with less emphasis on problem solving. Nonetheless, most students settle easily to their sixth form studies and many achieve standards higher than would be expected from their earlier attainments, and the number of students who fail to complete their studies is small. There are comparatively large numbers of students in the sixth form with special needs. These students are making progress comparable with other students.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

42. Attitudes in the sixth form are excellent and attendance is very good. Students show a loyalty and affection for their school. They are positive in their appreciation of the opportunities available to them and show an excellent commitment to school and participate very well in school life.
43. Students are enthusiastic about their work and want to do well. They show confidence and maturity in what they do and provide excellent role models for younger pupils. Sixth form prefects and senior prefects carry out a wide range of duties around the school with efficiency and dignity. Students are courteous and trustworthy and show a very good sense of responsibility for their work and conduct and for the tasks they undertake around the school. They are supportive of younger students and through the pastoral system are linked with year groups in Years 7 to 11.
44. Most students settle quickly into the sixth form and easily establish sensible routines for their work and extra-curricular activities in school. In lessons they work with interest and enthusiasm showing very good independent and collaborative learning skills. Especially good examples were seen in computing, design & technology, politics and physical education. Students are able to listen with interest and courtesy to each other. There is genuine respect shown in discussions for the views and beliefs of others and the strong moral and social ethos in the school lies at the heart of the very good personal development and excellent relationships in the sixth form.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

45. Overall, teaching in the sixth form is very good. It was at least good in all lessons seen, and it was very good or excellent in almost two-thirds of lessons. These figures are much higher than that found nationally. Of the subjects inspected in detail, teaching was judged excellent in computing, very good in art, design & technology, English, French, graphics, history, mathematics and media studies, and good in business, chemistry and physical education. Excellent teaching was seen in computing, English, French, film studies and history. As a result of the high quality teaching and their excellent attitudes, students' learning is very good overall.
46. Teaching has many strengths, but perhaps the greatest is the enthusiasm and love for their subjects that many teachers display. The enthusiasm and commitment are infectious, and many students strongly develop their intellectual and creative talents from the stimulus provided by their teachers. Many examples could be given, but an English lesson on Othello is one example. Students were enthused and their learning was excellent because the teaching was challenging and inspirational. Earlier lessons had been highly effective in teaching literary structures, and this enabled the students to cover a very substantial amount of ground in the lesson with great details and fully substantiated comments. The teacher provided challenging support, but it was the students who did the thinking. This was also the hallmark of a film studies lesson where the thorough preparation of the students by the teacher led to sophisticated and articulate arguments by groups of students in both criticising and defending a

controversial film; the particular qualities shown by the teacher were his enthusiasm to stimulate students' thinking, and the clarification and further development of key points in the whole class session at the end of the lesson. Students' learning in this lesson was excellent and they attained very high standards.

47. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subjects are excellent in most cases. As a result, students are introduced to very wide subject material, usually presented in interesting and logical ways. The depth of teachers' knowledge means that they are often able to add colour and background to the topic which raise levels of interest and aid understanding. On occasions, humour, developed out of assured confidence in the subject, blends well with the intellectual input and helps the learning process. A lesson on the French Revolution illustrates the deep knowledge and passion of the subject by a teacher. Place names of Paris at the time of the revolution were identified; as well as art and music, contemporary literature from Gibbon and Dickens was introduced. The teacher's knowledge was outstanding, and the pace was very brisk. Here was teaching that was very lively, motivating and engaging: learning was rapid indeed.
48. The best lessons are also characterised by the very high expectations teachers have of what students are capable of doing and the way students are managed to get the very best out of them. In a Year 13 computing lesson, for example, the teaching strategies fully involved all students in the process of learning a new concept. Part of this required students to explain to the rest of the class their solution to the question posed; this helped build their confidence and their presentation skills. The pace of the lesson was brisk, purposeful and fully focused on the tasks; it was timed to ensure that there were short, sharp bursts of dialogue and work to maintain motivation. The students were fully absorbed, very clear about what was expected of them, and they responded excellently to the teacher's styles and approaches. In addition, the teacher focused very well at times on individuals, knowing in detail their particular strengths and weaknesses. This lesson demonstrated teaching and learning at their best.
49. An excellent French lesson also illustrates many features of first rate teaching. The theme of smoking and health was relevant to the students, and the initial presentation using PowerPoint and an interactive whiteboard enabled students to develop their oral skills in discussing the theme. The use of small and large groups for discussion reinforced these skills, assisted by a range of phrases which the students had been given to sort out as part of the teacher's excellent preparation of the lesson. The teacher's French was very fluent, using a very wide range of structure and vocabulary; her manner was very encouraging but also challenging. There was also very good use of a game to develop reading and writing skills. All of this promoted excellent pace in students' learning with plenty of work at a very high level, such as the use of the subjunctive form of the verb 'prendre'.
50. Students are fortunate to have teaching of this high quality. Whilst the examples quoted are of particularly fine teaching, much is very good. All lessons are thoroughly planned and logically developed. Sometimes, however, the teaching is not as inspiring or as demanding as it might be. On occasions, teachers' planning focuses more on the content to be covered rather than on the learning processes; when this happens, students tend to be passive learners and most of the work is done by the teacher. As a result, learning is less effective and levels of motivation are reduced. This is in contrast to many lessons where students are encouraged to be independent learners and to make individual responses. In these lessons and others, the response and attitudes of students to high quality teaching are impressive.

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

51. The curriculum opportunities in the sixth form are very good. The school offers a very wide range of courses which attracts most Year 11 students and many from elsewhere to join the sixth form. The proportion completing their studies to final examination is high. The range of courses enhances the high levels of recruitment and retention. In response to the students' wishes, the school provides well-supported courses in film studies, media studies, law, psychology, politics

and sociology. Conventional subjects such as English literature are popular, as is art which attracts and retains high numbers of students.

52. In addition to AS and A-level courses, students may also opt for vocational courses in business at both GNVQ intermediate levels and at advanced certificate level. This range is not extensive but dovetails well with courses in other colleges in the locality. Consequently the needs of students seeking a broader range of vocational courses are effectively met.
53. The provision for students with special educational needs is very good, matching the provision in the rest of the school. In Year 12, eight students with a Statement of Special Educational Need are very well-supported in a mix of vocational, AS and A-level courses. Support in lessons, as well as one-to-one study support, helps these students to achieve very well. Very good liaison between learning support teachers, support staff and subject teachers ensures that teaching is geared appropriately to ensure the students' needs are fully met.
54. The school does not provide time for the teaching of religious education nor for a daily act of collective worship and therefore is not meeting statutory requirements. There is, however, a well-established assembly programme. This makes highly effective provision for the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Other elements of the provision also contribute to this development. Students follow a general studies course. There are also formal opportunities to experience further enrichment courses. The topics covered in assemblies such as Aids, the visually-impaired and prejudice make a good contribution to the enrichment programme. Year 12 students experience a six hour traffic education module. Other outside experts meet students to raise awareness of issues such as alcohol abuse. These aspects are all worthwhile. However, formally arranged programmes that focus on life beyond school are not a continuous feature of the enrichment provision in the sixth form. This view is also shared by a significant number of students. In their questionnaire responses, about one in five students took the view that there is not a worthwhile range of enrichment activities with a further ten per cent undecided. This is an area that requires further consideration so a systematic, broader and more sustained programme (on a week-to-week basis) can be organised through the year.
55. The school no longer provides separate key skills courses and accreditation for students, nor is there a systematic mapping of key skills coverage across subjects to monitor and ensure that all students receive structured opportunities to enhance their key skills.
56. The school provides a very busy extra-curricular programme which makes a very good contribution to the range of opportunities available to sixth formers. Amongst the many opportunities are sport (including representative sport), music, travel abroad such as the Kilimanjaro expedition, community service in conjunction with a neighbouring special school and at other venues, a sixth form council and prefect responsibilities. During the week of the inspection, the Year 13 drama group successfully performed for two nights their piece devised for their theatre studies course. Their strong performances and thought-provoking script on the theme of war will linger long in the memory of those privileged to be among the audience.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

Assessment

57. Assessment procedures in the sixth form are good; they involve the frequent monitoring in each subject of the standard of work of individual students, and therefore help to raise levels of achievement.
58. When students enter the sixth form, target grades are established in each subject they study. These are based on their performance at GCSE, and use a nationally recognised system as a guide. These grades inform teachers of the potential of each of their students, and assist in the early identification of any under-achievement. This is particularly important because of the recent introduction of AS examinations leading to module tests in subjects early in Year 12.

Parents are kept well-informed, and also receive an indication of subject targets during the Autumn Term of Year 12.

59. All subjects recognise that the system used for target setting provides a means to measure the annual performance of each subject. One of the additional benefits it provides, therefore, is a means of measuring the improvement made by each student in each subject, leading to an average figure for each class, and for each subject. This information informs discussions between heads of department and teachers, heads of subject and line managers, and subsequently with governors, about the annual performance of each subject in the school. Annual comparisons can then be made in each subject, and between subjects, leading to greater all-round accountability.
60. The established system of target setting ensures that students' GCSE assessments are used effectively to inform curriculum planning. Further use is made of these statistics in advising students on their choice of subjects, and in the organisation of teaching groups in a number of subjects. Subjects such as mathematics also use the results of school tests to inform their revision lessons for the national module tests. Full use has yet to be made, however, of the results of AS modules, for instance in modifying targets for A-level examinations.
61. Assessment procedures in subjects are regular and thorough. Particularly good practice occurs in design & technology where systems are thorough but workable, and used by all teachers. In computing also, assessments are regular and detailed, with standards frequently related to national grades. In physical education, assessments have been used to make appropriate adjustments to the subject's scheme of work. Some excellent examples of record keeping are found in English. The routine marking of work is less consistent both across and even within subjects, in spite of agreed policies on the marking of work. A number of subjects, for example English and mathematics, monitor the achievement of students from ethnic minorities, and this is also done at whole sixth form level. These assessments indicate that their achievements are similar to other students in their groups.
62. In the last inspection report, assessment procedures in the sixth form were described as good, and in places innovative. Since then, improvements to the school system have occurred mainly in Years 11 to 16. The system used in the sixth form continues to provide teachers, parents and students with reliable and up-to-date measures of individual student performance. Procedures are good throughout, from target setting through to assessments, the monitoring of achievements against expectation, regular reporting to parents, and each subject's analysis of results.

Advice, support and guidance

63. The school has very good procedures for ensuring the safety and welfare of sixth form students. Students are very well supported by both teaching staff and pastoral staff who exchange information efficiently. The excellent relationships that exist in the school add considerably to the level of care and guidance available. Students express enjoyment of their sixth form experience.
64. Overall the level of personal support and guidance available for students is very good. Careful records are kept of both academic progress and personal development which are reviewed regularly. Rapid intervention and support for students experiencing difficulties are important in maintaining the level of care which is valued by the students and in supporting them towards the achievement of their academic goals. There is a valuable system of personal interviews for students with their tutor each term and all students know that other teachers are readily available to talk to them and help them if approached. Attendance is very good and regular and careful monitoring of both attendance and punctuality ensure that this very good profile is maintained.
65. The advice and support for students entering the sixth form are satisfactory. Students are provided with clear advice about the courses available to them in the sixth form. They are able to

talk to teachers about sixth form opportunities and respect the advice and guidance they are given. They are given an introductory talk about the sixth form and a useful and informative prospectus and course information material are also provided. Induction into the sixth form is satisfactory.

66. An appropriate range of careers information is available to students and the library provides a good source of reference material. Students enjoy and value opportunities to visit careers and university conventions. Good support is provided by Prospect who conduct interviews for most Year 11 pupils but are also available to sixth form students. All students interviewed felt that the careers interviews had been of great value together with the help and advice of subject staff in the school. Most students spoken to expressed satisfaction with the careers information and guidance provided for them although the students' questionnaire did indicate some dissatisfaction. This is an area which the school could usefully review.

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

67. The views about the school of parents of older pupils and students are very positive. They agree that the school sets high standards, has high expectations and helps students to become mature and responsible young people by the end of the sixth form.
68. In interview with members of the inspection team, students expressed their great satisfaction with the school. They felt that the range of opportunities provided in the sixth form met their needs very well and they enjoyed and valued their sixth form experience. Students felt that they were well challenged and expected to do their best. They appreciated the high standards set by the school and respected the quality of the teaching and support provided by their teachers. Their enthusiasm for the sixth form in their school was very real. Students recognised the importance of undertaking activities beyond their main examination courses, but some were unhappy with aspects of the enrichment programme and in particular felt that the general studies programme was not particularly productive or stimulating. The school is in the process of reviewing the general studies element of the sixth form curriculum. Overall, students are very positive in the views they express about the sixth form and post-16 provision within the school.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

Leadership and management

69. Leadership and management in the sixth form are very good. Very clear leadership is given by the headteacher, senior managers and governors for the overall direction of the sixth form and for the high standards that are expected. The sense of purpose and pride in the sixth form that is communicated to sixth formers is impressive, and there is a very clear ethos of hard work, positive attitudes and civilised behaviour. There is also a very clear view of future priorities for new courses and facilities which are supported in the development and financial planning for the sixth form.
70. Within the sixth form as a whole, there are effective systems to monitor and evaluate performance which have been developed over many years. These systems enable individual students to be tracked and appropriate action taken, and also inform senior managers of how well, or otherwise, individual subjects or classes are performing. There are robust processes to discuss performance and to take action when necessary. Management structures within the sixth form are ensuring that it is administered smoothly and effectively. The large size of the sixth form, and the increasing numbers of students joining the school for the first time at sixth form level, mean that the way the sixth form is led and managed needs regular review to ensure that both its curriculum and support structures respond sensitively and effectively to rapidly changing circumstances. Currently, it is clear that it is very successful. With high recruitment and retention rates, and well above average overall results, the general thrust of the leadership and management of the whole sixth form is very good at present.

71. Leadership and management of subjects at sixth form level are also very good overall. They are judged excellent in computing and media studies. Again, effective monitoring and evaluation of both individual student and whole subject performance are particular strengths. Resources are well used at sixth form level, as described below, and there is a very good match of teachers for the demands of the curriculum. Indeed, the deployment of teachers in the sixth form is a major contributory factor to the high quality of the teaching. Heads of subject have good procedures both in the sixth form and in the main school to observe teaching and to monitor standards, and these are increasingly linked to the school's performance management policies and arrangements for professional development, which are good overall.
72. The sixth form is very cost effective. The cost of running the sixth form is less than the funding it notionally attracts; the balance is very effectively used elsewhere, but not to the detriment of the sixth form. The strategic use of funds, including specific grants, is very effective within a very good whole school development planning system. Unlike many schools, there is no 'sixth form block'. Apart from their common room, sixth formers do not have their own special areas and are extremely well integrated into the life of the whole school. They share much of the accommodation with the rest of the school. Much of the accommodation is outdated and in need of refurbishment before it becomes so run down as to be unsatisfactory. Whilst there is no evidence that the accommodation is adversely affecting standards at present, very substantial investment will be needed in the accommodation to bring it to the standards found in many schools and other establishments.

Resources

73. The resources for most subjects are good. The provision in media studies is very good, and includes digital imagery catching and editing equipment. However, in the sciences, the outdated laboratories, with much old equipment, are inadequate for the needs of much advanced work. The good range of up-to-date reference texts available in the library enhances students' capacity to research assignments and to extend their knowledge; in the library, there is good access to ICT and there are adequate study facilities. Current demands on ICT resources, however, mean that there are times when access to computers is difficult for some students with the limited study space available. Resources available within the school are very well supplemented by outside visits. Students' learning opportunities are enhanced by visits, for example, to theatres, museums, galleries, battlefields and industrial workplaces. The school's outdoor centre, in Derbyshire, is a valuable resource for geography and geology fieldwork trips, and for sixth form study weekends.

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

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

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

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art	43	100	96	49	46	6.9	6.6
Biology	12	67	88	17	34	3.5	5.2
Business studies	32	94	92	38	32	5.7	5.5
Chemistry	14	93	90	64	43	6.4	5.9
Media studies	16	100	93	63	31	8.0	5.5
Computing	27	96	86	48	23	6.8	4.6
Drama	7	100	99	71	38	8.3	6.6
English literature	27	100	95	33	37	6.5	5.9
French	5	100	89	20	38	5.6	5.6
Design & technology	3	100	91	67	30	8.0	5.4
General studies	110	77	85	19	30	3.9	4.9
Geography	14	93	92	43	38	5.7	5.7
German	7	100	91	43	40	6.3	5.8
Graphics	13	100	N/A	54	N/A	7.2	N/A
History	11	73	99	36	35	4.5	5.5
Mathematics	44	95	87	32	43	5.5	5.8
Music	4	100	93	0	35	5.0	5.7
Geology	9	100	90	33	30	5.3	5.2
Politics	6	100	87	33	34	5.7	5.3
Physics	15	80	88	20	40	3.9	5.7
Sociology	13	92	86	46	35	5.8	5.3
Sports studies	10	90	92	10	25	4.0	5.1

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

75. The focus during the inspection was on mathematics and chemistry. Physics and biology were sampled; geology is also taught in Year 13, but was not sampled. In a Year 12 physics lesson, teaching and learning were good overall, but the lesson took time to build up to high levels of challenge and pace; present standards are average. Students in a Year 13 biology lesson worked very hard and were very interested; the good teaching is leading to good learning and above average standards.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- The leadership and organisation of the subject are very good.
- The standard of work seen in A-level classes is often well above average.
- Teachers' very good knowledge and understanding of their subject lead to thorough teaching.
- The take-up for mathematics is high and across a relatively wide range of attainment.
- Relationships between teachers and students are very good.
- The subject uses assessments effectively to measure student and department performance.

Areas for Improvement

- A wider range of teaching and learning strategies would enable students to take more initiative to develop their independent learning skills.
- More consistency is needed in the application of department policies such as marking.
- The quality of some teaching resources is unsatisfactory.
- There is no provision for teaching of key skills in the application of number.

77. A-level results in most recent years have been above average, with a higher than average proportion of A and B grades. Unusually, A-level results in 2001 were broadly in line with the national average; the proportion of A and B grades was below average, though above average figures for grades A to E. The results were broadly as expected, reflecting the particular group of students. A high number of students were entered for the new AS examination in 2001; results were below expectations. One in three students gained either an A or B grade, but one student in four failed to gain a grade. This resulted in an unusually high proportion of students leaving the course. Overall, students' achievements were satisfactory. Overall, results in advanced courses were untypical in 2001. Students repeating their GCSE examinations in order to improve their grades gained satisfactory results.
78. Overall standards seen during the inspection both in lessons and in the scrutiny of work are well above the national average. A high proportion of students are on course to gain their targets grades. Their very good achievements are due to thorough teaching, the regular testing of standards, and their determination to improve. The four students in Year 13 taking further mathematics show a particularly positive approach to difficult topics such as vector geometry. They concentrate well and learn through lively discussions with their teacher and with their peers. In another Year 13 class studying three-dimensional vectors, teaching was more didactic, but a great deal of work was covered, and students concentrated well to the end of the lesson because of the quality and structure of the exposition and were reaching high standards.
79. Students in Year 12, with GCSE grades ranging from A* to B, clearly enjoy the additional challenge posed by the AS modules of work. Students appreciate that teachers make every effort to ensure that the transition from GCSE is as smooth as possible. In spite of the pressure to complete the modules of work in the time available, the take-up for AS and A-level courses remains high, but with some reduction this year.

80. Teaching overall is very good, and never less than good. There are some excellent features in the teaching, including teachers' expectations that students will work hard. There is mutual respect between teachers and students. Teachers have a very good knowledge and command of their subject, and convey their fascination with mathematics to their students. The planning of lesson content is very thorough, though less time is devoted to planning the best strategies for learning. The management of students is very good, and most effective when coupled with a sense of humour and an obvious enjoyment of the subject by the teacher, as in a Year 12 lesson on algebraic functions. This meant that students found it easy to concentrate on the work, and the pace of learning was very good. Relationships between teachers and students are generally relaxed, and students in most classes ask questions without being prompted when requiring further clarification; as a result, they learn very well.
81. Numeracy skills in the sixth form are developed in many subjects because students are required to use mathematical concepts in their work. There is no key skills course in the application of number to help students taking vocational and A-level courses, but no longer taking mathematics, to improve their confidence. A relatively small number of students repeat their GCSE course; in the lesson seen, they concentrated well to complete tally charts as part of their coursework task to analyse a set of data. It is unfortunate that a number of these GCSE students cannot attend both lessons because of timetable clashes; this causes difficulties with continuity.
82. There is insufficient use of literacy skills in the teaching of mathematics in the sixth form. Opportunities are missed to encourage students to express their understanding of concepts in their own words. The use of ICT is also under-developed apart from work with graphical calculators.
83. There is very good leadership and management of the mathematics courses in the sixth form. The acting head of department leads by example in his approach to teaching, and his enjoyment of mathematics. The organisation of teaching groups, the schemes of work, and assessment procedures are all very efficient. The department undertakes a thorough analysis of examination results each year, and produces figures to indicate how well each pupil, each year group, and each class has performed. This leads to an analysis of performance by teachers in the department, and a report for the governing body; this permits the comparison of standards in the subject with those in previous years, and with those in other subjects. There are areas for improvement. Although teaching overall is very good, there is insufficient monitoring of teaching techniques in order to focus on making learning more stimulating through the use of more innovative teaching methods. The routine marking of work is inconsistent across the department; in the best examples marking is regular, and constructive comments clearly indicate to students how to overcome their errors and improve their standards. However, a few students require more guidance about how to improve the organisation and quality of their work in books and folders.
84. The quality of resources is generally satisfactory. Students are all issued with good quality textbooks for instance. However, the quality of blackboards, which are well used in the teaching of mathematics in the sixth form, is unsatisfactory.
85. In the last inspection report, there was very little information about the provision for mathematics in the sixth form. It is therefore very difficult to comment on improvement since that time. However, standards in mathematics are high, teachers are well qualified, and the department shows good capacity for further improvement.

Chemistry

86. Overall the quality of provision in chemistry is **good**.

Strengths

- Teaching is good; lessons are well planned and have challenge and pace.
- Teachers have a secure knowledge of their subject and share their enthusiasm with the students.
- There is a commitment by teachers to raising standards further.
- Relationships are very good.

Areas for improvement

- Students lack full confidence in their practical skills and in the organisation of their written work.
- There are insufficient opportunities for students to engage in debate and question the concepts they are taught.
- The use of ICT in chemistry needs strengthening.

87. The GCSE A-level examination results in 2001 were well above the national average. Results were similar to those of the last two years but not as good as those in 1998. They were better than those in physics and biology. Students performed well in relation to their prior attainment and achievement was good. Students taking the AS level examination did not perform at the level predicted by their prior attainment at GCSE.
88. Inspection evidence shows that standards at Year 13 are above average. Students are performing well in relation to their prior attainment. Written work indicates that most students have acquired a good knowledge and understanding of the topics in the course. They have, for example, a good understanding of polymerisation, which they can relate to the manufacture of a range of modern materials. They are able to link practical work on the combustion of alcohols to the concept of enthalpy change. In a well-organised lesson, they investigated the enthalpy change associated with dissolving solids. Higher attaining students worked quickly through the procedures and recorded their results, though other students were initially insecure in their basic practical skills and unsure what to do with the data they collected.
89. Students in Year 12 have a good understanding of the basic principles of chemistry and standards are above average for this stage in the course. They have a secure knowledge of atomic structure and bonding which they can relate to the periodic table. Some students revealed that they had made a detailed study of, and acquired good knowledge of, some of the groups of elements in the table. Their understanding of organic chemistry is revealed by their ability to derive molecular, empirical and structural formulae. Some good work on the depletion of the ozone layer was followed up in a lesson in which they investigated the nature of free radicals.
90. The quality of the content of students' written work reflects their overall above average standards; however, its presentation and organisation are variable in quality, and, for a few students, they are inadequate. Teachers mark projects and exercises effectively but students do not always get sufficient guidance in the way to organise their notes. There is only limited evidence to indicate that they have engaged in presentations or debates or been given the opportunity to challenge the concepts they have been taught, and, therefore, they are not always being extended to their full intellectual potential.
91. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and students make good gains in their knowledge and understanding as a result of the teachers' enthusiasm to share their knowledge. Teachers are committed to raising standards. Relationships with students are very good. Humour is used to good effect helping to maintain students' interest. Lessons are well prepared to meet the needs of students with a range of attainment levels. In a Year 12 lesson, students were investigating the reaction between bromine and cyclohexane to illustrate the work they had done on free radicals. The teacher used constant challenge to encourage them to complete a lengthy experiment in the time allocated. Some students lacked confidence in their practical skills and those who moved on to start the second part of the investigation were insecure in their ability to carry out a simple titration. However, these minor shortcomings were overcome with effective intervention by the teacher and all students made good progress.

92. In a Year 13 lesson, students were given a degree of independence and control over their own learning. They worked in small groups, each one finding the heat of solution of a different salt. Results were recorded on the blackboard so that comparisons could be made. Some students worked slowly at first and were unsure what to do with the results they obtained. Constant encouragement by the teacher ensured that everyone completed the task and as a consequence the final discussion enabled students to consolidate their understanding of the topic. Overall, learning in this lesson was good. The same group was observed using their previous knowledge to explore the different ways in which one organic compound could be changed into another. The lesson lacked a variety of different activities but this was compensated for by the teacher's knowledge and humour and his skill in using some very well prepared work-sheets. Students' interest was maintained by the content of the topic which examined the manufacture of a range of pharmaceutical products. Again, the range of teaching and learning styles in the lesson led to good learning overall. Learning is also enhanced by the students' positive attitudes to their work and the help available to them. They appreciate the teachers' knowledge and the fact that they are always available to assist them. Extra help is readily available in the lunch hour and in chemistry 'clinics' after school.
93. Leadership and management are good. Under the effective guidance of the head of subject, three teachers share the teaching of the subject. The quality of teaching is enhanced by very good technical support. Assessment data is effectively used to monitor progress. Resources are adequate except that the lack of computers and items such as data logging equipment prevent students from fully developing their skills in ICT. Students achieve well despite the unsatisfactory nature of the accommodation which is outdated and lacks the facilities that are now generally available to advanced level students. The last inspection did not report in any detail on A-level chemistry but since that time standards have remained above average.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

94. In this curriculum area, design & technology is taught.

Design & technology

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

Strengths

- Well above average A-level results have been a consistent feature over the past few years.
- Very good teaching enables students to learn very effectively.
- Students' very positive attitude to work also promotes very good learning.
- There is very good leadership and management in the subject.

Areas for improvement

- There is a need for more specialist resources to extend work in computer aided design and manufacturing.

96. The most recent A-level examination results were well above average and similar to those of previous years. All students who took the examination gained a pass grade with a significant proportion gaining the highest grades. In relation to their prior GCSE results they achieved very well. Students do better in the subject than they do in their other A-level courses.
97. Current standards for Year 13 students are well above those expected in almost all elements of the course, and students are achieving very well given their average attainment entry levels. In the lessons observed, in both year groups teachers had very high expectations, both of the amount and quality of work to be completed. Tasks were demanding and interesting. These factors enabled students to make very good progress. In the 'lighting project' students are encouraged to explore a broad range of ideas and are adventurous, innovative and creative in their design solutions. In a practical lesson where they were producing their lighting product, students used their knowledge of a broad range of processes and materials effectively working

with a good degree of independence when marking out or cutting complex shapes on a range of materials and setting up and using machines. In both year groups, students' coursework projects indicate that their skills when researching and analysing information are very good and exceptionally good in the work of the higher attaining students and the gifted and talented who are well challenged by teacher expectations. Students use a wide range of sources for information and prepare detailed specifications before designing. In a Year 13 lesson students were required to produce design outlines for a 'salt and pepper' pot to meet stringent requirements within a limited timescale and showed high levels of creativity, flair and imagination designing in a broad range of appropriate materials. In all design folios students' use a good range of graphics and presentation techniques well in their work.

98. Teaching and learning are very good overall. Particular strengths in teaching are teachers' very good subject expertise, detailed planning and enthusiasm for the subject. Teachers clearly explain what has to be completed, together with the preparation that is required from students for subsequent lessons. The marking of students work is regular and thorough. Marking is linked effectively to examination marking criteria and students are given detailed guidance on how to improve aspects of their work. Very good informal feedback and guidance is given in lessons which enables students to make very good learning gains. Students show good levels of independence in their learning. The quality of their work shows that they spend considerable amounts of time outside the workshop completing assignments. This has a positive impact on standards achieved. Students confidently use a range of information and communication technology skills and apply these to their work. In lessons students', attitudes are very positive. They show respect for each other and all adults, and seek and value the views of others in the group.
99. The subject is very well led and managed and this has led to consistently high standards at A-Level. Staffing difficulties have now been resolved; teachers work well as a team and show a very high level of commitment. The monitoring of teaching and students' work is very effective and is a major contributory factor in the high standards and achievement. There is a clear understanding of the strengths within the department, together with a clear view of improvements that need to be made. For example, appropriate action has been taken to further improve standards in the AS-Level examination with modifications to the scheme of work
100. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. All teachers are now very effective in identifying strengths and weaknesses at individual student level and in each year group. This is having a positive impact on standards. Overall, resources within the department are good although a weakness, for example in computer equipment for control applications and computer aided design restricts developments in these areas.

BUSINESS

101. In this curriculum area in the sixth form GNVQ Intermediate level, AVCE, AS and A-level are all taught. The main focus was on AS and A-level courses, but other courses are commented on in less detail within the business studies report.

Business studies

102. Overall, the provision in business studies is **good**.

Strengths

- Teaching is good; some is very good.
- Students respond well to the courses.
- There is good leadership and management
- The courses are popular and make good contributions to wide range of the sixth form curriculum.
- Teachers work well together as a team.
- Students have good experiences of the business world through schemes like Young Enterprise.

Areas for development

- Computers presently in use are unreliable and need replacing.

- There is not always sufficient pace and challenge in all classes.
- Some students need to read more widely to increase the depth of their learning and understanding.

103. In the sixth form the school offers GNVQ intermediate level, AVCE and AS and A-levels. In the GNVQ intermediate course, students attain in line with national averages. In all other courses of study, students attain above national expectations
104. At the intermediate level of GNVQ in 2001, six out of eight students attained passes and one attained a merit. Work seen during the inspection indicates above average standards; students confidently and accurately use a wide range of business terminology. They demonstrate clear understanding of key business concepts, such as the use and importance of administration in business organisations. In the AVCE course in Year 13, students are attaining at above national levels. Particular strengths of the students' work in both years are the steady accumulation of knowledge, which is well organised in their files, and their basic understanding of the subject matter. A relative weakness is in the use made of this understanding, particularly in the interpretation and analysis of data. Moreover, students often do not retain the knowledge and understanding over periods of time and this sometimes leads to weaker performances in examinations.
105. In GCE business studies courses, both at AS and A-level, examination results have been above average for the last two years. In 2001, over a third of students attained A and B grades. The standards reached by current students, as seen in lessons and in their written work, are above average. In Year 12, students make good progress in understanding the central ideas of the subject, including those relating to the economic environment in which business operates, but they are not so good at applying their understanding. Some students in Year 13 also progress well in their current work, and some are making very good progress. However, the achievement of many students is no more than satisfactory overall. This is due mainly to the lack of wider and in-depth reading around the subject; students are not spending sufficient time on their reading to raise their levels of achievement. In both years, there are deficiencies in some students' analytical skills, which are needed to reach the highest grades.
106. Overall, the quality of the teaching in the advanced courses is good, and occasionally, very good. The teachers' excellent rapport and expert subject knowledge underpins discussion and lends clarity to the explanations provided. Lessons are carefully planned, and effective use is made of case studies and other activities to allow students to apply and extend their learning. For example, in a Year 13 lesson on corporate strategies, students considered the range of "stakeholders" anxious about the company's success. They understood, from examined case studies, that there were often obvious clashes of interest between the types of stakeholders, and that these potential clashes impacted on corporate strategy. Students generally worked well, knew what they were meant to do and learned effectively. The teacher's methodical explanation on this occasion promoted considerable gains in the lower attaining students' comprehension. However, there is a tendency to over-provide such help for the students; this is partly at the expense of practising the kinds of analysis that will enable them to become more independent learners and reach the higher levels of attainment.
107. Students respond well in lessons. Their attitudes are mostly mature and they sustain interest. Higher attaining students maintain intellectual rigour and they show more evidence of wider reading. Too often, however they are happy to be passive recipients rather than active participants in their own learning; as a result, they do not always reach their full potential in their learning.
108. Resources in the department are adequate. The subject suffers particularly from the lack of modern, high quality computers. The current computers are not always reliable. Leadership and management are good. The head of subject leads effectively and has a clear vision for the future of the subject which sensibly encompasses maintaining a full range of intermediate and advanced courses. Such provision would successfully meet the wide and differing needs and aspirations of future groups of students.

109. Students' attainment is aided by good links with the business world, particularly with local businesses. Students' understanding of business is further enhanced by the school's participation in the Young Enterprise programme. However, the main areas for development to raise standards further are to bring all teaching up to the quality of the best, to maintain pace and challenge which further encourages students' independent learning, and to develop wider and deeper reading habits by students.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

110. In this curriculum area, computing is taught to AS and A-level. No other formal courses are taught, though students make use of ICT in other subjects and in their research work.

Computing

111. The overall quality of provision is **excellent**.

Strengths

- Results are very high at A-level results and well above average at AS level.
- Teaching is very good and often outstanding, leading to very good learning in all lessons.
- Leadership and management in the subject are excellent.
- Excellent relationships are generating a very positive attitude to learning.

Areas for improvement

- Students studying other subjects sometimes have difficulty accessing computers outside of timetabled ICT lessons.

112. Fifty-three students take advanced courses in the subject, 37 in Year 12 and 16 in Year 13. The AS results in 2001 were well above the national average. All the students who took the examination gained a pass grade with the proportion gaining an A or B grade being well above average. A-level results were very high when compared with the national average and maintained the consistently high results achieved by students each year. Students do better in this subject than they do in most of their other A-level courses.
113. Work seen during the inspection is of a high standard at the end of Year 12 and reflects very good achievement since the start of the courses when students enter with average attainment levels in the subject. Students review local area networks and different operating systems and build up a thorough working knowledge of spreadsheets and database programmes. Most of the Year 12 students show good research and planning skills, having analysed problems effectively and drawn up a solution, which they systematically test and modify to achieve the final working programme.
114. By Year 13 students are attaining very high standards and readily applying higher order programming skills in the production of their own choice of a final software project. Most students show a clear understanding of system specifications and how to develop and modify a range of system variables to make the programme work effectively as, for example, in their prior work on the 'Postquick Parcels' project. They show a good understanding of commercial applications and how to respond to end user needs using linked multi-layer input forms when designing their systems. All students produce very well organised folders of work showing very good effort over time and clearly most students achieve the target dates set for each piece of coursework. The higher attaining and the gifted and talented are well challenged and effectively produce software solutions for a range of complex processes, such as for example tracking student data in a school system. A feature of all students' work is the use of email to post work between school and home. This enables them to work effectively on tasks outside of lesson time both at home and in school. In lessons seen, through discussion with individuals and a review of students' work folders, all students are achieving very well in the subject in relation to their prior attainment.

115. The very good achievement and very high standards are attributable to the teaching, which is never less than very good and often outstanding. Teachers have very good planning skills and structure the work in lessons very well, achieving the lesson objectives effectively. A feature of the teaching is the use of the 'network tutor' which teachers readily use to guide students through each aspect of a project. Teachers take control of students' screens and demonstrate to them every step of the often complex processes on the screen in front of them. Teachers are also able to very easily and effectively challenge and extend students' intellectual creativity because they have established a wealth of additional exercises on the network, which they can call upon to extend a project when deemed appropriate. The pace of work in lessons is very brisk and purposeful and very well focused on the completion of work. Teachers are very adept at questioning student's understanding of the work and in ensuring that they are consolidating their learning effectively. Relationships between teachers and students are excellent and enable very good learning to take place in lessons. Each project is broken down into modules and a target completion date is set for each module which is rigorously monitored so that teachers know exactly what students have or have not completed by the deadline set. Students are verbally well informed about the standards achieved and what they need to do to improve. They can also call up from the network details relating to their progress and achievement in all elements of the coursework and know exactly how well they are doing in relation to all others on the course. Constructive comments made by teachers in discussions and during the course of lessons also give students a very clear direction about what they need to do to improve work. As a result students learn very well. They are very attentive, work productively and respond very well to the supportive teaching and learning styles they experience. There is a good degree of collaborative and cooperative work and they show very good levels of maturity in responding to one another and to their teachers.
116. Leadership and management of the department are excellent with a very clear well structured educational direction provided. The monitoring of teaching and learning is very effective. It leads to continuous improvements in the teaching styles and techniques enabling the very good learning to take place. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good. Standards have improved significantly. Teaching is now a considerable strength. Larger groups of students than usual opt for the subject and they are well provided for in terms of the range and quality of resources and accommodation. However, the resources for ICT are now used to capacity which in turn restricts access and use by students outside of the timetabled computing lessons.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

117. In this curriculum area, sports studies is taught to AS and A-level. In addition, there is extensive provision for physical education in the sixth form. There is a wide range of options in the compulsory programme of physical education, with ten teachers timetabled for this programme. There are excellent extra-curricular opportunities, with a high participation rate; a full inter-school match programme takes place on Saturday mornings. A significant number of high attaining students achieve representative honours in a wide range of sports, including tennis, hockey, rugby and athletics. Many represent the county and some compete successfully as individuals and/or team members at national and international levels.

Sports studies

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

Strengths

- Students achieve well; their practical performance levels are above average and they understand the main theoretical concepts.
- The teaching of AS and A-level sports studies is good; expectations are high and a range of challenging tasks and activities is undertaken.
- Relationships are very good; students share ideas freely and work well together.
- The provision of extra-curricular sport is excellent.

Areas for further improvement

- The proportion of students gaining the highest grades (A and B) is relatively low.
- Lower attaining students show weaknesses in their understanding of key theoretical aspects.
- Overall, indoor accommodation needs updating, especially the sports hall.

119. The A-level sports studies results in 2001, although below the national average, represented satisfactory achievement for most students. Overall, results in the two previous years were above the national average and showed good achievement in relation to the students' GCSE results.
120. Inspection evidence shows that a good proportion of current Year 13 students are producing work which is of above average standard; a significant minority are on course to attain the highest A-level grades. Most students in Year 13 are achieving well in relation to their AS results. In the lessons seen, their good achievement reflects effective teaching, which demands much of them. In one lesson, students successfully compared the dietary needs of participants in various sports by drawing on their knowledge and through researching different text sources. Students' practical performance levels are good and many are achieving very well at local, county and sometimes, national levels, particularly in tennis, hockey and rugby. Students' written work is generally well presented; they frequently access the Internet to research information and most make good use of ICT to enhance their presentation of coursework. For example, students use graphics well to summarise performance analysis data. A few students show less understanding of key theoretical aspects; such as psychological concepts.
121. Students in Year 12, within a wide ability range, are achieving in line with what would be expected from their earlier standards. Some higher attaining students have developed very well their skills in planning, evaluating and improving performance. Most students organise and present information in a clear and appropriate form. In a lesson investigating the practical implications of various forms of skill drills, students showed sound numeracy skills in dealing with test data and accurately analysed video recordings of their performances. They understand the various graphical ways of summarising information and are confident in their use of technical language. The few students who did not undertake the GCSE sports studies examination are achieving in line with other students, because of their strong background in the sciences. A small minority is taking longer to adapt to the more independent learning demands of AS level work.
122. The teaching of AS and A-level sports studies is good; students learn well as a result. The principal features of teaching are clear objectives, sharp planning, good subject knowledge and high expectations. There is emphasis on getting students to refine their work through setting targets. They develop good independent learning skills, because teachers often provide opportunities for them to plan, research and evaluate work. Good use is made of the available resources, including the ICT suites, but overall, there is a need for more specialist indoor space to provide for the full range of teaching expected of the advanced courses, such as occasions when it is necessary to reinforce learning in theory lessons with a practical component.
123. Students have a responsible attitude to their work and are enthusiastic about physical education. Their learning benefits from well informed and supportive teaching. Students express themselves clearly in discussions, for example, in determining how anxiety occurs and then evaluating its influence on performance. Most students are confident in using books and ICT to

extract information. A few are less confident in seeing the focus of tasks where explanations are needed.

124. The subject is very well led and managed. There is a strong commitment to further improvement in standards. Target setting is well monitored and A-level examination results are carefully analysed. Overall, accommodation for the subject is in need of updating. Although teaching and learning are enhanced by very good outdoor games facilities and the very good fitness and weights room is spacious and well-equipped, the sports hall is inadequate for the demands of the curriculum and the large numbers of students, and it is in poor condition. There has been some new changing room provision since the last inspection, but, overall, changing accommodation is not in good condition. Major funding, which the school is already exploring, is needed to remedy this situation. Students' learning and personal development are greatly enhanced by the provision of a very comprehensive extra-curricular sports programme; this includes overseas sports tours and expeditions.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

125. No courses are taken in this curriculum area.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

126. There is extensive provision for the visual and performing arts and media in the school. In this inspection, the focus was on art, graphics and media studies. Photography, music and film studies were also sampled. Comments on photography are made within the section on art and graphics. Teaching and learning in the music lesson that was sampled were very good with high level discussion comparing Debussy with Berlioz, and making links with poetry and art. Many sixth formers also participate to a very high standard in a wide range of musical activities. An outstanding film studies lesson was observed. Teaching and learning were excellent, with very high standards, reflecting the very high results in AS examinations last year. Drama is also taught to A-level. No lessons were observed, but there is much evidence around the school of the high quality work that takes place. An excellent and powerful production about a group of soldiers in the trenches of the First World War by Year 13 students as part of their A-level coursework was performed during the inspection week. Written and performed by the students, it showed not only the very high standards being reached, but also the quality of the teaching they are receiving.

Art; graphics

127. Both subjects were inspected in detail. Both are led and managed within the same department by the same head of department. Both subjects are very strong and results have risen over the last three years with increasing numbers of higher grades at A-level. There are separate sections on standards and achievement in this report, but since both are led and managed together, and graphics teachers also teach art, other aspects of both subjects are interwoven as there is a great deal of overlap.
128. Overall the provision for both art and graphics is **very good**.

Strengths

- There is very good teaching and learning.
- Both subjects make excellent contributions to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The quality of students' individual responses is very high.

Areas for Improvement

- Provision for photography is still limited.

129. Standards in art at AS level in 2001 were in line with expectation according to prior attainment; over half gained grades A and B and almost all gained grades A to E. Standards at A-level were above average and an improvement on the previous year. Students achieved well adding on average one and a half grades to what might have been expected from their prior attainments.
130. Standards in graphics at AS in 2001 were higher than might have been expected from students' prior attainments; students achieved extremely well and improved on average by two grades. All students achieved grades A to E. Standards at A-level were above what might be expected from students starting points in the course; they gained on average between one and two grades on what was predicted. They continued the rising trend in graphics from 2000 when students added almost three grades on average to their predicted grades. All students gained a grade between A and D, which is higher than the national average.
131. Standards of work seen during the inspection in both art and graphics are above average, representing very good achievement by the end of Year 13, taking into account grades gained at GCSE and AS level. Technical skills in a wide variety of media are high for the majority of students, whether in sculpture, fine art or graphics. Standards are not as high in photography, but, as students do not have the opportunity to study photography lower down the school, their starting points are much lower. Students in Year 13 approach work from observation with confidence and vigour and produce a wide variety of high quality individual responses, showing their understanding of form and the influence of artists they have studied. Standards in graphics in the use of ICT are extremely high, and higher attaining students show their depth and breadth of knowledge and expertise in high quality units on computer animation. The quality of ideas is also high in both art and graphics. Students in art show their perception and thoughtfulness in work in Year 12 on an autobiographical theme; in graphics, they show similar perception and thoughtfulness in their understanding of the way in which posters can change people's minds and in their understanding of the morality inherent in this.
132. The quality of teaching is very good overall, and students learn very well as a result. The principal strengths in teaching are shown in excellent planning, high expectations and excellent subject knowledge. The strengths in learning are the excellent attitudes of the students, who show a very high degree of independent learning and higher order thinking, encouraged in discussions of a philosophical nature. Students interact and collaborate with one another most sociably and their learning is enhanced by visits to places of interest such as a visit to the Tate Modern and a trip to Hastings to record a very different environment from inner city life in London.
133. The team of teachers involved in the delivery of art and graphics is very well led and managed. Procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching and taking appropriate action are very good as are plans for the development of the subject in the longer term. Procedures for assessing and monitoring students' progress are good, but would benefit from the recording of progress being formalised to help students who may need that extra support. The rise in standards and the success of students in the sixth form have been affected by the many improvements since the last inspection. The most successful changes have been the further development of work using computers and in work in three-dimensions and the introduction at AS level of photography. A technician who is trained in graphics has enhanced the work using computers. These aspects are proving very popular and successful and resources are now inadequate to cope with the numbers who would like to study photography in particular. Progress since the last inspection has, therefore, been very good, as is the leadership and management of the team delivering art and graphics.

Media studies

134. Overall, the quality of provision in media studies is **excellent**.

Strengths

- AS and A-level results are very high, and achievement is excellent.
- Very effective teaching is leading to very good learning.
- Students are highly motivated and participate well in class.
- The excellent leadership and management contribute significantly to the very high standards.
- There are excellent relationships between students and teachers.

Weaknesses

- The lack of technical support limits some of the practical work students can undertake.

135. A-level results have been very high compared with the national average with a high proportion of students achieving grades A and B (85 per cent in 2000, 63 per cent in 2001). The AS results have been equally high (75 per cent grades A and B in 2001). Most students' grades have been usually much better than could be expected based on prior GCSE attainment, showing very good and often excellent achievement
136. The standards of work of the students are very high. In their practical work, the students demonstrate good skills in producing print media products. The best work shows originality and creativity, for example, in devising advertising campaigns to promote AIDS awareness or avoidance of drinking and driving. Students' video work is characterised by strong visual narrative. In class, students are able to effectively analyse film extracts. In one lesson, students showed a very good understanding of the key conventions of 'slasher' horror films such as Halloween and Scream. In the film studies course, students were able to develop quite sophisticated arguments when debating the merits of two controversial films, Clockwork Orange and American History X.
137. Teaching is very good. The teachers have a strong expertise in the subject and their excellent knowledge and understanding of their subject mean that students benefit in their learning from experts. There is an emphasis on developing in students a wide range of analytical and evaluative skills particularly through the use of well designed worksheets and assignments. In assessing the impact of new technology, students were required to research and report back on how the Internet is being used across different media industries. Students respond enthusiastically to the way the subject is taught. They concentrate well in class and are keen to participate in discussions. Teachers try to cater for the individual interests of students, for example, in the choice of coursework and unit options, and this means that all students learn equally well. However, some students feel the need for better guidance on how to undertake independent research in their chosen topics. Relations between the teachers and students are very good. The students appreciate the close support and attention provided by the teachers, and the students' excellent attitudes also contribute very positively to their learning.
138. The leadership and management of media studies are excellent, setting the highest standards. The head of subject has extensive examining experience as well as specialist expertise in film analysis. The teaching rooms have a distinctive subject identity through the excellent display of posters and subject references as well as good audio-visual sources such as DVD players. There is a separate media resources room with desktop publishing and digital video editing facilities. However, the department does not have any additional technical support. This restricts students' access to the available technology, especially video production, and is likely to become an increasing problem with the significant increase in the number of students taking AS media studies this academic year.

HUMANITIES

139. The humanities are a strong feature of the sixth form curriculum. In this inspection, the focus was on history and politics. Geography, law, sociology and psychology were sampled. Teaching and learning are very good in geography; standards are well above average as a result of very high expectations and high levels of independent research by students. Law is presently taught in Year 12 only and is a popular option. Standards are above average with very good teaching

and learning; students go on various visits, including Inns of Court, and benefit from visiting speakers who provide real insight into legal practice. Teaching and learning were good in a Year 13 sociology lesson, though the work was at a relatively straightforward level; the students' excellent attitudes are contributing to above average standards. Teaching and learning were also good in a Year 12 psychology lesson; responses from students showed high quality critical reading, and paired work was sharply focused and very successful.

History

140. The overall provision is **very good**.

Strengths

- Standards reached by students are above average.
- Teaching is very good, with outstanding knowledge and understanding by teachers.
- The subject provides very good learning experiences for students that enable them to develop the full range of skills required to do well at this level, including independent research.
- Assessment and target setting procedures are good.
- The subject has very successfully developed new schemes of work and new approaches to match the new syllabuses.
- There is a good range of visits and there are opportunities to attend student conferences.

Areas for improvement

- The subject uses computers in the ICT suites to support learning very well but computers are not used in the classroom as an integral part of lessons.
- There is scope for further development of the library as a facility for independent research.

141. In 2001, results at A-level examination were close to the national average for boys, with three not obtaining a pass grade. Results in recent years have been variable; overall they did not compare favourably with other subjects although the numbers entered have been too small for valid national comparisons. Students who took the new AS examinations did very well; all passed and one-third were awarded A grades, a very high proportion. The number of students taking history has increased significantly recently; there are now 16 students in Year 13 and 20 in Year 12. Results in recent examinations show that the students in Year 12 are achieving well; standards are now consistently above average.

142. The standard of work seen in Year 13 is above average. Students are able to show that they have both a detailed knowledge of the periods that they are studying and the high level of skills in essay and document work required. They approach their work with confidence and enthusiasm. They are generally very articulate and base their ideas and judgments on sound knowledge and understanding and a careful study of texts, extracts and source material. Students respond well to specific tasks in preparation for classroom discussion and they consult an appropriate range of books and web sites. Use of ICT by students is impressive in that they are able to use it for research and to share their findings with others in interesting and well planned PowerPoint presentations. The quality of most essay and document work at A-level is above average and all work seen was at least of an average standard. Most students plan their work well and their files of notes and assessed work are very well managed. However, the particular strength in Year 13 is the ability of students to take responsibility for their own work as active rather than passive participants in lessons. When studying Cromwell they clearly appreciate the complexity of the issues he faced, and that historians use differing criteria in judging him. In discussion, they show that they understand that there is no final judgment in history and that views on key figures like Cromwell are affected by later events. Higher attaining students are able to talk about the importance of his religious beliefs and to indicate why he ultimately abandoned the reforming ideas of radical groups and why they saw this as betrayal. Students are also studying Bismarck and they are able to compare the way he has been judged by different historians and to understand that attitudes to German unification have been affected by events in the twentieth century. Average students are able to use a variety of sources including political cartoons to study events in Germany although inevitably some students

confuse key dates and personalities at times.

143. The approach to work on Bismarck and Cromwell observed in lessons shows that students are not only able to cope with difficult concepts and political philosophies but also to share their ideas with others to ensure that all students achieve well. This provides a clear indication of the inclusive nature of study in history classes at this level. This approach is replicated in Year 12 where there is a rich learning environment in which adults and students with special educational needs can work supported by other students who perhaps are more skilled in the use of computers or find research work easier.
144. The majority of students in Year 12 are clearly coping very well with unfamiliar vocabulary and new area of study, for example strategy and tactics in the English Civil War. Some individuals find such tasks challenging but all show that they can understand how and why the war was fought and why the first battles were inconclusive. Higher attaining students show a very good understanding of the use of cavalry and all students are able to explain why the New Model Army was so important. Students also show good levels of understanding in evaluating broad trends in studying the causes and conduct of the Civil War and revolution in England.
145. Teaching is very good overall and students learn very well as a result of the quality of teaching. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and a real enthusiasm that they communicate to their students. In one lesson on the French Revolution, for example, the teacher's passion for the subject and his outstanding knowledge led to rapid increases to knowledge and understanding by students, whose recall and retention from earlier lessons were also very strong. Teachers use a variety of approaches to the subject and are prepared to take different approaches to the subject, although always ensuring that students take responsibility for their own learning through research. Written work is rigorously assessed and students have clearly set targets and they are taught how to improve their work. There is a clear balance between studying the key figures and the forces for change that had so much impact on the events
146. Students have the opportunity to use a variety of carefully chosen resources and they make good use of computers for research and word processing. However, at present the subject is not using computers in a classroom situation sufficiently frequently. It is making use of statistical and similar information to extend student understanding, for example, of casualty figures and taxes as factors in the fighting. The subject makes a very good contribution to the development of key skills that can be transferred to other subjects or to the work place. Students work together in pairs as well as in groups and they have frequent opportunities to participate in discussions and presentations. The impact of this on learning is clear in Year 12 where students are confidently and actively creating their own presentations on aspects of the Civil War.
147. The very good teaching and learning are a result of the very good management in the subject. The choice of course content contrasts well with GCSE work and provides interesting new areas of study. The resources for the new course have been developed well but the library resources would benefit from further development. The head of subject has introduced the new system of examinations very effectively. Subject documentation is easy to access and is available to all staff who teach AS and A-level classes. Information for students is clear and comprehensive.
148. The subject is providing a rich experience for its students and they are able to participate in a variety of visits; students conferences to extend their knowledge and understanding. They have recently visited the National Army Museum. During that visit they were given detailed information on the siege of Basing House and there were frequent references to it during lessons. Students speak with enthusiasm about their studies and they judge provision to be very good. Improvement since the last inspection has clearly been good. Standards of both teaching and learning are now very good and students' results in the new examination system show a clear improvement.

Government and politics

149. Overall, the quality of provision in government and politics is **very good**.

Strengths

- Results are above the national average.
- The response by students to the subject is very good.
- The very good teaching leads to very good learning.
- With his commitment to high standards, the subject leader is an excellent role model for students.

Areas for Development

- Group sizes are large compared with some other subjects in the same curriculum area.
- Lack of administrative support means that it is difficult to keep all information relevant to the course up-to-date.

150. The A-level results in 2001, from a small group of students, were above the national average, particularly for the number of students obtaining A or B grades. Standards attained by current students, in both Years 12 and 13, as seen in their written work and in lessons, are well above average in their respective courses.

151. In the AS course, Year 12 students have developed an early enthusiasm for the subject and they have a good understanding of the central concepts of the subject. They understand and interpret effectively political information in a variety of forms, and they are good at selecting and organising relevant materials to construct arguments and explanations leading to reasoned conclusions. For example, in their study of the United Kingdom judiciary and the Human Rights Act, students, in a range of different innovative scenarios, communicated their arguments and explanations with relevance, clarity and coherence.

152. In their A-level course, Year 13 students analyse effectively, and evaluate skilfully, the relationships between institutions, processes, ideologies and concepts. For example, in their studies of the political future of Europe, students identify and analyse, with considerable depth of understanding, parallels, similarities and differences between the views of Prime Minister Blair and Chancellor Schroeder concerning such issues as federalism and confederalism. Students across the ability range make good progress and are achieving well; there is considerable evidence in both their oral and written work of the acquisition of analytical skills to augment their increasing knowledge. There is, however, little evidence of the wider and deeper reading which would lead to even further achievement.

153. Students' responses and behaviour are very good, and on occasion, they are excellent. Students engage diligently in their work. They sustain concentration and have a responsible attitude to the subject. These very positive attitudes are important contributory factors to the very good learning that takes place, and reflect the very good teaching which the students receive. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, which they present in lively, and sometimes inspirational ways, which motivate and stimulate the students and which lead, therefore, to very good learning. Two significant characteristics of the teaching of politics are the teachers' enthusiasm for the subject, which is infectious and which has a favourable impact on students' learning, and the successful encouragement of students to become independent learners. These came together, for example, in a Year 12 class; students, exhorted to put to their colleagues the main concepts of the Human Rights Act in the format of a TV programme, acted out a range of scenarios, which included very amusing contributions, such as an "Ali G" type interview with Tony Blair. The students needed to engage in serious independent learning in order to achieve successfully. Thus, the humour was always sensibly subsumed to the supporting role of the learning. However, both were successful in large measures in a very good lesson which led to very good learning.

154. At present, government and politics is managed as part of the history department; partly as a result of this, there is no full size room dedicated to the subject which would allow the full use of the room for displays and specialist facilities. Group sizes are large, especially when compared with history; similar numbers take both subjects but with fewer teaching groups for government and politics. These limitations are compensated by the excellent role model provided by the

teacher leading the subject. He is committed to high standards, and he is well supported by his colleague. The subject lacks technical support to maintain a service that updates information to underpin students' independent learning. Overall, therefore, the management of the subject is satisfactory, but the subject has the potential to build on its popularity with students and its successes in the high standards being achieved.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

155. The focus of the inspection was on English literature and French, but work in German was also sampled. Teaching and learning in German are very good resulting in high standards of listening and speaking. A-level results have been above or well above average over the last four years, with very high valued-added in 2001, representing excellent achievement. The AS level results were well above average with six A or B grades from seven candidates.

English literature

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

Strengths

- Standards are well above average.
- There is very good and highly enthusing teaching with high expectations.
- Very good leadership and teamwork leads to very good curriculum provision.
- Students show excellent attitudes.
- Students are making very good progress in developing independent learning skills.

Areas for improvement

- There is scope to improve assessment further by:
More rigorous use of target setting; more systematic monitoring and support of progress and organisation; more precision in marking.

157. Results over recent years have consistently been in the average to well above average range. The 2001 GCSE A-level results were above average, and all students obtained a pass grade. Overall achievement was good. In the June 2001 AS examination, more than half the candidates obtained the higher grades A-B. This is significantly above the provisional national average. All students obtained a pass grade. The results represented very good achievement. In Year 12 current standards are above average. In the January 2002 AS examination more than half gained grades A-B. These students are also achieving very well given their broad range of attainment at the start of the course.
158. The standards of the current Year 13 students are well above average and match their AS results, so sustaining their very good achievement. Most are clearly working at grade A-B level. Their work is characterised by a succinct, assured and consistently evaluative writing style. They make frequent and detailed references to the texts. They are particularly skilled in commenting with insight on the significance of quotations. Perceptive comments on the impact on meaning of an author's use of language and of technical features are notable strengths. One student neatly analysed Owen's ironic use of a Petrarchian sonnet structure when writing of war in 'Anthem for Doomed Youth'. Another precisely analysed Brooke's imagery in 'The Soldier' to show how it conveyed the mood of young men in England. This assuredness in dealing with language was also apparent in lessons.
159. Some students achieve these standards but inconsistently. They are secure in their understanding of an author's themes but not in linking themes to an author's use of language. Some phrasing lacks the succinctness of stronger students. A few are below average in standards. They explain rather than analyse and do not comment with the detail required to gain higher standards.

160. In Year 12 students have adjusted well to the course. Some higher attaining students have made excellent progress. Their assignments on 'Enduring Love' demonstrate real improvement from their earlier, rather narrative-based pieces to their later, crisp, tightly-argued and evaluative pieces. Others have made good progress in presenting characters and events as representations of ideas and experiences. A few find this hard. They have secure knowledge, recognising, for example, the Chorus' use of a grandiloquent language in 'Henry V', but their subsequent writing did not effectively illustrate the use, purpose and impact of the language.
161. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. It is always enthusing and often inspiring. As one student remarked: 'Our teachers really go for it.' Each teacher has excellent subject expertise which directly enhances the students' own knowledge, understanding and skills. The teachers share a consistency of approach that leads to very productive, purposeful hard working lessons with lots of independent learning. They clearly outline and explain each lesson's learning aim. They outline activities, linking them precisely to the aims. They use a wide range of methods: highly interactive whole class teaching which challenges the students' thinking; tightly-scheduled opportunities for individual, paired or group work. This latter activity always has an outcome, often a presentation. Thus the students' minds are focused and they rise to the challenge. In one lesson, pairs of students analysed different sections from the first scene of Act IV of 'Othello'. After twenty minutes each had presented a detailed analysis to the class. The teacher used the presentations to explore themes and links with the text. This was an excellent lesson: purposeful, intellectually demanding and highly educational. Similar methods resulted in highly engaged lessons on Chaucer and Blake. Teachers and students make good use of ICT. Some studying Blake used the Internet for research. Several students use Powerpoint for presentations. The key skills of communication, problem solving, working with others and ICT are very well covered in English.
162. There are no significant weaknesses in teaching. Not all marking matches the standard of the best which often included comments such as 'Now to move on to grade A you need to...'. Occasionally, the support for those students whose standards are below average is not always sufficiently well targeted so they can lose focus. The student enjoy the texts, the challenge and the issues they discuss; they are highly appreciative of their teachers expertise and of what one student termed 'their infectious enthusiasm'. They value their teachers' approachability. Encouragingly, all the students interviewed are keen readers themselves so the course is having an impact beyond examination work.
163. This very good provision emanates from the very good leadership of the head of department ably supported by very good teamwork. She and her colleagues have taken full advantage of the new curriculum requirements to work collaboratively to produce courses and methods that make the most of all the talents in her team. In addition there are good procedures for assessment. Even so, students progress to targets could still be monitored more tightly right from the start of Year 12. The department's monitoring of on-going progress could also be more systematically focused on the students' general study skills and attitudes such as organisation and meeting deadlines.

French

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

Strengths

- Teaching is very good.
- Students' speaking skills in both years 12 and 13 are very high.
- The writing of higher attaining students is extensive, fluent and accurate.

Areas for improvement

- There are no significant areas for improvement.

165. After two years of below average results, standards in French improved in 2001 to be in line with national averages. Three out of the five A-level students had results that were higher than would be expected from their GCSE results. AS level results ranged right across the grades with three out of eight candidates obtaining grades A-B and two not obtaining a pass grade; overall achievement for most students was good, and was very good for some.
166. Overall, standards of work seen during the inspection are well above average. In AS lessons with present Year 12 students, standards of speaking and listening are well above average, with all eight students expressing themselves clearly and accurately. In Year 13, students' speaking skills are above average with all of them conveying opinions and ideas effectively. Pronunciation and intonation are very good in both years. Written work, however, shows a much wider range of skills. Most Year 12 students write extensively, fluently and accurately, using both an extended vocabulary and advanced structures in their work. In Year 13, writing standards range from well above average to well below average. A few students in both years have not yet mastered the structures that are necessary for the course and their writing is spoilt by frequent grammar and spelling errors. Achievement over time in both years is very good, with one lower attaining student making very considerable progress in spoken French, though less in the written language.
167. The standard of teaching is very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge; they speak French fluently and correctly, prepare lessons well and have high expectations. In one Year 12 lesson, the teacher effectively used computer generated visual images to stimulate discussion, in addition to a wide range of other materials on the theme of smoking. In a small group lesson, also in Year 12, the foreign language assistant skilfully assisted students to prepare material for their oral presentation. In Year 13, teachers used text book and tape recorder to good effect to deal with the theme of the Internet, whilst in another year 13 lesson, there was good use of photographs and video to develop discussion on the theme of advertising and its shock effect on the public. As a result students' learning in all lessons was very good. They developed very good understanding of the subject material and succeeded in expressing themselves very fluently in both the full group, in groups of four and in one-to-one conversation with the teacher.
168. Resources are satisfactory with very good provision of French television via satellite, which enables students to keep abreast of current issues in France and to develop their listening skills very well. Teachers mark work very well, indicating language mistakes and giving targets to enable students to improve their standards.
169. Students have excellent attitudes towards their learning. They contribute very well to the spoken activities of the lessons, with a high degree of concentration and co-operation, all of which helps to raise their standards of speaking and listening. The one girl in Year 12 is very well included in the group as a whole. They stay on-task throughout the lesson. Most, but not all, files are well maintained and are evidence of students' conscientious approach to their AS and A-level course. This provides a wide range of study material on cultural themes such as the French Presidential election, and moral issues such as immigration. However, there is no opportunity for other students to follow a French course at a lower level or to start a new language.
170. Management of the subject is very good. The head of subject has been in post for only six months and, together with the head of the modern foreign languages department, has given a very good lead to the development of the subject with effective dissemination of new ideas for teaching and learning, and to very good monitoring in the subject. Retention rates are good. The previous report said little about the provision for French at advanced level; because of this, it is not possible to judge improvement, but the current provision is very good.