

INSPECTION REPORT

ST JAMES' CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

Colindale

LEA area: Barnet

Unique reference number: 101364

Headteacher: Mr K McSharry

Reporting inspector: Nigel Pett
17331

Dates of inspection: 12th – 19th October 2001

Inspection number: 192819

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	11 to 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Great Strand Colindale London
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	A J Burke
Date of previous inspection:	February 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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14756	J R Lovell	Lay inspector		Pupils' and students' attitudes, values and personal development; How well does the school care for its pupils and students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
12003	Dr A Marfleet	Team inspector	Theatre Studies English as an additional language	How good are curricular and other opportunities for its pupils and students?
31135	Mrs R Hobson	Team inspector	English	
3643	D Jones	Team inspector	Mathematics	
30563	Ms J Pentlow	Team inspector	Science Biology	
2198	Mrs J Wilson	Team inspector	Art Special educational needs	
31218	Dr T Allen	Team inspector	Geography	
1085	J Laver	Team inspector	Physical education	
24622	Dr D Davies	Team inspector	Drama	
31783	Mrs G Holland	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
20767	J Royle	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
13122	Mrs S Matthews	Team inspector	History	
13065	Ms K Brock	Team inspector	Music	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

This comprehensive school is situated in the London borough of Barnet. Whilst many students live in the immediate vicinity of established housing estates, a significant majority travel for some distance to access denominational education. There are 1049 students on roll aged between 11 and 19, including 141 students in the sixth form, making the school larger than the average secondary school nationally. Students come from the full range of socio-economic backgrounds and, although the number of students eligible for free school meals is in line with the national average, a significant proportion of the students experience both social and financial disadvantage. There is a wide range of ethnic heritage amongst the students and the percentage of students not having English as their first language is above the national average. About a quarter of the students are identified as having special educational needs and 39 hold statements to address their specific needs. These numbers are above the national average. Attainment on entry reflects the full range of prior attainment, although there is a larger proportion of pupils of lower attainment. The school's aims are based upon the text 'I have come that they may have life and have it to the full' from the Gospel of St John.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school with a very strong Catholic ethos. It is very committed to the care and education of all of its students. It has many strengths. Through the high expectations for both work and conduct, the school's aims are generally well met. Many students achieve better grades in National tests and public examinations than would be expected from their previous attainment. Teaching is good. The school is very well led, although there are some inconsistencies in the overall management. It gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- It supports students so that many achieve well in relation to their prior attainment.
- Achieves good standards in students' behaviour, attitudes, values and personal development, which leads to its distinctive ethos.
- It cares in a Catholic setting for the needs of its students.
- Teaches effectively to promote the good and, often, very good progress of the large majority of students.
- Celebrates students' achievements very well.
- Works very effectively with parents and the Catholic and wider community.

What could be improved

- Meeting the National Curriculum requirements for information and communication technology.
- The overall development of literacy and numeracy to raise students' standards in basic skills.
- Meeting the differing needs of students by taking greater account of assessment data in planning.
- The quality of accommodation for sixth formers and dining room.
- Strategies for the monitoring and management of whole school initiatives.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in 1997. Good attention has been given to the key issues. Teaching has improved. Efforts have been made to improve students' punctuality and the difficulties in dispersing a large number of students to buses after school. However, public transport issues in increasingly heavy traffic cannot easily be solved. Monitoring by senior staff has improved, but it still does not fully ensure that there is consistency in the implementation of initiatives and work of departments across the school. A whole school literacy policy has been developed and this is supporting the improvement of standards. Standards have risen and development planning is better, but there are still inconsistencies in ensuring that it addresses the raising of standards, overall.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
GCSE examinations	B	A	B	A
GCE A level	E	E	E	

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

Results in the 2000 National Curriculum tests in English, mathematics and science at the age of fourteen were in line with the national average and show that pupils make good progress in this key stage. They were well above average in comparison with similar schools. The table shows the standards achieved in GCSE in the last 3 years were above the national average and, in 2000, were well above average for similar schools. Targets for the percentage of pupils reaching the national levels have been met and a scrutiny of students' work shows that standards for the large majority of pupils reflect these results. Standards in English, mathematics, science, geography, drama and art are above average by the age of sixteen, but in design and technology, modern languages, history, and music there is some underachievement.

In the sixth form, students make good progress and achieve well. The sixth form annexe shows that provision and standards are generally good. Most students' results show that there is good added value as they pass through the school. The average points score at GCE A level have been well below the national average, often reflecting the prior attainment of the students, but provisional results for 2001 indicate good improvement in students' scores.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	The very large majority of pupils and students have very good attitudes. They are proud of their school, work very hard and generally care well for their school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	The behaviour of most pupils and students is good. They understand the difference between right and wrong.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils and students show responsibility and take initiative. They collaborate well and have good relationships with teachers and each other.
Attendance	Good. Last year, authorised absence was lower than and unauthorised absences in line with, the average for secondary schools nationally.

The overall attitudes, behaviour and strength of relationships contribute extensively to the working and achieving ethos of the school. Most pupils and students respond very well to the high expectations made of them. They enjoy school, appreciating and taking good advantage of the opportunities provided. Many make good contributions to the overall life of the school. A small minority do not respond positively and they can disrupt learning.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of students:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years	aged 16-18 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good	Very good

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

The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection and is a strength of the school. There is a significant proportion of good teaching and, occasionally, very good teaching. In a minority of lessons there is unsatisfactory teaching. The teaching of English, mathematics and science is good, overall. Teaching of literacy and numeracy across other subjects is satisfactory. Support for the individual needs of students, including those identified as having special educational needs and the gifted and talented, needs further development. The needs of pupils with English as an additional language are generally met. The teaching has a positive impact on most pupils' and students' learning and leads to their good progress and subsequent standards. In the best lessons, teachers enthuse their students, reflecting the high expectations and stimulating challenge, to which students willingly respond. The scrutiny of students' work shows that there is a good standard in teaching over time.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	There is satisfactory breadth and balance. Provision for extracurricular activities is very good.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Unsatisfactory. Statutory requirements are met but there are shortcomings in the overall provision, which limit the efficiency of the support given.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	Good. These students make good progress and they achieve standards in keeping with their peers.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good provision is made for all aspects of students' personal development. A particular strength is the provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
How well the school cares for its students	The overall welfare is very good and is a strength of the school. Approaches to assessment are good, but there is some inconsistency in the use of assessment to support planning.

The curriculum generally meets the needs of the pupils. The additional provision at Key Stage 4 of a reduced curriculum provides satisfactorily for a minority of students but work-related opportunities are limited. There are issues relating to educational inclusion, because work set in lessons does not always meet the differing needs of students. Whilst the opportunities for students' personal development are very good, overall, even further improvement can be made in developing the provision for independent learning. There is a very distinctive partnership with parents and links with the Catholic and wider community enrich the curriculum.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the head teacher and other key staff	The headteacher gives clear direction and ensures that all members of the community are well cared for. He has an effective partnership with the deputy headteacher and there is sound support given by senior staff and middle managers.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors provide good support. They fulfil their statutory duties except in meeting the requirements for the teaching of information and communication technology.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. There is monitoring of teaching and learning and the analysis of test results, but data outcomes are not used consistently to set targets for whole school and for individual students.
The strategic use of resources	Good use is made of financial resources and planning is satisfactory. The school gives good value for money.

The high expectations of the headteacher have been a major factor in the creation of the school's ethos and in maintaining its standards and enhancing the opportunities for its students. The management of whole school initiatives is not carried out with sufficient rigour and this is limiting the pace of change and improvement. By addressing this shortcoming the school has the potential for further improvement. As in many schools there have been some difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff, but, overall, there are sufficient experienced staff to teach the curriculum. The accommodation is generally very good, although a minority of lessons have to be taught in non-specialist accommodation, which has an adverse effect on the teaching and subsequent standards. Resources are satisfactory, but there are limitations in computing, design and technology and music.

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 high expectations set in a Catholic ethos. • The standards and progress being achieved by their children. • The standards of behaviour. • How well the school cares for its students. • The good attitudes, values and beliefs being promoted and achieved by the school. • The good quality of teaching. • Very good extracurricular activities. • How the school works closely with parents and is very approachable. • The leadership and management. • That their children like school. 	In both the questionnaire and at the parents' meeting, no significant issues arose.

Inspectors generally agree with the points that please parents most.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form of this comprehensive school has 141 students. In the previous academic year, there were 163 students on roll, which is in line with other sixth forms. Approximately half of the Year 11 students stay on into the sixth form and a minority join from other schools. Most of the remainder continue in education and training. Students come from a range of ethnic backgrounds, reflecting the Catholic community the school serves. Eighteen students are identified as having special educational needs. The curriculum provides a range of GCE AS and A level courses, and some AVCE courses, intermediate GNVQ courses and repeat GCSE classes.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

Public examination results in year 2000 show that the students achieve well in relation to prior attainment. Teaching and learning are good, as is the level of support and guidance. Students have very positive attitudes to their studies and clearly appreciate the opportunities provided for them. The sixth form is well led and procedures for monitoring academic progress have the potential to bring about further improvement. The sixth form is cost effective and provides adequate post-16 education.

Strengths

- There are high standards, particularly in mathematics, geography, business studies, and theatre studies.
- Achievement is good in relation to prior attainment.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Students have very positive attitudes, behaviour and relationships and have good opinions of the school.
- Curriculum needs are well met.
- Students receive good academic and personal support and guidance.

What could be improved

- Standards, overall, and particularly in biology and design and technology.
- The better use of assessment data.
- The monitoring of teaching and learning.
- Opportunities for independent learning.

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, but the range taught was sampled. The quality of teaching and standards being achieved were consistently good, although there are weaknesses in biology and design technology.

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Very good. Standards are well above average. The very good teaching and learning result from a very well led and managed department.
Chemistry	Good. Results are above average and show recent improvement. Most students achieve in line with their prior attainment. Teaching is very good because of the teachers' very strong subject knowledge and well planned lessons.
Biology	Unsatisfactory. Standards are below average and whilst the overall quality of teaching is satisfactory it is not challenging enough to provide an effective learning environment.

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Business	Good. Standards and teaching in the vocational and non-vocational courses are good. Students benefit from their experiences and show good independent learning skills.
Theatre Studies	Very good. Standards are above average and reflect the very good quality of teaching and learning provision.
Geography	Very good. Standards are well above average and students achieve well for their prior attainment. Teaching is very good and supports learning very well.
History	Good. Although there are relatively few candidates, standards are high Teachers have very good subject knowledge and teaching is consistently good, supporting student learning very well.
English	Good. Standards are average, but the teaching is good and students achieve well. There is a very good learning atmosphere being created by the new staff.
French	Good. Standards in Year 13 are above average and reflect the good teaching and learning provision.

Key skills are taught effectively, with communication skills being taught through the compulsory religious education course.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Students receive good information and advice about courses. Individual support is provided through mentoring by tutors. Effective guidance on careers and higher education courses is provided. There are very good procedures for monitoring and improving attendance.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	The leadership team have begun to address the need to raise standards and are committed to monitoring academic performance and providing good support for all students. The curriculum and study time are closely directed but independent learning is under-developed. The leadership and management reflect the school's aims and values well.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is good information about courses. • The curriculum offers a good choice of subjects. • There is good teaching and assessment. • Teachers are accessible for help. • There is good academic support. • They enjoy the sixth form, and would recommend it. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some feel that the school should listen more to their views. • Some would like more support and help with personal problems. • More advice about future options is needed. • They would like a greater range of activities and enrichments.

There was a very good return to the questionnaire. Most students were positive about the sixth form. Those interviewed by inspectors were very positive and contradicted some of the views expressed in the questionnaire. For example, Year 13 students felt they were given good guidance about future options. Students feel they are encouraged to do well in the sixth form and teachers are very approachable. Many would like more activities, although quite a full programme is provided. The advent of AS courses has eroded the time available for enrichment activities.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Standards on entry show the full range of achievement at Key Stage 2, when pupils are aged 11. A significant proportion enter the school with standards that are below average and the proportion of the students identified as having special educational needs is above average. In the National Curriculum tests for 14 year olds in 2000, results were in line with the national average in English, although when compared with results from similar schools, standards were above average. In mathematics, results were close to the national average for the percentage of pupils achieving expectations for their age and above average for those achieving the higher level. Performance was above that of similar schools. In science, results were average and above average when compared to similar schools. These results show that the pupils are making good progress and achieve well. Targets were broadly met. There was no difference between the performance of boys and girls in English, but girls did better in mathematics and science. In relation to ethnic heritage there are no significant differences. When taking all core subjects together, results were average in comparison with all schools nationally and well above average in relation to similar schools.
2. Results in GCSE examinations for 5 passes at A*-C in 2000 were above average and at A*-G were below the national average. The average points score was above the average and has been for the last four years. In comparison with similar schools based on free school meals, results were well above average. A significant number of students are achieving better than would be expected for their prior attainment and the trend for improvement is in line with the national trend. The targets for this year group were broadly met. No comparisons can be made for results in 2001 until national statistics are published, but provisional results are close to those achieved in 2000.
3. From inspection evidence, standards for Year 9 are above average in English, mathematics, science, geography and drama. They are average in art, history, modern languages, music and physical education. They are below average for information and communication technology and design technology. Standards are above average by the age of sixteen in English, mathematics, science, art, drama, and geography. Standards are average in design technology, music, physical education and business education. Standards are below average in history, information communication technology and modern languages. Judgements on standards in religious education will be made in the Section 23 report from the Diocese.
4. Standards in literacy are average, overall. Whilst teachers of English are instrumental in teaching literacy, most subjects make a contribution by displaying subject specific words, highlighting correct spelling and giving pupils opportunities to talk both formally and informally in lessons. Practice is not consistent across the school, however, and pupils' progress is only satisfactory, because not all teachers tackle the teaching of literacy skills systematically. Particularly effective work occurs in drama, geography and science. Whilst pupils who are particularly gifted in English are not formally identified, there are good opportunities for those who have a flair for the subject to be recognised.
5. Standards in numeracy are at least satisfactory for most pupils by the end of Year11, although there is no effective, whole school provision for the teaching of numeracy in the schemes of work in all departments. Progress is being made but a number of opportunities in departments for enhanced learning by pupils are missed. In dealing with the everyday demands of numeracy the level of competence of pupils is good in geography and mathematics and satisfactory in design and technology. All pupils use calculators accurately for arithmetical calculations. Spatial development is satisfactory in art through work in three dimensions. Interpretation of graphs is good in geography and mathematics and satisfactory in history and science.
6. Information and communication technology is taught mainly as a cross-curricular subject. Opportunities are taken, but the integration into subjects is unsatisfactory and standards are below average, overall. Word-processing, data handling, graph conversions occur, but it is in the

knowledge and understanding of applications that standards suffer. There is inadequate development of control technology and sensing. There are no programs to develop numeracy skills. The lack of subject specific programs for some subjects on the network are the main reasons for the under use of information communication technology by all.

7. Pupils identified as having special educational needs make satisfactory progress. Statemented pupils receive appropriate support when withdrawn from lessons and their progress can be good. When in mainstream classes, pupils' progress is inconsistent and often unsatisfactory, because insufficient attention is paid to their individual education plans and teachers do not consistently set work that meets their differing needs. This leads to an element of underachievement and insufficient consideration of educational inclusion. For example, a significant number of pupils with learning difficulties are supported through commercially produced worksheets which are not always the most appropriate way of explaining a concept or introducing a new idea. The minority of students who have English as an additional language make satisfactory progress and, overall, achieve well. Overall, the majority of students achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. The achievement for students who are gifted and talented is satisfactory and improves in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form.

Sixth form

8. Because of the school's geographical location there is considerable competition and opportunity for post-16 education. A significant proportion of students take advantage of this provision to pursue academic and vocational courses. The prior attainment of students on entry is very wide. The majority achieve well, although the average points score for GCE A level in 2000 was well below average. No judgements can be made as to the standards of AS examinations taken for the first time in the summer of this year until national comparisons are published. No national comparison is made with similar schools because of the diversity of post-16 education. There has been little change in overall standards since the last inspection. Good results have been achieved in some subjects, as for example, in English literature, geography, science, mathematics and in the vocational courses of business studies. Because of the size and gender make up of some groups, comparisons by gender and ethnicity are unreliable.
9. In the sixth form, 9 subjects were inspected at depth and many other subjects sampled. Standards are well above average in mathematics and geography and above average in chemistry, French, theatre studies and business studies and average in English, biology and history. Standards are average in all other subjects sampled. Standards in literacy develop well and most students are articulate and numerate. Students undertaking vocational courses have good opportunities to develop key skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT, and they achieve well. In other subjects, standards in this key skill and the opportunities to apply ICT are underdeveloped.
10. Overall, standards show that the attitudes and behaviour of a significant proportion of pupils and students makes a positive contribution to the progress that they make. Achievement is supported by the expectations and ethos of the school.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

11. St James' is characterised by its Catholic ethos, which underpins all that it undertakes. It is an orderly community in which each member is valued for their contribution and in which pupils appreciate the help and support that are provided. Pupils' attitudes were identified as a strength of the school at the time of the previous inspection and remain very good. Parents and pupils speak very positively of attitudes to school that have a positive impact on standards of achievement. Pupils come to school expecting to learn and to make good progress. They are interested in their work, especially when lessons are purposeful and the quality of teaching is good. Their level of involvement in the general life of the school, Masses and extra-curricular activities is very good. Pupils enjoy undertaking responsibilities within the school and are committed to fulfilling their roles, such as by serving on the School Council and raising funds for charities that they have nominated.
12. The majority of pupils have a good understanding of the school's rules and respect the fair way in which staff treat them. The standard of behaviour in lessons and around the school is usually

good. On occasions, a minority of pupils lose interest in their work or seek to disrupt the learning of others. During the previous year, there have been 125 fixed period exclusions and six permanent exclusions, involving 66 boys and 15 girls. Some of these exclusions relate to incidents, which have occurred whilst pupils are travelling to or from school. Students are usually courteous and trustworthy. Staff monitor movement around the school and in the dining hall, but pupils accept the constraints imposed by the accommodation and uncomplainingly queue in corridors and the hall for breakfast, break-time snacks and lunch. Whilst there is no evidence of graffiti or vandalism around the site, at the end of breaks and lunchtime there is a significant amount of litter which thoughtless pupils have dropped. In general, students behave well out of class and conform to the expected high standards of behaviour during the lunch break and when moving between lessons.

13. The quality of relationships throughout the school, between pupils and between pupils and all staff is good and, for a significant proportion of pupils, very good. Pupils generally have confidence in their teachers and feel comfortable about turning to them for support and guidance. Pupils work well together in lessons in pairs and groups, such as in a Year 7 netball lesson in which pupils were developing an understanding of the techniques and tactics involved in passing the ball. Pupils respect each other's feelings, values and beliefs very well. For example, when talking to a group of Year 11 pupils, they spoke very forcefully about the need to promote an inclusive society in which every member has the right to be treated equally, both socially and educationally. They believe that they should always be available for someone in need to turn to and strongly believe that they should listen to others and respect and value their views, even when they disagree with those views. At lunchtimes, there are examples of boisterous behaviour, but incidents of oppressive or aggressive behaviour are unusual. Pupils, staff and parents recognise that some bullying does take place, but there is no evidence of any systematic bullying and pupils are confident that any incidents are addressed quickly and effectively. They value the willingness of staff and 'buddies' to listen to them and provide support in resolving such issues and in seeking to reconcile relationship difficulties.
14. Pupils of all ages respond positively to opportunities to exercise responsibility. For example, Year 9 pupils have undertaken training as careers librarians to help support other pupils. Pupils take pride in serving on the school council and becoming involved in considering a diverse range of issues that affect the life of their school community. Pupils show initiative and maturity when carrying out these duties and when participating in extra-curricular activities such as sports and the Duke of Edinburgh Award. These provide good opportunities for their personal development and, when pupils are provided with the opportunity to develop as independent learners, they usually respond well. Overall, there are insufficient opportunities for them to develop confidence and take responsibility for their own learning.
15. Although attendance levels are not as high as those reported at the time of the previous inspection, punctuality has improved. In 1999/2000, the most recent year for which national average figures are available, overall attendance of pupils up to the age of 16 was above the national average, whilst authorised absence was below and unauthorised absence was broadly in line. The significant majority of pupils are punctual at the start of sessions and to lessons throughout the day. The good or better levels of attendance of the significant majority of pupils have a positive effect upon their learning and achievement.

Sixth form

16. Students' very good attitudes to school, their very good behaviour, very good relationships and very good attendance are significant strengths of the sixth form and make very positive contributions to the progress which students make.
17. Students have very good attitudes to school and speak positively of the sixth form and the curriculum choices that are offered. They are focused on their work and sustain concentration very well, persevering to understand and apply concepts that they find difficult. Generally they would recommend the sixth form at St James. Students take their responsibility to play an active role in the school community very seriously, setting an example in their work, behaviour and faith to younger pupils and in supporting them.

18. Very good relationships benefit collaborative working and students are able to organise themselves well, developing ideas and deepening their understanding. Relationships are very good and students relate very well to all adults working in the school. They value the support and encouragement of staff and students and appreciate the work of all staff.
19. Sixth formers' behaviour is very good and they take great care of the facilities, which are provided. They work well in the sixth form study areas, although some feel that they would like to be treated more like adults and not always supervised so closely. The very good relationships in the sixth form generally ensure that there is no oppressive behaviour, although it is recognised by some sixth formers that, occasionally, what is intended as good natured banter can be unintentionally hurtful. Sixth formers are, however, generally very sensitive to each other's feelings.
20. Opportunities for students to develop skills as independent learners are limited but, when the opportunities are provided, students show initiative and generally respond well. They develop well as individuals within the strong Catholic, caring ethos of the school and respond very well to the very good role models provided by staff. Students are sensitive to each other and have a very good understanding of the needs of those who are less fortunate or have been the victims of a disaster. Students seek to provide support and comfort in such cases through prayer and through charitable giving.
21. In discussions with current sixth form students, it was clear that they have good opinions of the sixth form and are very proud to be identified with St James Catholic High School. Many students responded to a pre-inspection questionnaire and expressed very positive views about the quality of teaching and the accessibility of teachers to provide academic help and advice. They like the choice of subjects offered within the curriculum and enjoy the sixth form. However, a minority of those responding expressed concerns about some elements of the provision, such as the advice available to inform them about future options and the support available to help them resolve personal problems. Formal and informal discussions with students indicated that they are generally pleased with the support and advice which they receive if they approach staff about personal problems and lower sixth form students have found staff very supportive in helping them to adjust to the different learning styles experienced in the sixth form and the greater independence and self reliance which are expected of them in their sixth form studies. Inspectors found that the quality of impartial advice available to students in considering their future options is good and that staff are very accessible to listen to students and to help them resolve any problems.
22. In summary, the good standards of attitudes, behaviour and relationships of the majority of students and pupils from a wide range of ethnic heritage, have a positive effect on both attainment and progress.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

23. Teaching effectively promotes the good progress of the large majority of pupils and enables many to achieve well. Overall, teaching is good and a strength of the school. Teaching has improved since the previous inspection and, in Years 7-11, there is now more good and very good teaching. There remains a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching. Teaching is least satisfactory in 95 per cent of lessons; good in 42 per cent and very good in 18 per cent of lessons and excellent in 3 per cent. It is unsatisfactory in 5 per cent of lessons. Almost all parents who returned the questionnaire were pleased with the quality of teaching. There is consistently good teaching and, whilst the percentage of satisfactory teaching is similar between Years 7-9 and 10-11, there is slightly more good and very good teaching in Years 10 and 11. Evidence from pupils' work shows that teaching is consistently of a good standard in most subjects, although there are shortcomings in design technology, modern foreign languages and music.
24. The very large majority of teachers have high expectations, providing a stimulating challenge, to which students willingly respond. Teachers' subject knowledge is generally good and they use this well to provide challenging tasks to stimulate and motivate pupils. For example, in year 11 geography, the teacher provided a very good challenge that extended pupils' knowledge and

understanding. In a Year 8 art class, pupils were helped to tease out key features on perspective. The teacher provided the opportunity for pupils to work in groups and feedback the key features and, through skilful questioning, pupils made good progress. Lessons are generally well planned. Teachers are clear about their learning objectives and share them with students. Just occasionally, this is not done clearly enough. Most lessons have good introduction and summary sessions.

25. The majority of teachers manage and organise their classes well. Good use is made of time and lessons are conducted at a brisk pace. Relationships and class management are good, overall, as is the quality of relationships, which has a marked effect on the learning process. In the majority of lessons, teachers spend time checking for the levels of understanding through purposeful questioning. There are inconsistencies in marking among teachers and departments. Many teachers write constructive comments to identify strengths and areas for improvement, but, in some cases, there can be cursory ticks. Homework is set, sometimes to extend work done in class as well as used to extend students' learning. Teachers make generally good use of resources, for example, in geography, science and mathematics, but computers are not used sufficiently, especially as the development of pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding rely on a cross-curricular teaching.
26. The teaching of English, mathematics and science is predominantly good and leads to the good standards which are achieved. Teaching in English covers all aspects of speaking and listening, reading a stimulating range of texts and writing for a very wide range of purposes. In good teaching in Year 8 English, teachers challenge pupils well through effective questioning. In a year 9 mathematics lessons, a good example was seen of data handling when students are involved in calculating, interpreting and graphically representing the work to deepen their understanding. Teaching of literacy and numeracy is satisfactory, with some good examples in science, history and geography, but, overall, these key skills are not well monitored and evaluated to raise standards. Teachers in the Curriculum Access and Support Team (CAST) support pupils with special educational needs both in class and in small groups. Teaching, overall, is satisfactory, with some unsatisfactory teaching observed. Teaching is good, for example a session in the library where the teacher had prepared different materials designed to interest and motivate the pupils who remained on task throughout the lesson. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, there is no lesson planning, materials do not meet differing needs and pupils wait idly for their teacher's attention. The CAST team have introduced a range of provision, including before-school support for reading. However, the provision is unsatisfactory, because there are inconsistencies in both the writing and the use of IEPs by main stream class teachers. The learning support assistants provide appropriate support to individual and small groups of pupils. A significant number of pupils with learning difficulties are supported through commercially produced worksheets which are not always the most appropriate way of explaining a concept or introducing a new idea. The use of ICT to support pupils with SEN is underdeveloped in many subjects.
27. Where mainstream class teaching has shortcomings, the teachers do not build in enough opportunities for pupils to think for themselves and to increase their active engagement in the learning process, for example in design technology, music and science. Teachers fail to make use of pupils' enthusiasm and the pace in these lessons is too slow. Pupils do not have a clear understanding of the work and they can become restless and misbehave. Teachers do not always give pupils well-focused and rigorous feedback, as in some Year 10 and 11 lessons and progress is hampered because pupils are not sure of how to improve their work. In some lessons in history, music and French, the work set does not meet the differing needs of the pupils and teachers' expectations are too low.

Sixth form

28. Teaching and learning are good. Teaching was good or better in about three quarters of the 48 lessons observed and very good or better in over 40 percent, although each lesson seen represents over two per cent. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. This is reflected in the way that students learn: their acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding is very good. Although independent learning is underdeveloped, students show considerable interest in their

work, with good concentration and effort. Teachers have high expectations of them and most students respond accordingly.

29. Teaching is characterised by good planning and effective methods. There is a good pace to lessons, such that time and resources are used well. Students have a clear picture of lesson objectives; teachers ensure that they remain focused on these. Teachers generally have good subject knowledge, which has considerable effect on students' learning, especially when it is linked with appropriate tasks and effective resources, as seen in mathematics. In geography, teachers effectively draw on work-related experience from outside the classroom, helping students to do the same from their more limited experience. Theatre studies teachers know the examination texts very well and help students discover a variety of ways in which they can be interpreted. The enthusiasm of history teachers is caught by their students. Skills are acquired which are transferable to other subjects and to the workplace. In English, teachers use their expert knowledge to ask probing questions as well as to explain the finer points of a text. They make good use of technical language, characteristic of the high expectations they have in wanting to stretch their students. Teachers of French also use questioning to good effect, but in chemistry there were some lessons in which questions could have been used more effectively to help students link ideas together more clearly. The better lessons, in chemistry as in other subjects, were often those that employed a variety of activities and proceeded at a brisk pace. Good lessons also give students guidance on how to organise their work and consolidate their learning. Good examples occur of independent learning, for example, in business studies and vocational courses, where students undertake research and use computers well, but, overall, opportunities are missed. Where there are shortcomings, lessons are teacher dominated, with insufficient opportunities to assess whether or not students had fully understood the work.
30. The teaching of key skills has been introduced and some teachers are very aware of the cross-curricular dimension of this. For instance, some of the geography students were helped by a mathematics lesson that referred to a textbook on statistics. The use of number is also given due accord in humanities subjects, for example in history, where statistical information is used to explain social and economic trends. Communication skills are taught by an imaginative approach, through the compulsory religious education programme. This helps counterbalance the relative lack of opportunities in some science lessons to develop writing skills. However, there are insufficient opportunities for students here to develop computer skills in most subjects, through the under-provision of information communication technology.
31. Homework is used well and work is marked thoroughly. In a few cases, notably in biology, incomplete homework is tolerated and students are allowed to move on without the necessary groundwork being completed. Most teachers are extremely vigilant and not only mark homework, but also keep a weather eye on students' notes. Theatre studies teachers, for instance, take in students' folders and evaluate the organisation and quality of the notes students are keeping. Students are served well by teachers' marking in general. English teachers, for example, have very good procedures for marking and assessing against examination criteria; they enter into a dialogue with students about their work and how they can improve.

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

32. The curriculum is broad and balanced in both Key Stages 3 and 4 and National Curriculum requirements are met, except for information and communication technology (ICT). ICT shares time with French in Year 7 and drama in Year 9 and this is the only ICT taught as a discrete subject; elsewhere, provision – as for other basic skills – is expected to be through the teaching of other subjects and the coverage is underdeveloped. All pupils study French in Key Stage 3 and have the opportunity to take German instead in Key Stage 4. A small number of pupils – about 30 – have a reduced curriculum, not taking a modern foreign language and taking a single rather than double science. They study more ICT, mathematics and English in the time made available. The opportunities for vocational subjects or a work-related curriculum have yet to be developed. Overall, there is equality of access and opportunity for all pupils within the curriculum and extracurricular activities provided. Educational inclusion is satisfactory. The provision for pupils with special educational needs and the gifted and talented, is satisfactory,

although the school recognises that it needs to develop further the strategies within lessons to meet the differing needs of these pupils. Since the last inspection, the provision for ICT and for special educational needs has not progressed sufficiently.

33. Personal and social education, taught by form tutors, is provided under a rolling programme, with two different periods being set aside each fortnight. The programme is good and includes citizenship, drugs and sex education, as well as providing careers education from Year 8 onwards. Careers education is good and provides impartial advice on opportunities for work and further education. Advice on option choices at the end of Year 9 is good. In Year 10, pupils are involved in a range of activities, such as a careers convention and meeting visitors from a range of career fields. All pupils in Year 10 are able to undertake two weeks work experience, which gives them a valuable insight into the working world and the role of education in making opportunities available. The Careers Service provider gives good support and all pupils can have an individual interview with a careers adviser and take psychometric tests, which provide a matching of identified aptitudes with possible careers. The support addresses the needs of pupils and actively engages them in taking responsibility for action planning and making informed choices. Very good use is made of links with the community and with other schools, for example, through visits, visitors and work experience, which make a good contribution to pupils' learning. There are visits from the primary schools which feed St James' and with other providers of post-16 education.
34. Provision for extra-curricular activities is very good. Pupils can participate in a range of sports and other activities at lunchtimes and after school. There are clubs for drama, art and music, debating and public speaking and also opportunities for community service and fund-raising for charities. Sporting fixtures with other schools are good. School visits – both day trips and residential – enrich the curriculum and contribute to the personal and social development of pupils. Many activities are well supported, although transport provision limits pupils' opportunities.
35. The provision for pupils' and students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good, and has been well maintained since the last inspection. Final judgements on the spiritual and moral development will be made by inspectors from the Diocese. In many aspects of the curriculum, opportunities for spiritual development are very good and fully consistent with the ethos and mission statement. In English, for example, work on Shakespeare and John Donne allows for sensitive reflection on human mortality. In history, geography, art, science and drama opportunities are taken to consider values and beliefs as well as the awe and wonder of life. Provision for moral development is also very good. Behaviour policies are clear, home-school agreements are used and there is an effective system of commendations and merits. Across the curriculum, moral concepts are linked well with the spiritual dimension. For example, inequalities between peoples of the world are considered in geography, as are the effects of AIDS, population growth and migration.
36. There is very good provision for social development. Social issues are dealt with in English, geography, and personal and social education amongst other subjects. School visits, particularly those of a residential nature, make a vital contribution to this aspect of personal development, as does participation in school productions and in school teams. Pupils have the opportunity to serve on the school council and to help younger pupils as 'buddies'. Serving the community both locally and further afield features strongly in the school. Pupils show understanding and consideration for the needs of others, which is developed through their support of charities. These are selected by classes and have involved pupils in fund raising activities to support Catholic charities and those such as Cancer Research. Pupils have the opportunity to access opportunities within the London area, for example, The National Debating Society.
37. Provision for cultural development is good. Not only is the cultural heritage of the pupils taken into account, but also multicultural awareness. This is achieved through art, drama, music, geography, history and English. Displays – especially in the learning resource centre – highlight this element of development. There are opportunities, through international evenings and cultural diversity weeks, to celebrate the different cultures within society.

Sixth form

38. The curriculum is broad and balanced, with a good range of AS and A2 courses available to all students. These include physical education, law, sociology, and government and politics, as well as advanced courses in subjects that were offered for GCSE. There are vocational courses in business, travel and tourism and leisure and tourism. Students can take either AS level subjects or a combination of AS and vocational courses. Students also study key skills. Some of these are taught through other subjects; for instance, communication skills are taught as part of the compulsory religious education course. Year 12 students have an afternoon a week for recreational activities and games; some are able to take the Community Sports Leadership Award. It is possible for some students to take courses at other local institutions, although this does not happen on a large scale. There is a good programme of guidance about careers and higher education, linked to the extensive mentoring work done by group tutors.
39. Sixth formers participate fully in the range of extra-curricular activities that the school provides. There are opportunities for them to take positions of leadership and responsibility: in the sixth form concert, the 'buddy' and student support schemes, in public speaking and debates, in community service and in raising funds for charity. Opportunities to develop independent learning skills are limited. Private study is supervised and this limits the development of study skills and responsibility for working and discussing in groups.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

40. The overall quality of care is very good. Pupils and students are very well known by staff. This is typified by the way in which the Headteacher stood outside and, by name, wished pupils a good half term, referring to their work or family. Staff are very effective in promoting good and often very good standards of discipline and behaviour. Staff expect high standards of all pupils in their work and their attitudes, having a very good understanding of pupils' personal development and a good understanding of their academic progress, although there are some inconsistencies.
41. The procedures for assessing pupils' attainment are good. The assessment coordinator provides all teaching staff with a considerable amount of data about pupils' standards of attainment. The data is effectively used to predict future performance and there is some good practice in using it to monitor and support progress. For example, in English and mathematics, teachers responded to assessment outcomes by amending the scheme of work and changing the emphasis in their teaching. This practice of using the assessment data to improve pupil performance is inconsistent and requires further development by senior staff by monitoring the work of all departments to fully support pupils' achievement. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their learning and individual targets set by staff, together with those set by pupils, are regularly recorded and shared with parents. When these targets are monitored and reviewed to ensure that they are realistic, progress towards achieving them is often good, but when targets are not fully informed by assessment data, they are less successful.
42. Pupils' special educational needs are appropriately identified, beginning with links with the pupils' former primary schools. Each pupil is tested at the beginning of year 7 and reading recovery programmes are put in place. These support pupils' progress. Parents are invited and attend the annual review of their children's statements, and statutory requirements are met in this context. However, it is not always clear how support is allocated to pupils with statements, as in the sample of statements scrutinised there is a discrepancy in the provision outlined and that observed. A number of pupils have more support than is outlined in the statement. Individual Education Plans (IEPs) are written by the Curriculum Access and Support Team (CAST). However, the quality of these is inconsistent. Some targets are not specific enough to measure pupils' progress. Although the IEPs are circulated across all the year groups, use of the plans by teachers to inform lesson planning is inconsistent. Progress since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory in this work.
43. The pastoral care and support of pupils continues to be a significant strength since the previous inspection. Pupils join the school from many primary schools and induction procedures provide effectively for their entry to Year 7. There is a very caring and supportive community, comprising pupils, staff, parents and the Church. Teachers and staff, in particular the Headteacher, provide

very good role models. The school has a very strong Catholic ethos underpinned by its mission statement, taken from the gospel of St John: "*I have come that they may have life and have it to the full.*" Pupils are confident that they can approach staff with any problems and feel that they are well supported. The support of teachers is enhanced by that provided by the students' services staff and all adults working in the school. There are very close links between the monitoring of personal development, attitudes and academic progress within a structured system that supports staff very well in fulfilling their pastoral roles. The good links between tutors, heads of year, departments and members of the senior management team, combined with good personal and academic support and guidance, allow pupils to benefit from the educational opportunities offered.

44. The school's ethos and the high expectations are usually successful in promoting good behaviour in and around the school. The procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are very effective. Procedures to counter oppressive behaviour/bullying are generally consistently applied by staff and well understood by pupils. Staff work closely with parents and pupils to provide support through a range of appropriate strategies when the expected standards of behaviour are not met. For example, pupils returning after a temporary period of exclusion are seen by a senior member of staff and reminded of the expectations and the support that is available. Pupils value the rewards, such as merits and commendation certificates, which they may earn and recognise that sanctions are applied fairly. Good personal relationships are promoted well, engaging pupils in their learning and providing opportunities for collaboration within the classroom and through activities.
45. There are very good procedures to monitor and promote good attendance and punctuality. The opportunity has been taken to involve the school in a project to raise attendance levels of targeted pupils with identified attendance or punctuality problems. Computerised attendance records are maintained and attendance patterns are carefully analysed and linked to pupils' progress. Parents are made aware that holidays should not be taken during term time and these are not authorised. They are contacted by the second day if no explanation has been received for an absence. In those cases where concerns are identified, staff seek to work with parents and outside agencies to address them.
46. Child protection arrangements are good and the school uses the local area child protection procedures that fully comply with requirements. The headteacher is responsible for child protection and is very ably supported in this role by the deputy headteacher. Both have undertaken full training and all staff are aware of the procedures to be followed in the event of a disclosure. The school is vigilant and sensitive in exercising its responsibilities and acting in the best interests of pupils. There are well-established liaison arrangements with outside agencies.
47. The health and safety policy is satisfactory and safe practices are promoted by teachers in lessons. Equipment and appliances are regularly tested and there is a good awareness of safety. Departments conduct and record risk assessments, but the completion of whole school risk assessments is underdeveloped. The senior member of staff with responsibility for health and safety has not undertaken any formal training and does not have the necessary records to enable him to co-ordinate this area of work. The arrangements for providing first aid during the day are good. Whilst a large number of staff and pupils hold basic first aid qualifications, there are, currently, only two fully qualified first aiders. First aid boxes are readily accessible throughout the school and meet requirements. Accidents are properly recorded. Issues relating to pupil movement, referred to in the previous inspection report, have been addressed well and most movement in and around the school is orderly. The school takes care in the management of the departure of pupils at the end of the school day.

Sixth form

Assessment

48. The procedures for assessing students' academic progress are good. Since the last inspection, there has been a marked increase in the use of information and communication technology by management to record and access information. Records and documentation are now very thorough – information on students' prior attainment is used effectively to challenge and direct

them. Although not all departments use the available data in a consistent way, it is at their disposal. It supplements what class teachers learn from their own marking and assessment. Students feel they have a clear picture of their current performance. The mentoring system provided by tutors focuses on targets and this supports students' progress. Now that AS and A2 courses are fully in place, it has become even more important for students to be guided carefully throughout their time in the sixth form. This is evidently happening.

Advice, support and guidance

49. Procedures for monitoring and supporting students' progress are good. There is an effective tutorial system in the sixth form: tutorial time is used for mentoring students and giving general guidance. A tutor was observed, in one tutorial period, helping a student draft a personal statement for their university application form. Assistant tutors are used to release the group tutors to work with individuals on occasions. Teamwork is regarded as important: the head of sixth form and his assistant work closely with the tutors. Data on students' prior attainment are made available to teachers and effectively used to help guide students and set them realistic targets.
50. The students themselves speak well of the system. They are given guidance about their subject choices before entering the sixth form, although some are reluctant to accept that their preferences might be unsuitable, given their GCSE results. This problem is compounded by the insistence of a few parents that their son or daughter should follow a particular course, often science-related. Guidance about careers and higher education is good. It begins much earlier in their school life and becomes very focused in the sixth form. External bodies are used, including speakers from universities and local businesses. The latter have assisted in developing interview skills by working with the students. There are higher education and careers fairs and other speakers come in to talk about gap years or post-18 funding. The school is looking forward to becoming more involved with the new *Connexions* programme.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

51. The partnership with parents is very good, as was the case at the time of the previous inspection in 1997. Parents are generally more positive than they were in 1997 and are very pleased with the school and what it provides. The school is very effective in involving them in its work and life for the benefit of pupils. This includes the signing of planners, consultation evenings, extracurricular events and parish events. The partnership is reinforced by a home/school agreement and sharing of pupils' successes as well as involving parents at an early stage in the event of any concerns.
52. Parents are generally provided with good information about pupils' progress and attainment in the annual report, which they may discuss with staff. Occasionally, reports fail to identify targets that could help parents to understand what their children have to do to move to the next stage of their learning. This reflects the inconsistency in the issue of assessment data and when stylised comments drawn from data banks are used in reports, which fail to reflect pupils as individuals. A very high percentage of parents attend the consultation evenings and those who do not attend are offered alternative arrangements. Staff are very accessible to parents. Other information about the life and work of the school is provided through specific letters, a very good school journal and prospectus, and through appropriate option choice documents for Years 9 and 11. .
53. Parents express very positive views of the school. They value its Catholic ethos and the strong leadership of the Headteacher. Parents are particularly positive about the partnership formed between school and home, the school's high expectations and the attitudes, values and beliefs that it promotes. Inspectors generally agree with the points that please parents most, although inspection evidence shows that there is some inconsistency in management that is limiting the pace of improvement.
54. Parents are generally very supportive of pupils' learning at school and at home and their wider activities. This is demonstrated by the regularity with which parents sign pupils' planners. A small but very hard working committee of parents runs The Friends of St James, who provide very good support for school activities, such as an international evening that celebrates the

diversity in music, foods and poetry of different nations. In addition they raise a large sum of money each year and have funded items such as the fitting of seat belts in the school minibuses, sports equipment for the PE department and a laser presentation to enhance the science curriculum. The support of parents is appreciated by pupils and staff and makes a positive contribution to the life of the school and to the resources and facilities available to pupils.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

55. The school's aims are encapsulated within the text from the Gospel of St John - "*I have come that they may have life and have it to the full.*" - and are being well met. There is a commitment to equality of opportunity and, in general, all pupils and students are effectively included. As judged at the last inspection, the headteacher leads the school very well. This has a significant impact on the distinctive and caring Catholic ethos of the school, in which every member of the school community is valued for their contribution. He is a very visible headteacher, supporting staff and pupils throughout the day and through many extracurricular events. In this he has the extensive support of the deputy headteacher. Both are very respected for their work.
56. Generally, the headteacher gives clear educational direction, evidenced by the success in establishing the school on the one site, to which it had just arrived at the time of the last inspection. Results and the quality of teaching have improved. Performance management is in place and this includes an element of monitoring of teaching. The management has some shortcomings in that the links between the senior staff and the middle managers are inconsistent. Many middle managers are operating well, but in implementation, monitoring and evaluating policies there is insufficient vision and rigour to raise standards, overall. For example, the monitoring of teaching and learning is inconsistent and the coordination of information and communication technology, literacy, numeracy and assessment varies across subjects. This limits the pace of change and improvement. Much hard work has gone into the leading of the Curriculum Access and Support Team by the special educational needs coordinator, who has introduced a range of provision including before school support for reading. However, the co-ordination of the provision is unsatisfactory because there are inconsistencies in both in the writing and the use of individual education plans. There are inconsistencies in the provision outlined in the statement and during the week of the inspection there were a significant number of pupils not accessing support whilst others were being taught by teachers in groups of two or three. The quality of special needs teaching is not formally monitored.
57. Whole school development planning extends over a one year period, with a three year overview. The plan is clearly written, to a common format and identifies how targets will be achieved and the required funding. However, success criteria are not clearly defined and the plan does not identify how progress will be monitored and evaluated. Priorities broadly correspond with the school's current needs, but are not always expressed in relation to raising standards of attainment, improving the learning environment, for example the sixth form areas, and providing opportunities to involve pupils more in their own learning. Parents' and pupils' views inform the school development plan. Pupils are consulted through the school council and parents' views are sought on a range of issues. In addition, other stakeholders' views are secured, for example, through the parishes with which St James has links and through organisations, such as the Rotary Club, which work with the school.
58. The responsibilities of the governing body, its committees and areas of delegated authority are clearly defined. Many of them fulfil their role as 'critical friends' very well. The governors provide good support and fulfil their statutory duties, except in ensuring that the school meets the requirements for the teaching of information and communication technology. Governors contribute to the planning process by maintaining a strategic overview and bringing to discussions a range of experience and expertise. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
59. Financial planning is sound, supporting the educational priorities that form the basis of development planning. The principles of best value are satisfactorily applied. Test and examination results are compared through use of national comparative data to assess value added. Getting the best value for money is well established for goods and services. For example, the careful consideration of ways in which further computers could be provided, taking

account not only of cost, but also of effectiveness. Following the recent departure of the bursar, the administration staff are being supported by the local education authority's finance staff. Whilst this arrangement is providing good management of the school's finances on a day-to-day basis, monitoring, control and the availability of strategic information are less readily accessible. No recent audit was available. Additional funds such as those allocated for initiatives to promote educational inclusion are used effectively and expenditure is closely monitored. Taking account of the context of the school and the level of attainment of pupils on entry, both at 11 and into the sixth form, the quality of teaching and education provided, the progress which pupils make, the standards which are currently being attained and the levels of expenditure, the value for money provided by the school is good.

60. There are sufficient appropriately qualified teachers to meet the demands of the curriculum. The school has had difficulties recently in recruiting and retaining teachers. Staffing difficulties, however, have had an adverse effect on pupils' progress in a range of subjects, but with an influx of new teachers at the beginning of this academic year the school is now fully staffed with a balance of gender, experience and expertise. Many staff have a strong commitment to the school. The learning support assistants have undertaken a range of training courses relating to behaviour and language acquisition. When observed in class they provided appropriate support to individual and small groups of pupils, although they are not always effectively deployed. The librarians provide good support for teachers and pupils. Good support is provided by technical staff in science, design technology, art and information and communication technology. The clerical and administrative staff and the premises manager provide effective support for the day-to-day running of the school. Professional development needs of the staff are identified appropriately and met with effective training. There is a comprehensive programme of induction for both newly qualified and other teachers taking up appointments. Teachers appreciate this effective support.
61. The accommodation is generally good and there has been further consolidation on the new site. Classrooms are spacious and all subject areas are suited. Particular strengths are the extensive science laboratories, the main teaching block and the music centre. The library provides good accommodation and is a welcoming study area for independent learning and research. Provision for pupils with physical disabilities are good, with lifts to access upper floors. The environment has been enhanced with the excellent display of pupils' work in corridors and classrooms, and by religious artefacts, which reflect the Christian ethos of the school. Although the area for food technology has recently been refurbished it is cramped and is unable to accommodate a whole class. The drama studio is small and arrangements for teaching some classes in the school hall are unsuitable because of interruption, having a negative effect on pupils' progress. The three temporary classrooms have some shortcomings and there is inadequate provision for dining and social areas, as well as for sixth form private study.
62. Resources are broadly adequate to support learning. Science is especially well resourced and money generated through the initial teaching training links with Middlesex University is channelled well into providing extra resources for the subject. The library is well resourced with a range of fiction and non-fiction books and is well used, in particular by the special educational needs department. The ratio of computers to pupils matches the national average. The three separate suites of computers make satisfactory central provision. Recently updated hardware has enabled subject specific software to be installed on the network to support learning. However, there is insufficient software in mathematics and programs to develop literacy and numeracy skills for pupils with special educational needs. The resources for the design and technology department are unsatisfactory. Equipment is dated; technical resources are poor and there is a lack of electrical power points. There is a shortfall in percussion instruments in music. The use of new technology to support management is good and the analysis of attendance records has been transferred to a computer system. Computers are used to maintain the school's financial records, to record pupils' personal details and for word processing. The school is beginning to use new technology for the recording of assessment data.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

63. The aims and values of the school are very clearly applied in the sixth form. The information in the sixth form prospectus is mirrored by what can be seen in action. The head of sixth form has been in post since May 2000 and has introduced a number of structural changes. Together with the assistant head of sixth form and the assistant headteacher with sixth form responsibility, they have identified standards in the sixth form as the key issue to be addressed. The priority to improve target setting for individual students and for tutors and departments to improve the use of this data, is recognised. The targets set in the school development plan reflect the concerns already raised by this exercise and include the need for further professional development of staff, the modification of schemes of work and the acquisition of new resources. It is too early to judge the effect of these changes on examination results.

Resources

64. There are sufficient teachers and support staff to match the demands of the curriculum, although support for the small number of students with special educational needs is limited. Teaching accommodation is mostly good, although the areas used for teaching theatre studies are barely adequate for the numbers now wishing to study the subject at an advanced level. The mobile classrooms used for some private study are not particularly conducive to work. Learning resources are generally satisfactory. The provision of information and communication technology is limited for both private study and in subjects across the curriculum.
65. The sixth form is cost effective. Some classes are very large, such as law, whilst others are quite small, particularly in A2 biology and history and in modern foreign languages. To some extent this is an inevitable consequence of the provision of a wide-ranging curriculum for post-16 students and of the decision to allow the students considerable latitude in their choices. Individual needs are recognised and it would be regrettable if subjects were not offered simply because of low numbers. Within this context, the school applies the principles of best value to the sixth form.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

The governors, headteacher and staff now need to raise standards in Key Stages 3 and 4, and in the sixth form, still further by ensuring that:

The roles of the governors and managers are improved by:

- revising their responsibilities to give further impetus to the strategic management of the school;
- more effective monitoring and evaluation to develop rigorous links with middle managers of subjects and with whole school responsibilities

Paragraphs 41, 56, 57, 58,59, 63, 71. 90, 101, 122, 156, 157,

The management of resources and staffing for students with special educational needs is improved so that:

- the deployment of staff,
- the quality of individual education plans,
- and the setting of work

are more effective to address the shortcomings in educational inclusion for these students.

Paragraphs 7, 26, 27, 32, 42, 86, 94, 100, 105, 108, 126, 130

In subject areas, address the shortcomings so that:

- The statutory requirements are met for, and better use is made of, information and communication technology
Paragraphs 6, 58, 84, 87, 107, 113, 115-122, 143, 146
- Standards are raised in, design technology, modern languages, history, music, and post 16 biology.
Paragraphs 3, 97-101, 109-114, 123-127, 129-131; 153-157;
- More opportunities are given to develop students' independent learning skills
Paragraphs 14, 19, 20, 27, 28,30, 64, 97, 113, 114, 122, 164, 165, 173, 183, 189
- Planning takes greater account of whole school approaches to develop literacy and numeracy.
Paragraphs 4, 5, 26, 56, 71, 87, 121, 134, 135,
- Assessment is consistently used.
Paragraphs 41,48, 52, 56, 63, 75, 90, 95, 101, 113, 115, 120, 131
- Accommodation for drama/theatre studies, and sixth form private study, is developed.
Paragraphs 61, 143, 171

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7-11	130
	Sixth form	48
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		35

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
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Years 7 – 11

Number	4	23	54	42	7	0	0
Percentage	3	18	42	32	5	0	0

Sixth form

Number	1	17	19	11	0	0	0
Percentage	2	35	40	23	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 the sixth form as each lesson represents more than two percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Y7-Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	908	141
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	164	0

Special educational needs

	Y7-Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	39	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	288	18

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	24

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	6
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	22

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.5
National comparative data	7.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.0
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
	2000	105	81	186

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	61	70	59
	Girls	67	58	54
	Total	128	128	113
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	69(79)	69(68)	61(59)
	National	69(79)	69(68)	61(59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	24(29)	42(36)	29(21)
	National	28(28)	42(38)	30(23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	54	65	51
	Girls	63	57	64
	Total	117	122	145
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	64(80)	66(61)	78(57)
	National	64(64)	66(64)	62(60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	30(37)	32(34)	31(28)
	National	31(31)	39(37)	29(28)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	70	96	166

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	28	60	64
	Girls	60	88	92
	Total	88	148	156
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	53(59)	89(94)	94(97)
	National	47.4(46.6)	90.6(90.9)	95.6(95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	43
	National	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	
	National	

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	56	54	110

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	11.8	12	11.9	2.6	3.2	2.9
National	17.7	18.6	18.2	2.6	2.9	2.7

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	13
	National	76.5

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	26
Black – African heritage	94
Black – other	23
Indian	17
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	3
White	770
Any other minority ethnic group	52

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	1	0
Black – African heritage	10	1
Black – other	9	0
Indian	1	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	102	5
Other minority ethnic groups	2	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	74.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	13.5

Education support staff: Y7-13

Total number of education support staff	4
Total aggregate hours worked per week	70

Deployment of teachers: Y7-13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	73.5
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Average teaching group size:

Key Stage 2	n/a
Key Stage 3	23.1
Key Stage 4	19.9

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/01
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	£
Total income	3,400,783
Total expenditure	3,550,784
Expenditure per pupil	3,335
Balance brought forward from previous year	73,970
Balance carried forward to next year	46,000

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	29.6
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	28.5

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	10
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1064
Number of questionnaires returned	162

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	70	26	3	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	57	35	4	1	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	51	41	4	1	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	47	42	8	1	1
The teaching is good.	55	41	1	1	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	48	36	8	1	5
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	74	20	4	1	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	80	19	1	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	59	32	4	1	2
The school is well led and managed.	73	23	1	0	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	62	33	2	1	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	57	34	3	1	5

Inspectors agree with the points that parents make and that the evidence confirms their views expressed in the table above and at the pre-inspection meeting.

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- Pupils achieve well in relation to their prior attainment.
- GCSE results are above average.
- Teaching is good.

Areas for improvement

- Pupils' knowledge of their own learning.
- Developing the use of computers.

66. At the end of the last academic year there were major staff changes in the department and it is to the school's credit that it persevered to find such a good teaching team for this year. Five of the eight subject teachers are new to the school this year and four of them are new to teaching in England. The other is in her first year of teaching. The department is working effectively to ensure that pupils make good progress.
67. Pupils enter the school with standards that are below average. In the National Curriculum tests for 14 year olds in 2000, results were in line with the national average, although, when compared with results from similar schools, standards were above the average. Results were better than in mathematics and science, when compared with all schools nationally. This means that the majority of pupils achieve well during their first three years. In 2001, nearly 10 per cent more pupils in the year group attained the average level than in 2000. The attainment gap between boys and girls was similar to the national picture, with girls outperforming boys. In the GCSE results in 2000, the proportion of pupils achieving an A*-C grade was above the average, as was the percentage of pupils attaining a grade G or higher. More girls than boys, achieve a grade C or better, which reflects the national picture. The 2001 English GCSE results saw an increase in the percentage of pupils gaining at least a C grade or better. In the English literature GCSE examination in 2000, the proportion of pupils who achieved an A*-C grade was well above the national average. In 2001 the percentage of pupils attaining a C grade was very similar to the percentage in 2000. When compared with pupils' prior attainment, these results in both English and literature represent good achievement. Results in tests and examinations have fluctuated over the last three years, although standards have risen significantly since the previous inspection.
68. Standards of work by the end of Key Stage 3 are a little higher than the results of the National Curriculum tests for fourteen year olds and were above average. Higher attaining pupils achieve well and are reaching levels that are well above average. They write detailed, technically accurate pieces and can adapt their writing effectively for different situations and readers. They can employ the techniques of literary analysis successfully. For example, in their work, Year 9 pupils wrote well about irony in 'Ozymandias' and analysed character and plot carefully in Susan Hill's 'I'm the King of the Castle'. Lower attaining pupils develop their ability to write for different readers and purposes, although their writing lacks detail and, sometimes, technical accuracy. All pupils are introduced to the skills of literary analysis and are able to make straightforward judgements about writers' intentions. The majority of pupils can express their ideas orally quite confidently in informal situations, although their language is often fairly restricted. Pupils make good progress during their first three years in the school. This is confirmed through looking at data showing how much pupils improve over time.
69. Standards for pupils aged sixteen are above average. By the time pupils take their GCSE examinations, most have made good progress in the two years of the course and achieved well. Highest attaining pupils learn how to employ skills of literary analysis and they write extended pieces accurately, in a lively and imaginative way. They can use textual quotations appositely and their enjoyment of the subject shines through their writing. They are able to use technical

vocabulary well to deconstruct text (for example, they can use terms like 'lexis' and 'enjambment' skilfully to pinpoint the ways in which writers achieve their effects. Middle attaining pupils generally write accurately and use a good range of vocabulary appropriately. Lower attaining pupils tend to make basic spelling mistakes and have difficulty in paragraphing.

70. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in line with others, from entering the school until they are sixteen. There is effective support for pupils with English as an additional language and overall educational inclusion is satisfactory. Gifted and talented pupils generally make good progress.
71. Standards in speaking and listening are average, overall. Whilst teachers of English are instrumental in teaching literacy, most subjects make a contribution by displaying subject specific words, highlighting correct spelling and giving pupils opportunities to talk both formally and informally in lessons. Practice is not consistent across the school and, because literacy skills are not taught systematically and the monitoring of the whole school policy for literacy is not rigorous enough, pupils' progress is adversely affected. Particularly effective work was seen by drama teachers who used flip charts to reinforce technical vocabulary and, in another lesson, pupils used word blocks in an imaginative way to show that they had understood the dramatic terms used in the lesson. The geography department builds opportunities into its schemes of work for pupils to write letters and newspaper articles and to discuss issues, such as the impacts of migration, and the science department had a display of 'poems and plants' on a classroom wall. Whilst pupils who are particularly gifted in English are not formally identified, there are good opportunities for those who have a flair for the subject to be recognised and staff have an imaginative approach to developing such talent. For example, a Year 11 pupil has been invited to attend a forthcoming sixth form trip.
72. Teaching and learning are good. During the inspection, all lessons seen were at least good, with nearly one in five lessons very good and, occasionally, excellent. Teachers have a secure command of their subject and they use their knowledge to challenge pupils to think deeply and to make connections between the use of language and writers' intentions. They also use the technique of 'modelling' good writing effectively. In one Year 8 lesson, the teacher had prepared examples of pupils' own creative writing to show on the overhead projector. She read aloud and commented on the good features in the writing and this enabled pupils to have a very good understanding of how to write successfully. The management of pupils' behaviour is a strength of the department. Teachers clearly set out their expectations of how pupils should behave and what their learning objectives are for the lesson.
73. In a minority of lessons, teachers had not built in enough opportunities for pupils to think for themselves and to increase their active engagement in the learning process. For example, in a Year 8 lesson, the teacher gave pupils a lot of information about Chaucer's Wife of Bath. She challenged pupils well and the pace of the lesson was brisk, but pupils did not work independently enough to enhance their learning. Whilst all schemes of work include assignments in which computers are to be used, either for research purposes or to draft and present work, their use is underdeveloped.
74. On the whole, pupils like English. They show positive attitudes through their volunteering answers to questions and their enthusiastic participation in group and whole-class work. For example, in a Year 11 lesson, pupils were looking at ways of interpreting a scene in Macbeth dramatically. First they read the scene in groups and then the whole class acted it out. Pupils enjoyed the work and their sensible and mature attitudes helped to contribute to excellent learning in the lesson.
75. The department uses performance data very well to assess how both individuals and groups of pupils achieve. Teachers mark pupils' work very thoroughly, giving helpful development points and recognising good work. Pupils in years 7 to 9, however, do not have a clear idea of what National Curriculum level they are currently working at and, therefore, are not clear about exactly what they need to do in order to perform at the next level up. Year 10 and 11 pupils usually know which GCSE grades they are aiming for, their current performance level, and targets for improvement.

76. The head of department provides very good leadership and management. She is new in the post this term, having previously been the second in department for a year. Given that the department is so newly formed, they function remarkably well as a team. The head of department has prioritised the development of schemes of work that provide a very good structure for teachers new to the school and they have built up a collection of very helpful model examples to use with pupils, to show them what to aim for. She is addressing assessment procedures, so that pupils know more clearly how well they are doing and short term target setting, particularly related to technical accuracy, is very well established. The department acted as a pilot for the introduction of the Key Stage 3 National Literacy Strategy last year, but, unfortunately, those staff who were using the methods have since left, so that new staff need to be trained. This is seen as a priority. The head of department has an analytical, reflective approach to assessing how well pupils are doing and in highlighting what needs to be done to raise standards and in setting individual pupil targets. There is a systematic programme in place for monitoring teaching and the head of department works closely, particularly with the unqualified and newly qualified teachers, to raise their knowledge and understanding of teaching, curriculum and assessment matters.
77. The department has made good improvement since the last inspection. Standards at the end of both key stages have risen, the quality of teaching has been maintained in difficult circumstances and schemes of work have been written to accommodate curriculum changes. Effective monitoring and support for teaching are now firmly in place and the assessment issues mentioned in the last report have been generally addressed. Now that staffing problems have been largely resolved, the department is well placed to develop further.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Standards are above the national average.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- The leadership and management are very good.
- Monitoring of subject performance has maintained good standards of teaching despite staffing difficulties in the last few years.

Areas for improvement

- Use of computers in the teaching.

78. The standards achieved at the end of Year 9 in the 2000 National Curriculum tests were close to the national average for the number of pupils achieving expectations for their age and above average for those achieving the higher level. Performance was above that of similar schools. Boys and girls have performed equally well over the last three years, as measured by their average National Curriculum points score. There has been little variation in standard in the last five years. The trend is below the national trend, although results in 2001 indicate improvement however, a judgement cannot be reached until national comparisons are published. The standard achieved in GCSE results at the end of Year 11 in 2000 was well above the national average for the number of pupils gaining grades A*-C, and A*-G. Performance was above average in relation to other subjects. There was no significant difference between boys and girls and there is not a trend for improvement, overall.
79. The standard of pupils by the age of fourteen is above the national average. Higher attaining pupils work accurately with numbers in standard form. Construction work with ruler and compasses is accurate and basic algebra is developing well. Learning is thorough and the teaching copes well with pupils of different prior attainment. Average attaining pupils use simple formulae for the area and circumference of a circle appropriately, but the formulae themselves have not yet been learnt. Low attaining pupils calculate the area of triangles and rectangles and more complex plane shapes. Basic work in statistics with pictograms and bar charts is done well. Pupils with special educational need are supported well in lessons through the smaller teaching groups and the management of pupils. Further support from learning support assistants in

lessons is low at approximately six lessons per week. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is good, although they do not achieve expected levels for their age. Achievement through years 7 to 9 is good for all pupils, including those from different ethnic backgrounds, those for whom English is an additional language and the gifted and talented.

80. Standards by the age of sixteen are above the national average, matching external examination results. Higher attaining pupils have completed the study of trigonometry of triangles, using the sine and cosine rules appropriately to solve problems. Not all pupils know these formulae. Average attainers' recent work on algebra shows a secure basis for further development. Their learning in algebra is enhanced through the very good use of graphical calculators and overhead projector used in the teaching. The visual impact enables a good understanding of the roots of a quadratic equation. Low attainers' facility with numbers is consolidated well through good use of mental work. Basic statistical techniques and ideas progress through good whole-class discussion. All pupils, including those with special educational need, those from different ethnic backgrounds, the gifted and talented and those for whom English is an additional language, achieve well through years 10 and 11. Assessment techniques indicate that pupils attaining GCSE grade B do so by good achievement at intermediate level rather than by underachievement at the higher level. Long term absence is the reason why a small number of pupils are not entered for GCSE.
81. The attitude of pupils in lessons is very good. They arrive ready for work and attend well to the teaching. They answer questions voluntarily and well. Individual work is a feature of many lessons. Pupils work well together when required, talking quietly and helping each other in their learning. Low attaining pupils are dependent on their teachers for their learning. Behaviour is very good. Work in exercise books is very neat and tidy.
82. Teaching is good. There is no unsatisfactory teaching and approximately two fifths of the teaching is very good or better. The strength of the teaching is in the very good management of pupils, which ensures that they listen well, know what to do and work hard. Teaching methods sometimes lack the impact of short mental questions to reinforce previous learning, such as formulae in trigonometry and the definition of p . Teachers' subject knowledge is good. The use of interesting activities enables pupils to see patterns and relationships, as in a Year 8 lesson that effectively introduced rules for multiplying and dividing negative numbers. The teaching of basic skills is good, with evidence in some lessons of recent innovations from the National Numeracy Strategy. Work on fractions is clearly explained. The teaching is planned well and makes the most of the available time. Teachers' expectations of pupils are good, as in a Year 9 lesson on algebra that began with a problem needing intellectual effort for a solution. Subsequent answers to questions in the continuous dialogue that followed showed learning of a high standard in the lesson. Day to day assessment of pupils' work is good. Marking of pupils' work is very good, with helpful comments in exercise books to help them further in their learning. Homework is used well. The textbooks that year 9 pupils are encouraged to have at home for private study promote independent learning.
83. The curriculum is satisfactory and fulfils the demands of the national curriculum. Procedures for assessing pupils' performance are very good. Assessment is put to very good use in determining the teaching groups, informing pupils and parents of standards and what needs to be done to improve. The monitoring of pupils overall subject performance is very good with details going back over the years. Current developments through modern technology show pupils' attainment on entry to the school through to GCSE. These show the good achievement of pupils as standards rise from below average on entry to above average at the end of Year 11.
84. Leadership and management are very good. There is a distinctive commitment to improve shown by all the teachers who work very well together as a team. Staffing difficulties in the last four years have required the best possible induction of temporary teachers in order to maintain the highest possible standards. The monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching is very good, as seen by the good standards in the inspection. The introduction of new computers leads to difficulties in using older programs and, as new programs are not available, the use of computers in teaching and learning is underdeveloped. Since the last inspection, improvement has been good as the progress of pupils and the teaching have improved. Standards have been maintained.

SCIENCE

Overall the provision for science is **good**.

Strengths

- Attainment is consistently above the national average.
- Very good accommodation and displays provide a stimulating environment for learning.

Areas for improvement

- Marking of pupils' work to ensure that comments are included to show how the work may be improved.
- Opportunities for the use of ICT.
- Integrate the scientific investigations into lessons, rather than having separate investigations in Key Stage 3.
- Ensuring that outcomes from monitoring and assessment are followed up.

85. The attainment of pupils at end of year 9 in the 2000 National Curriculum tests was average for the percentage of pupils reaching expected levels for their age and the higher levels. Results are above average when compared to similar schools. Girls performed better than boys. In 2001 the proportion of pupils gaining the expected level or above is significantly higher, but no comparisons can be made until national figures are available. These results show that the pupils are making good progress and achieve well. Results in the GCSE examinations for grades A* to C are also well above average. Boys' results were above average and girls' well above average. The results have been variable over the past three years, but pupils are achieving higher levels than expected by standardised tests predictions and this shows that they make good progress in Years 10 and 11. This is particularly true of the pupils taking the single award science.
86. Inspection evidence shows that pupils aged 14 are achieving above average levels. Pupils are competent in handling apparatus, apply safety procedures and are able to give explanations as to why an experiment is not working; making good suggestions for improvement. By the end of Year 9, higher attaining pupils are confident in researching a topic, using a variety of source materials, as seen in a class looking at the link between digestion and respiration. The pupils can separate out the key scientific facts and present them in a coherent way. Scientific investigations undertaken by pupils show a comprehensive understanding of planning, methods and evaluating the results. However, these tend to be undertaken as independent exercises rather than as integrated parts of all lessons. Some lower attaining pupils showed a weakness in the understanding of electricity and confused amp with volt. By the age of 16, standards are above average. The minority of pupils following a single award for science are confident in explaining what has happened in an experiment. In a lesson, they initially had difficulty in explaining the reasons for the results, but following clear teaching they gradually understood the principles of increased heat and greater concentrations of chemicals causing a faster reaction. Higher attaining pupils are confident in explaining the advantages and disadvantages of mutations understand the half-life of radioactive materials and are able to use a graph in order to work out the half-life. The work seen during the inspection did not show the variation between boys and girls shown in the previous examination, with both boys and girls generally doing equally well. The good teaching, overall, makes a positive contribution to pupils' progress within lessons. The majority of pupils, including those with special educational needs, generally make good progress and achieve well. Support is limited and there is not always sufficient attention given to setting work which meets their needs.
87. Standards of literacy are good, overall, with all pupils using the appropriate technical terminology. A range of literary styles is used in their work, with pupils in Years 7 to 9 showing a greater range of extended writing, such as a piece on 'Life without fuels' and the display showing pupils' work of poems about plants. The department has had an emphasis on improving the presentation of the work that enables pupils to have clearly organised notes for revision purposes. In numeracy, the pupils have sufficient ability to cope with the work they are being asked to do. Use of ICT has been developing recently with new software now being available. Pupils undertake research, using the Internet and are confident in word-processing, but do not

use spreadsheets and computer-generated graphs in their scientific investigations, even when the rest is word-processed. Therefore, further development is required in the use of ICT in all aspects of their work.

88. Teaching is good, overall. In over half of the lessons seen it was good or better and only a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching occurred. Teaching in years 7 to 9 is satisfactory, but there is too much variation. The teaching in years 10 and 11 is good. In the best lessons, the strengths are the clear objectives for the lesson, which are well shared with pupils and which they understand. The relationships between staff and pupils are good and teachers ensure that the work is well linked to the examination requirements and meets the needs of individual pupils. Marking is regular and always includes encouraging comments, but does not consistently show how to improve the work. The school marking system is used and the pupils understand this, although, in Years 7 to 9, national curriculum levels are not used. The grades in Years 10 and 11 have a closer link to the GCSE levels. Where there are shortcomings in teaching, there is insufficient involvement of pupils in the lesson. Teachers fail to make use of pupils' enthusiasm, there is a heavy dependency on copying and the pace in these lessons is too slow. Pupils' attitudes are good. They respond well in lessons, but, on occasions, when restlessness occurs, this is linked to their not understanding how the task is to be completed.
89. The curriculum offered to the pupils is broad and balanced and meets the needs of a wide range of pupils. Provision of the single award in Years 10 and 11 has enabled lower attaining pupils to achieve significant success. The curriculum offered to the pupils is enhanced by a wide range of visits to the school, enabling pupils to experience the practical application of science in many ways such as visits by 'Michael Faraday' 'Florence Nightingale' and 'Edward Jenner' and involvement in the Science Fair and the telescope project. Accommodation is very good; the light airy laboratories and the very good quality displays in both corridors and rooms provide a lively, enriching and stimulating environment in which learning can take place.
90. Leadership is sound. Departmental priorities are on raising achievement and the appropriate strategies decided in September 2000 are having a positive effect, as shown in examinations results and standards, overall. Regular assessment is undertaken with a continuous tracking of how pupils are performing, making satisfactory use of the system of pupil monitoring and target setting. The monitoring of teaching is undertaken through evaluating work in pupils' exercise books. The outcomes of assessment and monitoring are not followed with sufficient formality to ensure that when examination and tests results show that pupil progress is not good enough, action is taken.
91. Satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection. Teaching has improved. Marking is more consistent and a greater amount of extended writing is undertaken in Years 7 to 9, but levels of attainment have not risen significantly. The department has the potential for further development.

ART AND DESIGN

The overall provision for art and design is **good**.

Strengths

- Standards by the end of Year 11.
- Quality of teaching.
- Use of sketchbooks.
- Good curricular opportunities.

Areas for improvement

- The use of assessment.
- Developing pupils evaluative and analytical skills.

92. In 2000, teachers' assessments of standards in Year 9 were in line with the national average. Achievements are good in relation to pupils' prior attainment. Observations and scrutiny of work during the inspection showed that pupils are working at the levels expected for their age. Pupils

experience a wide range of media; they work in two and three dimensions. They are introduced to the formal elements through well-structured and innovative teaching in Year 7 and this work is developed well across Years 8 and 9. In a Year 9 class, appropriate support for pupils with SEN was provided, as resources were organised to meet their individual needs and the computer was used to support their colour mixing. By the end of Year 11 standards are above average, overall. In the year 2000, GCSE examination results were significantly above national averages at A*-C grades. These results have been fully analysed and shortcomings addressed. Work observed in lessons and elsewhere during the inspection shows that pupils build on the skills learnt and develop their ideas. They work on individual responses to assignments set, experimenting confidently with a range of media, which supports the development of their technical skills. They are using the Internet to access material, which supports the evaluation of their work.

93. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are generally good. They enjoy the challenging activities. They listen to one another during the regular, critical analysis time. They behave well because they are motivated and inspired by the quality of teaching, the work displayed in the classrooms and because they know how they can improve their work.
94. Teaching and learning are good. Three quarters of lessons seen were good or better. Some excellent teaching was observed. One unsatisfactory lesson was seen. In Years 7 – 9 a strong feature of the teaching is the use of good demonstrations, which show pupils what they need to do to succeed. An equally strong feature is the critical analysis. For example, in a Year 7 class the teacher led a critical analysis of pupils' homework. This helped pupils understand whether they had met the objectives of the work, discuss the expression in the portraits and the range of colours used. Higher attaining pupils had evaluated their work and written about how they planned the task. Teachers support the written aspects of art through ensuring that pupils have a developing knowledge of key vocabulary, which is displayed in a prominent position and used during lessons. In a Year 8 class, pupils were helped to tease out key features of four buildings studied as part of a topic on perspective. The teacher provided the opportunity for pupils to work in groups and feed back the key features remembered. Through skilful questioning and very good management of the class, pupils were able to listen to other groups' contribution and so extend their own learning. Sketchbooks are used well across all year groups to extend learning; they are marked well, with supportive comments to help pupils know what to do next. Where teaching was unsatisfactory, classroom organisation and the management of pupil behaviour was inadequate. In Years 10 and 11, there is good individual coaching, with good advice as teachers move from pupil to pupil. This means that pupils can see what they need to do to improve and they remain focused and interested in their work. A good use is made of exemplar materials, including those from previous pupils. This adds variety to the work and results in good learning. The inclusion of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory, but there is limited learning support and individual education plans are not sufficiently subject focused. Pupils with English as an additional language make good progress and there is good inclusion of ideas from ethnic minority pupils.
95. The department is led well by an experienced head of department. A developing strength of the department is the shared philosophy and the consistency in approach. There are comprehensive schemes of work in place for Years 7-9. The departmental handbook is a useful document, which serves to communicate information as well as celebrate the achievements of the department. Monitoring takes place through regular departmental meetings and observation. Opportunities are provided for new staff to observe more experienced teachers. The procedures for assessment are satisfactory and developing. Opportunities are provided for pupils to attend galleries, art club and recently an artist in residence worked with pupils in school. Older pupils participate in the outreach programme with the Royal Academy. Pupils' work is well displayed in the art rooms and corridor and creates an immediate visual effect. Clusters of drawings, paintings, designs and collections of their dimensional work serve to celebrate the school's artistic achievements and enhance the appearance of the buildings. All these activities contribute to the standards achieved and pupils' enjoyment and experience of the subject.
96. Since the previous inspection, photography is no longer offered as a discrete subject, but is built into the GCSE course for everyone. The head of department has worked hard to refocus on pupils' analytical and evaluative skills. This has supported the thrust on high expectations and initiated improvement, although it is still underdeveloped.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Standards in food technology.
- In the quality of learning objectives in the best lessons.

Areas for improvement

- Raising standards by improving the quality of teaching through better assessment procedures and their use to inform planning.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs.
- Monitoring of teaching and learning.

97. By the age of fourteen, standards are below average because of the way the learning experiences are planned and arranged on the timetable. This results in a lack of continuity in learning, which adversely affects pupils' progress. Pupils have experience of a range of different materials, including wood, metal, plastic and food. They learn specialist vocabulary and reinforce mathematical skills, for example, when measuring materials. The depth of their understanding of most materials is limited. Pupils make products, for example, nightlights, clocks and cakes. When completed, some of these products are of good quality, but a significant majority of pupils struggle to complete their work and their products are unsatisfactory. In food lessons, pupils investigate and experiment with materials and processes to find out how things work and how they might work better. This gives them a good understanding of food. In other areas, their ability to manipulate materials effectively and skilfully is limited, as is their ability to organise their time and resources. There is too little evidence of pupils modifying and adapting their work as it develops to enable them to attain the higher levels.
98. By the end of Key Stage 4 standards are in line with national expectations. Girls' achievement is significantly better than that of boys. Older pupils work on individual projects and many make good progress. The majority of pupils are interested and involved in their own work. The skills which are needed to manipulate materials are below average and, coupled with underdeveloped problem solving skills, leads to a narrow range of products in some areas, for example, resistant materials. Whilst results in GCSE examinations were above the national average in 2000, they are below the school average. Too many pupils are not entered because of a lack of motivation in areas such as electronics.
99. Teaching is satisfactory overall. In about a quarter of lessons, teaching was good, but in a minority of lessons it was unsatisfactory. The planning for good lessons was focused on what it was intended that pupils should know, understand and be able to do. For example, in a Year 9 food lesson, the teacher had identified the specialist knowledge and skills required for the task and the pupils consequently made good progress. The most successful learning occurred when lessons were related to the real world, for example, food preparation in an airline catering company. Pupils' understanding was enhanced when links were made with work in science during a lesson about electricity. Where teachers structure learning very well, it helps the pupils to understand how to find information. Pupils' attention was well maintained in a Year 7 class when the teacher used well-framed questions and made effective use of humour. When teachers gave pupils well-focused and rigorous feedback, as in some Year 10 and 11 lessons, they made better progress because they understood how to improve their work. This was particularly helpful when the strengths and weaknesses of their work were agreed and written down as a record of progress. In lessons where pupils were presented with a problem, for example, when learning about three-dimensional drawing, their attention was maintained and they were challenged for a considerable length of time. Where pupils had difficulties, for example, in shaping plastic because of the lack of resources, the teacher used time at the end of the lesson to discuss how they could be addressed. Pupils responded very well to this approach and made helpful comments and suggestions because they were being involved in discussion about their learning.
100. Where teaching has shortcomings and is occasionally unsatisfactory, the work is not effectively matched to the differing needs of the pupils. There is either insufficient challenge or pupils

struggle when they all have exactly the same task, as in some resistant materials lessons. This situation includes the support for pupils with special educational needs, English as an additional language and from different ethnic heritage. Pupils do not have a clear understanding of the purpose of the lesson, limiting their progress. Overall, the department has too few strategies for supporting pupils with a range of learning needs. Although strategies are developing to help pupils who are under-achieving in Year 11, the lack of direct teaching about how to use research and evaluation to improve work as it develops limits the learning opportunities. Neither long nor short term planning identifies sufficiently precisely what it is intended that pupils should know, understand and be able to do. Marking tends to be sporadic, does not always help pupils to understand their strengths and what they can do to improve, and does not involve them in evaluating their own work.

101. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The new head of department has worked very hard to ensure satisfactory improvements but progress has been limited by the difficulties of recruiting permanent staff. There has been an honest attempt to analyse how the department might improve standards. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Although there is an assessment system in place, it is not linked sufficiently well to the planning. The department development plan focuses strongly on resource issues but does not indicate how these will be used to raise standards. Neither the planning, assessment of pupils nor the monitoring of the department is sufficiently rigorous to provide a clear picture of how to improve provision. Resources are unsatisfactory, for example, for cutting and shaping resistant materials, and for understanding the impact of technology on pupils' lives. The use of information and communication technology has developed rapidly over the last year and is becoming good, although there is no computer-aided design and manufacture or control due to the lack of appropriate equipment and software. There are too few links with industry. The accommodation for food is well organised and attractive, but cramped, and in resistant materials conditions do not present a positive image.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good.
- Standards of achievement are above average.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are good.
- A wide range of fieldwork opportunities is provided.
- The curriculum is relevant and makes a good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils.

Areas for improvement

- Improving the achievement of girls.
- The provision and use of information and communication technology.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs.

102. In the 2000 GCSE examinations, the proportion of pupils achieving grades A* to C was well above the national average, as was that at A*-G grades, with all entries gaining a pass. Compared with other subjects in the school, as well as nationally, results are above average. The trend over the past four years shows a very significant improvement. The standard of work seen, for pupils at the age of 16, is above average.

103. By the end of Year 9, standards are above average, as is also shown in teacher assessments. Pupils use basic skills confidently, well demonstrated in their drawing of maps and diagrams and the sketching of landscape features. They use geographical vocabulary appropriately and understand the difference between weather and climate as well as concepts such as the natural increase of population. They explain the influence of rock types on relief and relate this to the landscape of the British Isles. They extend this knowledge to understanding the effect of tectonic plate movements. In their study of natural hazards, they examine reports of the storm of 1987 in England and compare it with the impact of hurricanes in the Caribbean. Their study of

contrasting environments helps them to understand the reasons for population changes, including the results of migration.

104. The pupils make good progress to achieve standards above expectations nationally by Year 11. Students build on the good foundation laid in Year 9 and, by the end of Year 11, they have a good grasp of the complex relationship between the natural environment and human activity. For example, they can assess the impact of natural hazards on the lives of people who inhabit areas subject to volcanic eruption and earthquakes. They can analyse differences in the natural increase of population between more and less economically developed countries and relate population pyramids to the demographic transition model. They discuss news items to assess the conflicts arising from urban renewal and the variations between different parts of the British Isles. They successfully apply appropriate skills to investigate environmental management and the development of sustainable tourism. In their studies on fieldwork in Cromer, North Norfolk, they analyse the formation of coasts and practise their skills of analysis, recording and presentation of data. The skills developed in the field and in the classroom provide a firm basis for their individual case studies.
105. Students are well motivated and make good efforts to achieve the high standards expected of them. They are generally enthusiastic and co-operative in completing their assignments, including homework that is carefully monitored by their teachers. By the end of Year 11, the pupils have acquired a good foundation of geographical ideas and applications and this enables them to make good progress and achieve high standards in their GCSE examinations. Most pupils achieve well, but there is a difference in the rate of progress between boys and girls. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress as a result of the additional support in their lessons, but there are shortcomings in meeting their full needs. Teaching staff provide support by using their non-contact time, but this creates difficulties for staff in performing other duties. Work set does not always meet the differing needs of the pupils and individual education plans are not sufficiently focused. Nevertheless, the department works hard at educational inclusion of its pupils.
106. The quality of teaching overall is good, with a significant minority of lessons being very good. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed during the inspection. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge so that pupils receive accurate information, obtain clear understanding of the principles involved and acquire new skills in dealing with geographical studies. The teaching of basic skills is very good and pupils recognise the need for accurate use of scales, a key and other features of map work. This enables the pupils to interpret distributions by plotting locations accurately and drawing conclusions based on their observations. The best teaching is characterised by enthusiasm that stimulates the interest of the pupils and motivates them to make good intellectual efforts to solve problems. The planning of the work is generally of a high standard so that the pupils know exactly what is expected of them by the end of the lesson. A variety of strategies is employed which hold the attention and interest of the pupils throughout the lessons. These include group discussions, note taking, individual investigations and practical exercises. Classroom management is a strength of the department and the relationship between staff and pupils is good. This relationship, including a sense of humour, is conducive to effective learning and pupils generally work at a good pace and waste no time at all. Homework is very well used in the department to reinforce learning. There is however insufficient use of information and communication technology to enhance the teaching and learning.
107. Leadership and management are very good and there is a shared commitment to raising standards. There are systems in place for planning and for assessment and recording of pupils' progress. Tests are administered at the end of each unit and targets set for improvements. The test results are used in the annual report to parents. Good use is made of resources which are augmented by the personal efforts of the staff preparing work sheets related to each unit of study and video recordings of current affairs programmes relevant to the geography syllabus. The curriculum is broad and balanced with some extra-curricular opportunities, including day conferences. Resources are satisfactory, overall, but provision for computer use is inadequate. Monitoring takes place in the form of planning and discussions between staff and the observation of lessons followed by appropriate feedback. The provision of individual tutorial and the use of teaching staff to give support to pupils with special needs in lessons is commendable but very demanding on the staff.

108. There has been significant improvement since the last inspection. Results in the GCSE examinations have increased substantially. Schemes of work have been updated to better reflect staff expertise and opportunities for fieldwork. Assessment procedures have been developed and refined for recording pupils' progress and for setting targets. Although there is ample evidence of the use of computers by pupils at home, provision in the department is inadequate. Insufficient provision is available for meeting the needs of all pupils, especially those with special educational need. More strategies are needed to raise the attainment of boys compared to girls.

HISTORY

The overall provision in history is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Pupils achieve well in Key Stage 3.
- Teachers' knowledge and understanding is good.
- Use of available resources is good.
- There is a good contribution to pupils' literacy and personal development.

Areas for improvement

- Results at GCSE.
- The use of ICT.
- The use of assessment to guide lesson planning and for meeting the differing needs of pupils.
- The support for pupils with special educational needs.
- The opportunities given for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning.

109. Pupils achieve well in relation to their standards on entry to the school, which are below average. In the end of key stage assessments at 14 years of age, results show that over a half of the pupils attain average standards for their age. In 2000 GCSE examinations, results were below average at grades A*-C, although all entries gained a pass grade. Whilst a minority of pupils achieve well in GCSE, and the number of A* and A grades has improved, results have not been maintained since the previous inspection where standards were above the national average. This reflects in part the prior attainment of the pupils who choose to take history as an option choice and the significant number of pupils with special educational needs. The results of boys are in line with national trends in that they do less well than girls but they do respond well to the subject. The changing requirements of the subject content and the reduction in the course work element make the subject difficult to cope with. They do well to achieve within the A*-G grades. There have also been changes in staffing which have been detrimental to the development of skills, to continuity and progression and to pupils' perceptions of the subject. These issues have affected the current Year 11 and inspection evidence is that standards are below average.

110. By the end of Year 9, standards are broadly average. For example, most have a sound understanding of the major developments in Ireland in the twentieth century. They show awareness of the impact of key developments such as the Easter Rising and the highest attaining pupils can understand the tensions caused by the recruitment of soldiers from Ireland during the Great War. Pupils' knowledge of events is often limited and, for some, the pattern of cause and effect is difficult to understand. They experience difficulty in the idea of long and short term causes of the war but others can relate causes such as the naval rivalry and imperialism to the tensions that led to war. Average attaining pupils can link economic factors such as the discovery of gold in Africa or trading rivalries to the growth of tension. Only the highest attaining pupils can link changes in the effectiveness of weapons and the development of an arms race to the issue of competing alliances and the development of a world, rather than Balkan war. Written work is usually well presented, although there are many errors in English. Reading comprehension is poor for some pupils but they can usually express their ideas vividly in class. The majority of pupils show some skills in managing information and the work of higher attaining pupils in all year groups shows skill in using source materials to establish understanding of the motivation of individuals. Pupils with average and lower potential attainment sometimes struggle with source-based evidence and tasks that are too difficult for them. Pupils of below average

attainment and pupils with special educational needs can use eyewitness accounts and maps to reach a higher level of understanding of major events in history, for example the assassination at Sarajevo in 1914.

111. By the end of Key Stage 4, standards are below average. Pupils have satisfactory knowledge of the course topics that they have studied and all pupils, including those with special educational needs, understand satisfactorily about the major developments in the twentieth century. However, not all can use this knowledge to answer GCSE questions at an appropriate level. The highest attaining pupils can use documents and extracts well, producing quality coursework, for example, in their work relating to the experience of children evacuated from London during the war. They understand why women actually enjoyed war work in the USA and suggest why they might be reluctant to give up employment. The highest attaining pupils can compare attitudes to women at work in the USA with the attitudes in Hitler's Germany and average pupils understand the issue of segregation in the army. Below average pupils are held back by lack of knowledge of important detail and for these pupils there are some real weaknesses in knowledge, understanding and in the skills required by work at GCSE level. Although pupils make sound progress and achieve well, many of them cannot reach the level of skills or the depth of knowledge required to succeed at the higher levels.
112. Learning at both key stages is enhanced by visits, such as the Imperial War Museum and they have the opportunity to listen to the experiences of individuals who survived the Holocaust. All aspects of work make a valuable contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils as they study such a wide range of topics and issues. Most pupils work hard in history lessons and concentrate and behave well. Some pupils are easily distracted and can be disruptive and this adversely affects learning in a minority of lessons.
113. Teaching is good overall. It is satisfactory overall in Key Stage 3 and good in Key Stage 4. No unsatisfactory lessons were observed. In the best lessons, pupils achieve well when they are given the opportunity for structured activities that are suited to their needs. Where this is not the case, learning is less effective and pupils do not achieve well because they are using the same material and attempting the same tasks. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress when support is available, but in classes where there are statemented pupils, and where almost half of the pupils are identified with a learning difficulty, there is no support available. Teachers effectively develop pupils' understanding by teaching the difference between primary and secondary sources and between fact and opinion. The majority of lessons are well paced and interesting. Teachers are enthusiastic and knowledgeable about the subject and the majority of lessons observed were well planned, managed and resourced. All lessons have clear objectives that pupils understand. Work is marked frequently and assessment procedures are used effectively and understood by pupils. However, assessment data is not used to ensure that planned work meets the need of all pupils in mixed ability classes. In some lessons, pupils are passive listeners rather than active participants. The use of available resources is good overall, but there are not enough suitable textbooks for the wide ability range. Resources are supplemented by the use of photocopied sheets and by effective use of overhead projectors. Homework is set regularly and contributes well to learning. However, during the inspection pupils in Key Stage 3 were only infrequently given the opportunity to work in pairs and groups or to develop their ability to conduct independent research. There is also insufficient use of information and communication technology to help pupils develop skills in the use of computers or to use them to take responsibility for their learning. Because of this, some pupils are not ready to begin work at an appropriate level when they start their GCSE course as their skills in the study of history are insufficiently well developed.
114. The leadership and management are satisfactory and the department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. Schemes of work, resources and assessment procedures have been developed and there has been improvement in the quality of teaching. However, there has been some decline in standards at GCSE, although higher attaining pupils are now achieving appropriate grades. The last report also expressed concern about the lack of opportunities for pupils to involve themselves in independent research and this shortcoming still exists. There is a good contribution to the development of skills in all aspects of literacy by encouraging reading comprehension and allowing pupils to write in a variety of formats and at length. Skills in numeracy are developed by the use of graphs and statistics.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching in specialised lessons.
- Pupils knowledge and confident use of the word processing application.

Areas for improvement

- The development of pupils' knowledge of control technology.
- The provision of information and communication technology across the curriculum.
- The management and the co-ordination of the subject.
- Pupils understanding of the use of information and communication technology in its wider sense.

115. No pupils were entered for the 2000 GCSE examination. Attainment of 14-year-old pupils, based on teacher assessments, is at the level expected. These assessments, however, do not accurately reflect pupils' attainment as only one element of the National Curriculum was assessed. Direct observation of pupils' work and of work seen during the inspection shows that, by the time pupils reach Year 9, standards are below average. A contributory reason for these below expected levels of attainment is staffing problems. The lack of a specialist teacher has meant that teaching of the subject has been inconsistent, resulting in pupils not having developed sufficient information and communication technology skills to support their learning in other subjects. The problems have been resolved and, since the appointment of a subject specialist, progress has improved.

116. Pupils enter the school with varied previous experience and, by the time they are 14 years old, the majority are confident users of the word processing application. They have a clear understanding of all the main functions, enter the text, alter the style and the size of the lettering, and save their work for future reference. When designing a document, pupils are beginning to understand the need to organise a document to suit different audiences. An example of this was a Year 9 presentation of a document of 'My Favourite Programmes' using texts in varying styles together with graphic illustrations to enhance the publication.

117. Pupils can explain the use a spreadsheet but few are able to use the appropriate formulas for easy mathematical calculations. Pupils' understanding of the use of a database is limited and the majority are not able to explain its use. Their understanding of the use of information communication technology in its wider sense is below average and few pupils can give examples of how or where it might be used outside the school. They use the Internet with confidence, negotiating their way through the procedures, successfully accessing the area they need for information and appreciating its use as a means of reference for their individual projects. The use of e-mail is underdeveloped. Although pupils are developing a basic understanding of control technology using the Logo program (a simple control program), development is in its early stages and there are too few opportunities to experience more sophisticated programs. Standards are unsatisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language are fully included into lessons and achieve appropriate individual targets.

118. From inspection evidence at Key Stage 4, pupils' achievement and understanding of the use of information and communication technology is below average. Their understanding of word processing applications is being effectively developed and pupils are beginning to use techniques to present information in a variety of ways, for example, in creation of a chart to show their individual timetables and combining shaded areas to enhance the document. In other strands, progress has been unsatisfactory since the last inspection and standards are below average.

119. Attitudes to learning are good. Pupils behave well in lessons and show respect for the equipment. They respond well to expert teaching and view the subject as worthwhile, many commenting that they now have a better understanding of the use of computers.

120. The teaching in specialised lessons is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and this expertise is used efficiently to demonstrate new procedures leading to a good level of learning. Lessons start briskly with a short typing exercise. Pupils respond well to this and with interest, understanding the need to gain familiarity with the keyboard and develop typing skills. Teachers have good discipline, insisting that pupils listen carefully whilst explaining the aim and the task of the lesson. The outcome of this is that lessons move with pace, maximising learning during the very short sessions allocated for the subject. The planning of lessons is, in general, appropriate for the immediate needs of the pupils with a consolidation of previous work. However, there is insufficient use of assessment information, particularly for those pupils who have recently transferred from primary education, for lesson planning. The good quality teaching by specialist teachers has been maintained since the previous inspection.
121. Although some subjects incorporate ICT into their schemes of work, this is generally unsatisfactory. Effective work was seen in English using the word processor to draft and re-draft their work and with the presentation of a newspaper report. The satisfactory use of a spreadsheet was seen in mathematics and in science with the logging of data and presentation of results in graph form. Modern languages are in the early stages of development and are awaiting teacher training but good use was seen in a German lesson, using a range of different skills to support and develop pupils learning. Design and technology encourages pupils to use the Internet and CD ROM's for research purposes but the use of CAD-CAM is underdeveloped. The music department has the appropriate programs to help and support pupils' composition skills but they are under used. Apart from word processing and the use of the Internet, little use was observed in art, history and geography. There are no programs to develop numeracy skills. Teachers' lack of confidence and competence and the lack of subject-specific programs for some subjects on the network are the main reasons for the under-use of information and communication technology. Training of teachers is in its early stages but, where teachers do have confidence, information and communication technology is contributing positively to pupils' skills and learning.
122. The management of the subject is unsatisfactory. Although there has recently been considerable improvement with the upgrading of resources, the lack of an overall development plan for the subject has meant that the co-ordination and use of information and communication technology across the curriculum has lacked direction and its development has been unsatisfactory. With the recent up-grading of hardware and software and the appointment of a specialist teacher the subject is appropriately placed for future developments. However, the time allocation to teach basic skills at Key Stage 3 is too short and insufficient to promote pupils' independent use.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

The overall provision for modern languages is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- At Key Stage 3 listening skills are good.
- At Key Stage 3 pupils are eager to respond and the majority have a positive attitude to language learning.
- The progress of pupils with SEN is good.

Areas for improvement

- Raising the standards to eliminate underachievement in Key Stage 4 for pupils of middle and lower ability.
- Speaking skills at Key Stage 4.
- The quality and quantity of written French at Key Stage 4.

123. The GCSE examination results in French in 2000 were in line with national averages. In German they were below national averages and in both languages results were lower than those achieved by pupils in other subjects. Girls' results were better than those of boys but both boys and girls were under-performing.

124. By the age of fourteen, standards of attainment in French are average. The majority of pupils listen attentively. They understand French spoken by the teacher at near normal speed, can follow classroom instructions and identify main points in French recorded on cassette. Pupils are keen to answer questions but need prompting to respond in full sentences. Reading comprehension of textbook exercises and worksheets is good but pupils do not have the opportunity to read for pleasure. By Year 9, the highest achieving pupils write with increasing accuracy about family and daily routine, but the majority of pupils' written French is restricted to one sentence or short paragraphs which limits their progress in written skills over the key stage.
125. At Key Stage 4, pupils have the opportunity to take two languages. Standards in both French and German are below average. Pupils continue to understand familiar language but need frequent repetition to identify details. Higher achieving pupils respond well to questioning and take part in role-plays on topics prepared for GCSE examinations. However, they do not sustain conversations and, for the majority of pupils, oral responses are short. Reading comprehension of factual texts is satisfactory but pupils do not read independently and they have few opportunities to write at length. As a result there is significant underachievement, particularly for pupils of middle and lower attainment and progress over the key stage is unsatisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in both key stages. At Key Stage 4 they respond very well to lessons that include the use of computers. The majority of pupils have positive attitudes to language learning and they co-operate well in pairs.
126. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. In a minority of lessons it is good and in a small minority unsatisfactory. Overall at Key Stage 3 teaching is good. Teachers plan lessons carefully to include a range of activities. In a few lessons, where the progress of pupils is very good, pupils participate with enthusiasm and enjoyment in the imaginative language activities provided. They benefit from the very effective use of a range of resources: flashcards, cue cards and the overhead projector. However, at Key Stage 4, in a significant proportion of lessons, teachers' expectations for achievement are too low. They do not prepare activities for pupils of differing abilities and, as a result, the pace of the lesson is slow. All teachers are fluent linguists and use the foreign language for most of the lesson, although they do not always encourage pupils to do the same.
127. Since the last inspection, problems in appointing and retaining staff have affected standards. At present, all teachers in the department are well-qualified linguists and, under the guidance of a newly appointed head of department, they are renewing policies and schemes of work. This has had the immediate impact of raising standards in Key Stage 3, particularly in Years 7 and 8. Marking is consistent and a thorough system of assessment is now in place. These, together with appropriate strategies to improve results in GCSE examinations, have the potential to raise standards.

MUSIC

The overall provision for music is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Management of pupils.
- Schemes of work which have improved significantly.
- Accommodation is well maintained to support learning.

Areas for improvement

- GCSE results.
- Assessment procedures.
- Extra-curricular activities.
- Resources to support teaching.

128. Results in 2000 teacher assessments at the age of fourteen were average. GCSE examination results in all years since the last inspection in 1997 are well below the national averages in grades A*-C, but are average at A*-G. The cohorts for examination entry remain very small, with

only 19 pupils in the past three years being entered for the subject. Currently there are only 6 pupils in Year 11 and 5 in Year 10.

129. Standards are broadly average by the end of both key stages, although pupils do make satisfactory progress. Standards on entry are very varied and are below average overall. In Key Stage 4, the higher standards achieved in previous GCSE results reflects the differing prior attainment within year groups. When standards are high, pupils demonstrate their ability to practise, rehearse and perform effectively in groups, maintain their own parts and communicate effectively to an audience. Many follow scores that they have composed themselves. Some show a good sense of style and awareness of genre and are beginning to adapt ideas in order to make them their own. Achievement was particularly high in several Year 7 classes. In one lesson seen, many pupils could imitate complex Brazilian rhythms and perform a rhythmic piece with a number of parts. In another example, tapes of pupils' work revealed some excellent composition work based on a "Space" project. These showed a good sense of musical style, inventiveness and were works of real imagination. However, where attainment is low, pupils were hampered by being given inappropriate and uncreative activities. Often they did not have the opportunity to effectively evaluate their work. Work on keyboards was slow due to a lack of co-ordination skills by some pupils. Attainment is weak in singing, particularly at Key Stage 4 and in the use of ICT to support learning at both key stages.
130. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. In Years 7-9 there are examples of good and very good teaching and in Years 10-11 it is mostly satisfactory. In all lessons seen, pupils were managed very well, relationships were very good and behaviour was dealt with very effectively. This is a strength of the teaching. Where teaching was most effective, lessons were organised so that all the pupils could take part in musical activities whatever their level of attainment. In these lessons listening and evaluation opportunities were combined with composing and performing and pupils understood what they had to do. Where teaching was good or very good, teacher expectation of what could be achieved was very high and pupils were given challenging work. In these lessons, pupils made good progress and learning was accelerated. They achieved well. Where teaching was less effective it was in lessons where many pupils were not engaged in practical work for long periods of time, published materials were not adapted for the needs of the class and there was an over emphasis on the theory of music before the practical engagement. For example, there were far too few opportunities for pupils to engage in appropriate singing or vocal activities. In addition, pupils were unaware of how they were doing. The setting of work that meets the differing learning needs of pupils, and support for their learning, is underdeveloped. Thus, the progress of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory overall.
131. There has been insufficient improvement since the last inspection. The curriculum meets the expected national requirements and much work has been done in updating schemes of work and in the review of current practice. There is a clear progression in these schemes and they are constantly under review. Although there are plans to develop ICT work in a creative and supportive way, it is, as yet, underdeveloped. Assessment is not rigorous enough to allow for the clear target setting for pupils failing to meet the expected levels at Key Stage 3. There are a limited number of extra-curricular clubs, such as orchestra, choir, recorder and keyboard. These clubs attract very small numbers and none operate during the lunch hour. Departmental development planning is underdeveloped. Accommodation is good, with a good suite of practice rooms and two teaching rooms. Resources are inadequate, with far too few tuned and un-tuned percussion instruments available for both class teachers. There is an urgent need to address this. Individual instrumental provision is limited. In recent years, the numbers of pupils learning instruments has fallen due to the reorganisation of resources at a local level. The full musical potential of pupils is not yet being fully realised.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Overall provision in physical education is **good**.

Strengths

- Good teaching overall, leading to good learning by most pupils.
- An extensive programme of extra-curricular activities, which have an enthusiastic take-up by many pupils.
- Committed leadership by the head of department, implementing initiatives such as a new assessment policy.

Areas for improvement

- Raising attainment in GCSE and increasing the number of girls opting for the subject.
- Improving the pace of teaching and learning in a minority of lessons.

132. There were no formal assessments of Year 9 pupils in 2000. GCSE results at grades A*-C were average in 2000 and all entries gained a pass. The proportion of girls gaining an A*-C grade in the 2000 GCSE examination was slightly above the national average, whilst boys was below. The trend in attainment in the GCSE examination in the three years prior to 2000 was a declining one, due partly to changes in the composition of option groups.
133. Standards by the end of Year 9 in performance, knowledge and understanding are in line with the expectations of similarly aged pupils nationally, with no significant differences in attainment between boys and girls. Many pupils enter the school with standards which are below average. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and higher-attainers, and those with English as an additional language, achieve well by the age of fourteen. Pupils make good progress in consolidating their stick-handling skills in hockey, although they have limited awareness of the potential of space in attacking and defensive situations. Most girls make good progress in developing their passing skills in netball. Pupils learning basketball skills make satisfactory progress in developing the skills of accurate shooting and in learning stratagems such as screening and an effective jab-step, although higher-attainers make the most rapid progress in developing higher-level tactical skills. In gymnastics, the majority of pupils in Year 7 make good progress in developing the ability to travel in a variety of ways on mats or apparatus, creating a sequence of linked balances, and developing the skill of evaluating each other's performance.
134. It was possible to observe only one non-GCSE lesson for pupils between the ages of fourteen and sixteen. Standards were average and it is not possible to make an overall judgement on standards in core physical education. For pupils following the GCSE course, standards, by the age of sixteen, in theoretical understanding and practical application of skills are average. Very few girls are taking the course and, therefore, differences in attainment by gender are not significant. All pupils following the GCSE course achieve well in relation to their prior attainment at the age of fourteen. This includes pupils with special educational needs. In the theory part of the course, pupils make good gains in developing their knowledge and understanding of factors influencing health and fitness, and factors affecting training and performance in various sports. However, the lower-achieving boys' communication of their knowledge and understanding is restricted by poor literacy skills, although the department is trying to address this, for example by focusing upon key terminology. Pupils in practical lessons make good progress in developing their tactical awareness in badminton, although they make less progress in furthering their understanding of the rules.
135. The overall quality of teaching is good, leading to good learning. Teaching in Years 7-9 is never less than satisfactory and is good or very good in four out of five lessons. Teaching in Years 10-11 is always at least satisfactory and is good or very good in two out of three lessons. There are several strengths evident in the good teaching. Teachers manage classes well, usually employing a range of briskly paced and progressively challenging skills practices which enable pupils of all levels of ability to consolidate their existing ball skills whilst improving their ability to apply them in a competitive situation. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and capabilities and this, combined with the positive attitudes of most participants, helps pupils make good gains in learning in many lessons. This was very evident for example in a GCSE lesson in

which the teacher used a range of resources and activities to get a good response from lower-attaining pupils learning about illness and physical activity. Teachers encourage pupils to show initiative, for example in selecting warm-up routines for games. Initiative is promoted very effectively in Year 7 gymnastics lessons in which the teachers, having established clear conventions for good performance, then succeed in getting pupils to develop their own routines and evaluate each other's attempts, thereby increasing their understanding of good practice. A particularly strong feature of the teaching is the very good feedback given to pupils at various stages in many lessons: pupils are not only clear about the lesson objectives, but they are frequently told how they can improve their performance further. This was very evident in a Year 9 lesson in which the teacher analysed progress in passing technique in netball and then gave good advice on how it could be improved. It was also very evident in a Year 11 GCSE lesson in which the teacher continuously evaluated progress in developing badminton skills against criteria clearly established at the start of the lesson. Where aspects of teaching are less effective in otherwise satisfactory lessons, the pace of activities sometimes slows or the teacher's explanation is too complex, restricting the quality of learning. This is evident occasionally when teaching basic games skills. Opportunities are sometimes missed to reinforce the literacy skills of lower-attainers in theory lessons, particularly in writing, and weaknesses in this area occasionally impede progress.

136. Leadership and management are good. The head of department is leading a relatively new team of teachers in initiating developments which are having a positive effect upon raising standards. These include the monitoring of teaching and sharing of good practice, a focus upon improving literacy skills and developing detailed assessment, which is used to set suitably challenging targets for pupils. The department makes a good contribution to social provision within the school by cultivating a climate of co-operation between pupils in lessons, for example when doing pairs work in gymnastics. The provision of extra-curricular activities is a strength of the department and adds to pupils' enjoyment whilst contributing to an improvement in standards. For example, pupils greatly value the lunchtime inter-form competitions and there is a good take-up of the various activities. The school also has a record of successful involvement both at individual and team level in external competitions. The use of information and communication technology as a teaching tool is relatively undeveloped.
137. There has been good progress since the previous inspection. In 1997 standards were described as mainly sound, which they still are. Pupils' attitudes remain good, there is still a good range of extra-curricular activities and the department is still well led. The overall quality of teaching has improved significantly and assessment is now better developed.

DRAMA

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

Strengths

- Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is very good.
- Pupils participate well work and effectively evaluate their own and others' contributions.
- The effective literacy strategy reinforces pupils' learning.

Areas for improvement

- The quality of the accommodation.
- The use of ICT.

138. Drama is taught to all pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 and is an option in Years 10 and 11. Results in GCSE Drama at the end of Year 11 for pupils gaining grades A* to C were above the national average in 2000. These results have been maintained in the provisional GCSE results for 2001. The inspection evidence confirms that the attainment of pupils in Year 11 is above national expectations.
139. Attainment in Year 9 is above average and pupils achieve well. Pupils demonstrate an understanding of dramatic terms in Years 7 to 9 and understand dramatic techniques such as 'freezing', 'freeze framing', the importance of character and staying in role and improvisation. They can talk about what they have learned in lessons and can use props effectively. Attainment

in Years 10 and 11 is also above average, with good achievement. Pupils evaluate their own and others' contributions in class positively and take part effectively in individual, pair and group work. For example, in a Year 11 lesson they used effective story-telling techniques in groups. Pupils in Year 11 also understand the importance of using space, movement and sound in performances.

140. The majority of pupils in all years are enthusiastic. They co-operate effectively in lessons, for example when working in groups to create a gloomy atmosphere in work based on Coleridge's 'The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner'. They make pertinent responses to their own and teachers' questions. Pupils with special educational needs take a full part in lessons. Learning is satisfactory in Years 7-9, being occasionally affected by a small number of pupils who do not listen well to instructions. Learning is good in Years 10 and 11.
141. Teaching is good in Years 7, 8 and 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Teachers in the department have a good knowledge of their subject. They plan their lessons effectively, have high expectations of their pupils and use a variety of teaching strategies effectively. They manage pupils well and make effective use of time and resources. Teachers use assessment effectively by marking pupils' work closely in order to demonstrate ways in which work can be improved. Homework is used to reinforce learning in all years. Through this teaching, pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 acquire the skills to take part in individual, pair and group work and pupils in Years 10 and 11 gain a full understanding of the requirements of the GCSE specification. The pace of work in lessons is always demanding. The department has an effective literacy policy which reinforces learning by means of 'word blocks' and other forms of recapitulation of drama terminology. A small minority of pupils in Years 7-9 do not fully develop their scenarios or contribute in discussions.
142. The quality and range of learning opportunities is good. Pupils take part in two annual drama productions and there is a separate Drama Club for Year 7. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have the opportunity to demonstrate their GCSE performance work to parents. There are effective cross-curricular links with physical education, art, English and music. There are a number of opportunities for pupils to consider moral, social and cultural issues in lessons, for example in a lesson on bullying where a variety of dramatic techniques are used to encourage pupils to consider the moral issues connected with the topic and in other lessons where poetry and art are used as additional stimulus material for improvisation.
143. Leadership and management in the subject are good. Monitoring and evaluation of subject performance are also good. There are effective procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress. Assessment information is used to guide curricular planning. Accommodation is unsatisfactory as the hall is not a suitable space for performance. Learning resources are satisfactory. Teachers in the department have not yet had training in the use of new lighting equipment and a new video camera. The use of ICT is under-developed.

BUSINESS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Standards are above average.
- Teaching is good.

Areas for improvement

- The use of ICT.

144. Results in previous years have been well above average at A*-C and all pupils entered have gained a pass grade for the last 4 years. Inspection evidence shows that standards are above average, overall, and that a minority of students reach high standards. The large majority of students achieve well. For example, Year 11 students in a lesson on cash flow statements gained a good understanding of the differences between income and expenditure and between receipts and payments. The students made good progress because the work was well designed to meet their differing needs. In their work, there is a clear level of understanding of the main

facets of the business world. They are interested in their work and are conscientious. Behaviour and attitudes are good.

145. Teaching is good. Lessons are well planned and work seen shows that there is effective continuity and progression. Good strategies are used so that the work meets the differing needs of the students. Teachers give good support during lessons and use an appropriate range of strategies and good questioning techniques to enhance progress. There is good use of extension tasks to maintain pupils' interest, especially those who have potentially high attainment. Time is used to good effect.
146. There is effective leadership and management. Staff work well as a team. Since the last inspection, results have improved and the subject makes a significant contribution to pupils' personal development. Resources for the use of ICT are limited in some teaching rooms, although there is good access within the main business studies area.

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

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2000.

GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-B		% gaining grades A-E		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Business Studies	18	50	16	89	78	3.11	1.91
Chemistry	1	0	6	100	47	1.00	0.87
Full Design and Technology	9	11	25	67	75	1.44	2.09
Other Social Studies	12	17	18	92	70	2.42	1.72
Religious Studies	15	0	19	60	76	0.87	1.96

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-B		% gaining grades A-E		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and Design	13	0	45	77	96	2.15	6.42
Biology	15	7	34	33	88	1.47	5.28
Business Studies	12	13	8	100	91	5.17	5.34
Chemistry	5	40	42	60	89	3.60	5.87
Communication Studies	4	25	30	100	93	6.00	5.42
Economics	3	100	36	100	88	9.33	5.41
English Literature	8	25	36	88	96	5.25	5.90
English Language	12	25	29	83	90	4.33	5.38
Full Design and Technology	9	11	29	100	92	4.00	5.37
Geography	10	50	37	100	62	6.60	5.73
History	7	0	34	71	89	3.71	5.43
Maths	6	50	45	100	89	7.67	5.99
Physics	8	50	41	88	88	5.25	5.72
Religious Education	13	15	35	92	91	4.00	5.57
Sociology	1	0	37	100	88	6.00	5.46
Spanish	1	0	40	100	91	6.00	5.75

Intermediate vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining distinction		% gaining merit		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Business	13					12.46	10.78

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The focus in mathematics was on GCE A level but GCSE mathematics was also sampled. The focus on science was on biology and chemistry, but physics was also sampled. In the mathematics GCSE courses, students have good attitudes to their work. Their interest is captured through the good use of open-ended questions. Good and appropriate questions were set by way of practice. Students know what they have to do to improve. Standards in physics are good.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Standards are well above the national average.
- Teaching is very good; teachers have a very good knowledge of their subject and involve the students in their learning through the very good use of questions, which is why they learn very well.
- Assessment is very good, enabling the teaching to focus on the needs of all students.

Areas for improvement

- The size of the group. More students would enhance discussion and independent learning.

147. Standards in the Year 2000 GCE A level examinations were well above the national average for the number of students with the higher A/B grades. All students earned a grade. In relation to their GCSE results, achievement was good. These very good standards have been maintained for the last few years. Although there have been more male students on the course, the female students have achieved equally well. Similar results were obtained in 2001.

148. The standard of work of current students is also well above average. Year 12 students in pure mathematics are acquiring a firm and secure algebraic knowledge. They simplify surds accurately and can factorise cubic expressions. In statistics students, know the difference between discrete and continuous distributions. They calculate the median and the quartiles from a set of discrete data, representing them appropriately in diagrams for comparison purposes. Year 13 students starting the mechanics module are able to write down an equation for a position vector of a particle moving from one point with a constant velocity and can solve appropriate problems. They maintain good notes for revision purposes and answer questions quickly and accurately, showing that their learning is secure. Year 13 students in the second pure mathematics module correctly integrate integrals of the form $(x+1)/x$. They explain their solutions to each other as part of the learning process, which is one reason why their achievement is good by the end of the course.

149. Teaching is very good overall. Its strength lies in the very good knowledge the teachers have of their subject. Together with the involvement of students in the solution of problems, this impacts very well on students' learning. In one lesson seen, the teaching was excellent, laying excellent foundations for further progress. Earlier work was revised quickly and very well at the start. The very good use of a video relating everyday experience to a statistical five-figure summary covered the main part of the scheme of work. Reference to a textbook on statistics was helpful to those students studying geography. Students were split into two groups to debate the skewedness or otherwise of distributions as the central point of their understanding. This was very effective, with one student, in particular, able to articulate his understanding to everyone. The teaching was at least good in the four lessons seen. Overall, planning is very good. Teachers have high expectations and the teaching methods are very good. No stone is left unturned.

150. Assessment is very good. The marking of students' work is very thorough, with worked examples by the teacher in those questions where students' answers are incomplete or wrong. Sometimes the teacher's solutions are long, detailed and followed up in class. Module results available during the inspection confirm the standards indicated by the examination results.

151. Students' study habits are developing well. They read over completed notes, finish work set and work in private study on further reading or seek further teacher support if they feel the need. They work well together and enjoy the challenge of the work. In two of the lessons there was a great deal of individual work and little discussion, one aspect of learning that can be improved.
152. The very good teaching and learning result from a very well led and managed department. There is a commitment to maintaining high standards and the teaching staff are deployed very well. The principle of two modules per two terms through the course ensures that effective progress is maintained through an equal amount of time for teaching and learning per module per week. The six modules are covered in the six terms this way. This is good, as it allows for the full development of concepts new to students in Year 12. Standards have improved since the last inspection and this improvement is good.

Biology

The overall provision in biology is **unsatisfactory**.

Strengths

- The new strategies that have started to support the Year 12 students.
- The new resources and schemes of work that have been developed.

Areas for improvement

- Raising the achievement of students relative to the prior attainment.
- Implementing strategies for assessment, monitoring and support of students.
- Developing strategies to provide compensation support in the Year 13 advanced course.

153. The results in the GCE A level examinations over the last three years have usually been well below the national average, the one exception being 1999 when there was a slight improvement. The results of the students taking the AS course in 2001 were poor, with almost one-third of the candidates being unclassified. These results show that progress measured against the prior attainment of students is unsatisfactory.
154. The standard of work of the current students in Year 12, who are only six weeks into their course, is average; students are coming to terms with the complex structure of sugars and starches, linking their structure to use. They also understand enzyme action and bonding. The standard of work of Year 13 students is below average; they have relatively weak practical skills as seen in the time taken to complete a practical of gram staining of bacteria. Many students have poor organisational and note-taking skills; this is seen with students having notes of different subjects mixed up and the notes lacking a framework. The use of techniques such as spider diagrams is rare.
155. Teaching is satisfactory overall, with some being very good. In the better lessons, the students are given good guidance as to how to organise their work and consolidate the learning. There is a good variety of activities and the students work in different groupings, each contributing to a good pace. Where teaching has shortcomings, the lessons are teacher dominated and the initiative to correct weak or non-understanding is left to the students. Weaknesses in teaching are also seen when looking at the students' folders, where unfinished work is not challenged and the lack of guidance on note-taking skills means that students do not have a framework on which to hang their learning. Much of the written work demanded of the students is in the form of personal note taking and this is frequently in the form of long paragraphs. Highlighting, sub-titling and annotation of notes is rarely seen. There is insufficient use of structured questions to follow up the work and ensure consolidation of understanding and learning. Teachers have not been in the habit of marking these general notes and questions are also frequently left unmarked. Use is made of past test papers and these are marked, although there is little evidence of follow up when poor marks are obtained. Overall, these significantly contribute to the unsatisfactory progress of the students.
156. The students work steadily and in lessons complete the work requested of them. However, work

produced outside lessons is not always complete. Their folders show incomplete work that has not been handed in and the lack of completion of a recent homework meant three-dimensional models were not available to assist learning in a lesson seen. A closer monitoring of students' work is required to assist the learning of all students.

157. The leadership of the subject is unsatisfactory in that there is no formal structured monitoring of the students' progress through assessments and general marking. This is beginning to be done with the current Year 12 students who have completed a self-evaluation form of their own strengths and weaknesses identifying areas where they need additional support but it is still not available for Year 13 students. The number of students continuing from the AS examination to the A2 level is low and most of those students have low AS results. No compensatory procedures have been put in place to allow the students time to develop their understanding in key areas of work that will be required in the A2 examination. Staff teaching the Year 12 students have developed new schemes of work and resources and have a number of strategies planned to assist the students. Progress since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory.

Chemistry

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

Strengths

- Standards are above average and show improvement on past years.
- Teaching is very good and stimulates students' learning.
- A well-developed problem-solving approach is evident that reflects the nature of the new course.
- Regular homework and a very good system for revision prepare students well for internal and external examinations.
- An effective system of self-assessment helps students pinpoint what they need to do to get better.

Areas for improvement

- Schemes of work.
- The use of mathematics.

158. Standards in the 2000 A level examination, taken by just four students, were below average, but this small cohort makes any comparison unreliable. Underachievement is rare. More students have since taken up the subject. Whilst no comparison can be made until national statistics are published, 2001 GCE A level results give provisional indication of significant improvement on the results of the previous three years. All students that were entered gained at least a pass grade. Although the proportion gaining the higher AB grades was a little below the national average, value added studies indicate that nearly all students achieve satisfactorily. Pleasing numbers take the AS course in Year 12 and most choose to continue with the A2 course in Year 13. Few drop the A2 course once it is chosen.
159. Standards in both Years 12 and 13 are above average. This is partly because the entry requirements to the course are high but also because of the very strong teaching and good work ethic of the students who choose the courses. Year 13 students made good progress in their learning. This was evidenced in a lesson which, as a result of demanding teaching, proceeded with a brisk pace. Students learnt what a buffer solution was and how this worked to counteract changes in acidity or alkalinity, keeping the pH of the solution the same. The majority learnt this quickly, using their existing knowledge of Le Chatelier's principle and dynamic equilibrium to good effect in applying the ideas to new situations. Written work is generally well-organised and is based on a problem-solving approach, but there is scope to increase the amount of more open-ended writing and note-taking. Students take some opportunities to use information and communication technology such as in data logging and using word processors, but this aspect of work is generally under-represented.
160. Students in Year 12 have just started their AS course and the majority have settled in well. The more able students in particular are grasping the more difficult intellectually demanding concepts well and mastering ideas about atomic structure and all molar calculations. In the lesson seen, most demonstrated above average levels of practical skills when carrying out titrations between

a “mono-protic” acids and an alkali, and were very aware of sources of error or inadequate practical techniques. Most could follow the calculations involved and the more able students quickly followed the steps required to calculate successfully. However, some students found difficulty undertaking simple numerical calculations using the idea of proportionality, reflecting their skills in mathematics. A few are not keeping up with the pace of work required by the course and are starting to fall behind.

161. The teaching of the subject is very good and, through, this students experience a good range of learning approaches. Both teachers have very good subject knowledge and plan individual lessons well with the demands of the examination syllabus in mind. Lessons start very clearly with objectives being communicated very well. Time is used to the full in lessons. Students work with confidence, either independently or in small groups. For example, in the practical work on titrations, one student undertook the practical work whilst the other assessed their performance. Learning proceeds at a brisk pace. Students are equipped with the latest chemistry textbooks and make good reference to these in their work. When given the chance, most rise well to the challenges set by the teachers, especially in Year 13. The close attention that is given to examination technique is helping many students to maximize their grades and focus on developing areas of weakness. Teachers do not always ensure that all students develop their writing skills and questioning is not always used effectively so that students link a series of ideas together well.

162. The subject is very well led and the teachers are continually striving to improve provision. Rigorous monitoring of students’ progress helps to ensure that they receive timely help and support at all times. New schemes of work have been developed that set out the course on a lesson-by-lesson basis, but this does not adequately show how the social, moral and ethical aspects of the subject and practical skills will be developed or how information and communication technology will be incorporated. A very useful and manageable system of topic reviews is helping students assess how well they are doing and helping targets for learning to be set through regular discussion. The quality of guidance has improved since the last inspection.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

Design and technology was sampled. Teaching is satisfactory. Students achieve satisfactory standards in relation to the course expectations. They understand a range of materials and manufacturing processes. Their graphical skills are sound. Results in external examinations improved last year and all students gained a pass. However, with the introduction of the new examination, results dropped this year.

BUSINESS

The focus of the inspection was business studies. Economics was sampled and standards are good.

Overall provision in business related courses is **good**.

Strengths

- Pass rates are above national averages in Business Studies at GCSE and AS Levels and in AS and A2 Levels in Economics.
- Skills and strategies needed to succeed in examinations are effectively developed.
- Teaching is good.
- Students are committed to their own success and work purposefully to achieve within and between lessons.
- There is effective leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

- The development of strategies for meeting the individual needs of learners.
- Strategies for checking and consolidating understanding within individual lessons.
- The use of ICT to support both vocational learning and the development of students’ key skills.

163. Pass rates on GCSE and AS Levels in Business and AS and A2 Levels in Economics all exceed national averages. Results show an improving trend and students at advanced level perform better than would be predicted from their GCSE results.
164. Standards in all courses are good. Across the range of subjects inspected, students produce written work of a standard that is at least satisfactory and often very good in relation to the level of course. For example, at Intermediate GNVQ level, they effectively dissected and analysed real customer care policies drawn from McDonalds and Euro-Disney. The interest of students was sustained throughout the lesson and they rose to the challenge with intelligence and enthusiasm. Students at all levels are committed to succeeding in their studies and show a mature attitude towards the completion of their assigned tasks. In work that involved the construction of cash flow statements, students were required to complete these independently on a manual basis, having seen the teacher complete examples on the whiteboard. Whilst the students gained full awareness of the process, the lack of ICT equipment limited the students' skill levels and awareness of everyday applications of spreadsheets as normal business practice.
165. The quality of teaching is good. Lessons are well planned, taught by well-qualified teachers with a good command of their subjects and supported by written handouts and visual aids produced to good professional standards. Considerable emphasis is placed on the development of the strategies and skills needed to succeed in public examinations. Students are well supported in developing notes for examination revision and given useful advice on how to produce examination answers that exploit their knowledge to the full. The atmosphere within lessons is purposeful and productive. Teachers provide thorough and helpful feedback and, where they are responsible for assessment decisions, their judgements are sound and securely based. Teachers use strategies for checking and consolidating learning. These mainly involve occasional substantial tasks and questioning of students. Although most questioning is reasonably effective, it is sometimes insufficiently directed to involve the full range of students. For example, in one lesson, the teacher's approach suited the majority of students who had achieved high AS Level grades but failed to meet the needs of a minority of students who demonstrated within the lesson a lack of more basic understanding of the subject matter. Where teaching also has shortcomings, information is conveyed in a minority of lessons to students in a competent manner but, apart from the one substantial task or exercise scheduled within the lesson, students' activities were largely confined to recording information in a relatively passive manner. These lessons failed adequately to consolidate new understanding or to check whether it had taken place.
166. Leadership and management are strong. All members of the teaching team are clearly committed to continuing improvement and are aware of national developments and issues. There are clear and effective policies and procedures for managing the learning process.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Information communication technology was sampled in the sixth form. Students studying the key skills course are making satisfactory progress. They use the word processing application with confidence and are developing an appreciation of its use in the wider sense, understanding the benefits of using information technology as a tool for communication. In vocational courses, students are making good use of the full range of programs and achieve well. In other subjects, there are examples of good use of computers, but, overall, there is insufficient application to enhance students' learning. Access to computers for private study is very limited.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Advanced Supplementary physical education, AVCE travel and tourism, and intermediate GNVQ leisure and tourism were sampled. The standards of those in Year 12 studying physical education are in line with the expectations of students at this relatively early stage of the course, whilst the provision of recreational activities for all Year 12 students enriches the sixth form curriculum. Standards in travel and tourism and in leisure and tourism are average, with students achieving well. They are effectively taught and respond in a very positive manner. They make good use of computers in their work and

work with increasing independence as they research topics. Teachers provide good guidance and plan effectively.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus of the inspection was theatre studies. Art was sampled and, in 2000, all the candidates entered gained passes in the A level examination, but as the group was small, numbers cannot be compared with national figures. The numbers gaining passes in 2001 are broadly similar. AS level has been introduced, but students have not gained the results which might have been expected. Students are working at an appropriate level. They demonstrate appropriate technical skills to produce good quality tonal drawings and use paint well. Teaching is good. Pupils appreciate the studio style of the teaching. They benefit from the teachers' subject knowledge and the confidence to develop their work further.

Theatre studies

Overall, the quality of provision in theatre studies is **very good**.

Strengths

- Teaching is very good.
- Students respond very positively and learn very well.
- Standards of work are good, with above average examination results.

Areas for improvement

- Accommodation, which is barely adequate.

167. In 2000, all candidates for GCE A level gained at least a pass grade, which is better than the national average, and has been the case in previous years. Over a third have gained grades A or B. A large number of Year 12 students were entered for the AS examination in 2001, with almost all achieving pass grades, the great majority at grades A to C.

168. The inspection evidence confirms this picture. Standards are above average. Students are very focused on their work and have a good grasp of the texts that are prescribed for their study. They can write well and are adept at working on the plays in their lessons. They prepare, present and evaluate their work well, whether in improvisation or in scripted work. They are equally at home with Shakespeare, Sheridan, Chekov and contemporary drama. They can bring out the status of characters well and appreciate the importance of physicality in stage production. They keep useful notes and log their learning experiences. They benefit particularly from participation in workshops led by outside groups: the department has links with the Young Vic, the Royal National Theatre and the Scarlet Theatre Company.

169. The quality of teaching is very good. Teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of the texts they teach and lessons are well planned to fully engage the students. Lessons are also characterised by very good pace and make demands on the students. Good work receives due praise; there are high expectations, although students could be encouraged to take more responsibility for their own learning.

170. The students have a very positive attitude to their work; as a result of this and the very good teaching, they learn very well. They work very well together, in pairs and in groups. They are totally committed to their work, putting in 100 per cent in lessons – they respect their teachers and follow instructions meticulously. This leads to some exciting work, as students discover different ways in which to interpret a script, and derive much enjoyment from the subject. Some of them are also committed to the extra-curricular drama in the school – they are ready both to work with younger students in clubs and to throw themselves into school productions.

171. There are two specialist teachers, who are very well qualified. The head of department, though not new to the school, has only been in post since the start of term, but has inherited a well-organised department. Both teachers are very keen to improve their teaching and regularly attend courses and workshops. They recognise the need for further technical training in order to

make better use of the ICT facilities that are becoming available to them. The department is satisfactorily resourced, but the accommodation is barely adequate for the subject at this level. The two drama teaching areas are small and, when numbers of students are large, as they were last year when 18 took the AS course, space is somewhat restricted. This has not improved since the last inspection, but good progress has been made in the subject overall.

HUMANITIES

Geography and history were the focus of the inspection. Government and politics, law and sociology were sampled. One lesson in government and politics, one in sociology and two in law were seen and students' work was examined. All are popular subjects and it is clear that students are being well taught and that they are achieving well in relation to their prior attainment. They responded very well to an exercise on the political and economic features of Thatcherism and to a lesson on gender socialisation. In their written work and in law lessons observed, students showed that they can address the issues related to both civil and criminal law. Students engage well in discussion and apply their knowledge well to current situations that face students of their own age. Teachers are very knowledgeable about the subjects and teach well. Lessons are relevant and interesting and students have the confidence to contribute well. Departmental documentation is very good in each subject.

Geography

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is very good.
- Results are well above the national average and show good value added.
- There are very good relationships between students and with staff.
- A wide range of fieldwork opportunities is provided.
- Leadership and management are very good.

Areas for improvement

- The use of information and communication technology in all units of study.

172. The result of the 2000 examinations show well above average performance. All students entered gained a pass. There is a significant value added based on prior attainment of the students in the GCSE examinations.

173. From inspection evidence, standards are well above average. Year 12 students have already acquired a good grasp of the subject. They confidently compare changes in rural communities in Yorkshire with those in Kenya, carefully assessing the impact on the physical environment and human activities. They note positive as well as negative impacts of, for example, tourism development on rural life. Year 13 students extend their prior knowledge and understanding of population studies to debate the problem of international migration and confidently give illustrated presentations on individual case studies. They use statistical analyses well to illustrate their findings. Attitudes to learning are very good. The students are attentive during discussions and respond well to questions from the teacher. They concentrate well and remain fully involved throughout the lesson. Most are confident in making presentations and contributions to discussions. The more reticent ones are sensitively encouraged to express their views. There is insufficient use of ICT to support individual work and in its application to lessons and research.

174. Teaching is very good overall. Teachers show very good knowledge of the subject, some based on work related experience outside the classroom. This enhances the students' appreciation of real life situations. They respond enthusiastically, making contributions from their own experience. Lessons are very well planned so that the students have a clear picture of the lesson objectives. Teachers use a range of strategies that help to keep the students focused and attentive. The very good relationships established between staff and students and among students help to generate good discussions, the diffusion of ideas and the inclusion of all students.

175. The quality of management is very good. The course is well organised, with each unit of work clearly outlined so that the students know what is expected of them. The head of department has a clear vision for the course and all staff have a strong commitment to achieve high standards. The staff share ideas and work co-operatively. Record keeping is well established and data analysed for target setting. A range of fieldwork in Somerset, Dorset and London enhances the quality of provision. Fieldwork helps to raise the profile of the course and to achieve high standards of attainment. There has been good improvement since the last inspection.

History

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good.
- Results and standards are good overall and students achieve well.
- The department provides students with a good learning experience, including the ability to undertake independent research, and develops the key skill of communication.
- Assessment and target setting procedures are good.
- Documentation is very good.

Areas for improvement

- The use of computers.
- Resources in the school library, for students to extend their reading and research.

176. GCE A level examination results were satisfactory in 2000 and the majority of students met course requirements. The school has produced consistently sound results in recent years, although the number of students taking A level and AS examinations has been too small to make a valid comparison with the national picture. The majority of students achieve appropriately or better in relation to their results at GCSE and there is no significant difference between the results of male and female students.

177. The standard of work in Year 13 is good and all students are achieving well. They show that they have built on their experience in Year 12 and gained both in knowledge and maturity. They can cope with complex issues, for example the political factors that undermined democracy in Italy and contributed to the fascist dictatorship of Mussolini. They are confident in completing research tasks and in sharing their findings with others. The key skill of communication is developed well and written work shows that they have the potential to develop the high level of skills in essay and document work required by the higher level of work at A2. Most students approach their work with confidence and enthusiasm and they support weaker students in the group very well. Students in both year groups are able to work together well. This is a clear indication of the inclusive nature of study in history classes at this level and is clearly a factor that has contributed to the progress and success of individuals within the group.

178. Students prepare well for classroom discussion and they use an appropriate range of books provided by the department. At present, the school library is not stocked in a way that enables them to undertake extended research on their own. Students plan their work well and their files of notes are well managed. A particular feature of work in Year 13 is the ability of students to take responsibility for their own work as active rather than passive participants in lessons. Students in Year 12 are now well into the course and have made good progress. Some of them are experiencing difficulty with unfamiliar vocabulary, but they are methodical in creating glossaries of new vocabulary and political terminology. They have sound reading skills, both in scanning extracts for information and in reading comprehension. Some students initially have difficulty in coping with the complex events and unfamiliar names in the Russian Civil War, but they are confident and well motivated. Because of this, they respond to the challenge of the work very well. They have good skills in deduction, which was observed in a lesson on the issues relating red and white successes to specific events during the civil war. Students show good levels of understanding in evaluating broad trends in studying the history of the USA in the period after the end of the First World War. They find this topic easier: the course content is

much more familiar because there is an element of continuity from work at GCSE.

179. Teaching is good and students learn well. Teachers are using strategies that promote a high level of participation. They have also developed effective assessment procedures that contribute well to student achievement and motivation. Students are encouraged to research and to make decisions about the past based on what they have read, rather than to rely on class notes. Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic about the subject and students share in this enthusiasm. Students have the opportunity to use a variety of carefully chosen resources, but they do not have sufficient opportunity to use computers for research and word processing, unless they have facilities at home. The department fails to use computers in class sufficiently frequently. For example, students are familiar with a seminar style presentation and they are confident in the use of an overhead projector, but do not have the opportunity to enhance their presentations by using Power Point. Statistical information is used effectively to extend student understanding, for example in relation to economic and social trends in the USA. Learning is well managed. Students gain not only skills specific to history, but also those that are transferable to other subjects and to the workplace. It is clear that they also enjoy the subject and half of the A2 group plans to study history at university.
180. The high quality of teaching and learning are a result of the very good management and development of the subject. The department has a good balance of responsibility for different aspects of the course and resources and assessment procedures are being used very well. The teacher with responsibility for the subject has planned the introduction of the new system of examinations very effectively and has ensured success for the first cohort of AS students. There has been good improvement since the last inspection.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus was on English literature, English language and literature, and French.

English

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good, with teachers having particularly effective strategies for preparing students for examinations.
- Students have positive attitudes to the subject.
- The leadership and management are very good.

Areas for improvement

- Opportunities for students to become more independent learners.

181. The GCE A level examination results in 2000 in both English literature and English language and literature were below national standards. In the English literature examination, eight students were entered, seven passed, with students attaining a range of grades from A to D. In the English language and literature examination, ten out of the twelve candidates passed, attaining B to E grades. These results represent good achievement when the students' attainment levels at the start of the course are taken into account. In 2001, fourteen students took the examination in English literature, with all achieving a grade A to E. In the language and literature examination, fourteen students were entered, with two thirds attaining a grade C to E and a third failing to pass. In Year 12, twelve candidates were entered for English literature AS level, and all passed, with a spread of grades from A to D. In the English language and literature AS level, 21 candidates took the examination and 90 per cent passed, achieving a range of grades from A to E, with a preponderance of higher grades achieved. No national comparisons can yet be made.
182. Inspection evidence shows that standards are in line with the national average, with students on target to attain a full range of grades in both the English literature and English language and literature A-level and AS level courses. Although still at an early stage of the course, Year 12

language and literature students are acquiring a good grounding in analytical techniques, for example, in their work on Wilfred Owen's poetry and other work on text transformation. Students are starting to develop the skills of writing extended, detailed, analytical pieces. Some good work was seen during the inspection on students honing their writing, through the drafting process, on Miller's *A View from a Bridge*. A-level students can analyse literary texts successfully and can compare and contrast treatments and themes effectively. Higher attaining students in Year 13 are on target to achieve high grades. Some work on John Donne's poetry seen was detailed, analytical and full of interesting insights. In a Year 13 lesson, where students were looking closely at a speech from *Much Ado About Nothing*, they showed that they had a good understanding of ways in which the dialogue signalled clues about character and plot.

183. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge that enables them to ask probing questions, as well as to explain the finer points of literary analysis. In a Year 13 English language and literature lesson, the teacher's specialist subject knowledge underpinned her explanations and enabled her to ask specific, targeted questions, which helped to deepen the students' understanding of how to analyse a passage from Shakespeare. The focus was on aspects of the spoken word. The teacher's use of technical language, such as 'discourse conventions' and 'phonological features', reinforced the students' learning and they were challenged to think hard. Teachers use the technique of 'modelling' textual analysis effectively. Students have positive attitudes to the subject, which they take seriously; they want to do well. Procedures for marking and assessing work are very good. AS and A2 work is very helpfully marked against examination criteria. Teachers enter into a dialogue with students about their work and how they can improve. Comments are very encouraging (for example: 'You are an excellent writer ...') and teachers give very good guidance in lessons in preparing students for examinations. They closely relate work covered to the criteria and give very helpful advice as to how students can improve. Nevertheless, there are insufficient opportunities for students to develop independent learning skills.

184. The leadership and management are very good. The department uses data to evaluate how well students are doing and to measure whether or not students achieve as well as, or better than, expected. Teachers have produced very helpful model answers that show how to prepare for examinations and schemes of work have all been updated to accommodate recent curriculum changes. Students have opportunities to explore the subject widely, a good example of which is the forthcoming Radio 4 recording of *Book Club* in which sixth form students are discussing Nick Hornby's *About a Boy*.

185. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Standards in the GCSE resit examinations have improved and a weekly lesson is now timetabled. Examination results and students' work seen show that standards have risen at A level. The department has responded well to the recent curriculum changes and is in a good position to improve further.

French

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

Strengths

- Attainment in Year 13 is well above average. The highest attaining students speak fluently and accurately and their aural comprehension is very good.
- Students in Year 13 have opportunities to visit France regularly. These visits are effective in raising their confidence and knowledge of the culture.
- Students make good progress in Year 12 in the transition from GCSE to AS level work.

Areas for improvement

- The quality and range of written French in Year 13.
- Speaking skills in Year 12 as students lack confidence in unrehearsed situations.
- The development of further opportunities for independent learning.

186. Low numbers of students have studied French in recent years. In 2000, no students were entered for A level examinations. There continue to be low numbers studying French; three in

Year 13 and two in Year 12. Three students were entered for A/S level in French in 2000. All gained a grade. Two achieved the higher grades A and B. All three students benefit from their linguistic background where French is spoken by members of the family. There are no boys studying French.

187. Standards in Year 13 are well above average. All students make very good progress. They understand French spoken at normal speed without difficulty and sustain and initiate conversations, discuss their ideas and give opinions. Comprehension of written texts is sometimes outstanding and students read aloud confidently and with very good pronunciation and intonation. They show a very good understanding of the literary text they are studying and analyse characters and plot well. Written skills vary in standard. The more able write complex language well; the least competent make recurring grammatical errors. Evidence in files reveals that students have not yet developed the ability to write in a variety of styles.
188. Standards in Year 12 are satisfactory. The two students who gained grades B and C in GCSE examinations in 2001 have made a rapid transition to more advanced work. They can identify important details from recordings of language spoken at a natural pace and reading comprehension is good. They are beginning to develop vocabulary and idiom independently by using dictionaries. The emphasis in the course on mastering grammatical structures ensures they write with increasing accuracy. They use the Internet to consolidate their knowledge of grammar and gain access to authentic and up to date written texts. However, both students lack confidence when speaking and are reluctant to offer more than the minimal response to questions or to engage in conversations.
189. Teaching is good and skilful questioning in class gives students the opportunity to produce their best work. Lessons have clear aims and teachers plan varied tasks to consolidate language skills. They ensure students have a sound knowledge of the structure of the language by providing plenty of practice in complex grammar, but there are insufficient opportunities to write at length using a wide range of vocabulary and idiom. Students show interest in lessons and enthusiasm for their work. In Year 13, they are very keen to answer and ask questions. Since the beginning of this academic year, they are taking more responsibility for their own learning. Recent changes to the schemes of work ensure that students now have more opportunities to use ICT and to develop their research skills and there are plans for work experience in France for Year 12 students in 2002.
190. By Year 13, students show a mature approach to their studies and they are keen to discuss and reflect on their progress with a visitor. They have a very positive attitude to school and to the education they are receiving.