

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **CLITHEROE ROYAL GRAMMAR SCHOOL**

Clitheroe

LEA area: Lancashire

Unique reference number: 119812

Headteacher: Stuart Holt

Reporting inspector: David Morton

13154

Dates of inspection: 11<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> March 2002

Inspection number: 192858

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

© Crown copyright 2002

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Grammar
School category:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	11 to 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	York Street Clitheroe Lancashire
Postcode:	BB7 2DJ
Telephone number:	01200 423118
Fax number:	01200 442177
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Christopher Carr
Date of previous inspection:	January 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities (sixth form)	Aspect responsibilities (sixth form)
13154	David Morton	Registered inspector		How well students are taught How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students
19374	Wendy Sheehan	Lay inspector		Students' attitudes, values and personal development How well the school cares for its students
23926	Douglas Howorth	Sixth-form coordinator	Geography	The school's results and students' achievement How well the sixth form is led and managed
30512	Margaret Bailey	Team inspector	Chemistry Physics	
11190	Winifred Burke	Team inspector	Art and design	
12825	Niall Carr	Team inspector	Psychology	
17269	Jean Johnson	Team inspector	Biology	
25744	Trevor Osgerby	Team inspector	Politics	
19452	Anthony Pearson	Team inspector	History Physical education	
19214	Geoffrey Price	Team inspector	English literature	
17923	Michael Shaw	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
17404	Judith Tolley	Team inspector	French	
13623	James Waddington	Team inspector	Business studies Sociology	
8341	William Wimshurst	Tem inspector	Mathematics	

The inspection contractor was:

Power House Inspections

Grasshoppers

1 Anglesey Close

Chasetown

Burntwood

Staffordshire

WS7 8XA

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Complaints Manager

Inspection Quality Division

The Office for Standards in Education

Alexandra House

33 Kingsway

London WC2B 6SE

## **REPORT CONTENTS**

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>7</b>
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
 <b>ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM</b>	
 <b>PART B: COMMENTARY</b>	
 <b>WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL</b>	<b>16</b>
 <b>WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED</b>	<b>22</b>
 <b>WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?</b>	<b>24</b>
 <b>PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS</b>	<b>25</b>
 <b>PART D: THE SIXTH FORM</b>	
 <b>HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?</b>	<b>30</b>
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
 <b>HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?</b>	<b>31</b>
 <b>HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO STUDENTS?</b>	<b>34</b>
 <b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?</b>	<b>37</b>
Assessment	
Advice, support and guidance	
 <b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS AND STUDENTS?</b>	

**HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED? 38**

**PART E: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN  
AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES  
IN THE SIXTH FORM 40**



## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Clitheroe Royal Grammar School is a co-educational, selective foundation grammar school for pupils aged 11 to 18. There are 1189 pupils on roll of whom 586 are sixth-form students. The school, established by foundation in 1554, is situated on two sites: the main school is on the edge of the town and its sixth-form centre is in the heart of the town. Pupils to the main school are selected by an admission test; the school takes just over 80 per cent of its intake from its traditional catchment area across the Ribble Valley, the remaining coming from a wide area of East Lancashire. The school's sixth form is one of the largest in the country; currently, female students considerably outnumber males. Clitheroe is the market town of a large rural area, although two-thirds of sixth-form students travel from further afield and come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds, having attended other schools up to the age of 16. Attainment on entry to the main school is well above average and almost all of these pupils stay on into the sixth form. On entry to the sixth form, the full range of students is, overall, above average in its attainment as represented by results in GCSE examinations at the age of 16. Almost all students leave the sixth form for places in higher education. Applications for entry to the school at the start of Year 7 are four times as many as the school can accommodate; the sixth form is over-crowded. The school's population is stable, only 3.7 per cent of pupils joining or leaving the school other than at the usual times. Just over eight per cent of pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds; this is about average. The percentage of those for whom English is an additional language, 4.4 per cent, is a little above average, but none is at an early stage of acquisition of English. The percentage of pupils on free school meals, 1.6 per cent, is low. The percentage of pupils on the register of educational needs, one per cent, is low and none have statements. The school was nominated as a Beacon School in 1999.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

This is an excellent school. Pupils and sixth-form students obtain results that are very high. In 2001, the school's results in national tests taken at 14, and in GCSE, AS and A-level examinations taken at 16, 17 and 18, placed the school amongst the top five per cent of schools in the country. This is the result of the very positive attitudes pupils and sixth formers bring to their work and because of teaching and learning that are very good. Pupils and students achieve very well in relation to their prior attainment. High standards are sustained and steadily improved. The leadership of the headteacher is outstanding. He receives excellent professional support and dialogue from the deputy headteachers (curriculum and sixth form), and very good and reliable back up from the full senior management group. The main school is effectively managed by a further deputy headteacher. Clitheroe Royal Grammar School is a self-evaluating, developing and improving school that provides very good value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- Results in examinations are very high; pupils' achievement is very good.
- Teaching and learning across the school are very good and sometimes excellent.
- Pupils' attitudes to their learning are excellent.
- The headteacher's determination to ensure that all pupils enjoy the highest quality learning in lessons and from the broader life of the school is at the core of his outstanding leadership.
- Many pupils and sixth-form students take part in imaginatively chosen activities in school and the local community. They are also given extensive opportunities to travel the world.

- It is a friendly and caring school.

#### What could be improved

- Very good rigour and scholarship that are the backbone of much very good teaching in all subjects are not consistently matched by equal focus on how different pupils and students learn most effectively.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) is not yet a dynamic and motivating force at the heart of learning in the school, despite pupils and students showing very good individual awareness of its potential.
- There is not enough systematic sharing of the good practice of teaching and learning that exists within the school.

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Improvement has been good since school was last inspected in 1997. Results in GCSE and A-level examinations have improved steadily. Since 1997, the sixth form has increased significantly in size. The proportion of very good and excellent teaching has grown. The school's leadership and management have more impact on the overall quality of education provided by the school. The school has strengthened its programme of monitoring and support through the review systems that are more extensively in place. Although there remains a need to develop effective patterns of learning even more, significant improvement has been made in most subjects in the encouragement of independent learning and research. Standards in design and technology, music and physical education are now in line with those in other subjects in Years 7 to 11.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1999	2000	2001	2001	
GCSE examinations	A*	A*	A*	A*	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
A-levels/AS-levels	A*	A	A*		

The A\*s in this table indicate that results place the school in the top five per cent of schools in the country. The school's performance in National Curriculum tests at the age of 14, GCSE examinations at the age of 16, AS-level at 17, and A-level results at the age of 18 in 2001 were very high. The school is also in the top five per cent of all selective grammar schools.

In national tests at the age of 14 in English, mathematics and science results were very high in 2001 compared with all schools. Results at the age of 14 have been consistently very high for the past three years. Results in English have been marginally better than those in mathematics but not quite as good as those in science. In each subject, almost all pupils achieved very well in relation to their attainment when they began in the school in Year 7, sustaining very high standards. The school's improvement trend in these tests over recent years has been faster than the national trend.

In 2001, too, results in GCSE examinations were very high as they had been in the previous three years and 100% of pupils gained five or more A\* to C grade passes. Nonetheless, there has been gradual improvement over these years at a rate faster than that found nationally. Pupils' achievement in relation to their attainment at the start of the courses was very good for the high standards were sustained. Girls performed slightly better than boys in 2001. The school exceeded the challenging targets it set. Pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds were as successful as other pupils. Results in all subjects were much better than national averages, especially those in the sciences, ICT and French. Whilst being well above average, art and design, design and technology and English literature were relatively weaker than other subjects in the 2001 GCSE examinations. Out of 1226 entries, only 10 were not A\* to C grade passes.

At AS-level and A-level, results in 2001 were very high. Achievement was very good in relation to standards at the start of the course, high standards being maintained. Students added value to their performances in GCSE examinations. Data indicates that there has been a steady improvement in A-level results year by year, despite the considerably increased number of sixth-form students. Results in 2001 were best in computing and English literature, closely followed by biology, business studies, chemistry, economics, English language, English language and literature, German, physics, politics and sociology.

The very high results at each examination are a sign of the success of the school. However, there are very small pockets of underachievement in relation to prior attainment, mainly amongst the school's relatively average and below average pupils and sixth-form students. Learning and teaching do not always tackle ways of helping these pupils and students drive up their achievement. Standards seen in lessons in Years 7 to 11 are well above average or high in 50 per cent of lessons and above average in almost all other lessons. Pupils are on track to maintain high results in the 2002 tests and examinations. In the sixth form, standards seen in lessons were high in computing and well above average in all other subjects except art and design, mathematics, psychology and physical education where standards seen were above average. In the sixth form, too, therefore, students are on target to repeat the similar results of recent years in the 2002 examinations.

## **PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Attitudes to the school	Excellent. Pupils like school and are very positive in their approaches to their work. They value what the school has to offer and most participate fully.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. The atmosphere on the Chatburn Road site is calm, relaxed and purposeful. Pupils are friendly and polite. The sixth-form centre is very busy and areas easily become congested. By and large students cope with this well.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Positive and mutually respectful relationships are a strength of the school. Pupils develop a sense of responsibility and exercise it effectively.
Attendance	Very good. Attendance is well above average and pupils enjoy attending school.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching and learning is almost always good, frequently very good and quite often excellent. Lessons are rigorous and pupils and sixth-form students are prepared well for examinations. In Years 10, 11 and the sixth form, pupils and students are getting more opportunity to take responsibility for their learning than found at the previous inspection, although there is still a lot of scope for further development of this independence.

Teachers are committed and conscientious in their approach and lessons are generally planned in extremely careful detail; this is appreciated by pupils and students who remark of the confidence they have in their teachers. The teaching of English, mathematics and science is consistently good or better during Years 7 to 11. Nonetheless, even the best of teaching in some subjects lacks a full appreciation of the scope available for approaches to learning that take advantage of modern technology as an aid to teaching, and an understanding of how aspects of courses might best be tackled for the most effective learning. Lessons are generally challenging and the best make the most of the very positive attitudes and enthusiasm that pupils and sixth formers bring to their work. They respond well to demands made of them. Teachers usually plan work to meet the needs of groups of pupils within a class. Whilst pupils are very literate and numerate, teachers nevertheless pay good attention to how the skills of communication and number can be applied to lessons; they ensure that technical and subject-specific language is fully understood and appropriately used. Graphical representation of information is used well when this is appropriate. If given the opportunity, pupils in all years and the sixth-form students show that they can enhance their learning by responding to opportunities to discuss issues and evaluate the effectiveness of their work. There are too few occasions when ICT is used to enhance learning.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. Pupils and sixth-form students follow a full and extensive academic curriculum richly enhanced by a comprehensive and imaginative range of extra-curricular opportunities. Most notable of these, greatly valued by pupils and students, are the adventurous and comprehensive visits to mainland Europe and beyond.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very Good. The school meets the limited requirements of a small number of pupils. Although there is no central list of gifted and talented pupils, individual departments generally provide extension activities.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Although English is an additional language for just over four per cent of pupils, their command of English is good. Their learning is monitored and this process indicates that the progress of these pupils is very good and in line with that of all other pupils.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Opportunities for personal development are a strength of the school. Pupils and sixth-form students are given the chance to take part fully in lessons and other activities that aim to enrich their lives and increase their social and cultural awareness. Some of these, such as the annual Religious Education Conference and the school's own Remembrance and Commemoration Days give everybody moments of deep reflection about the nature of being part of a global community.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. It is a caring and friendly place and worthwhile effort is made to support pupils and sixth-form students through the setting of targets and checking of progress. The newly instituted heads of year have a clear view of their role in coordinating this support.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	Good. Most parents are happy with the school and trust it to do a good job for their children.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent. The headteacher and senior management team are successful in directing the school towards being an excellent grammar school for the twenty-first century. The development plan is tailored imaginatively to improve teaching further so that all pupils and sixth-form students learn to their fullest potential. The administration of the school is very efficient.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Key governors are fully involved in the school and care deeply for its continuing success. They work with the management of the school in holding the school to account and planning for its future development.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The headteacher and senior management have fingers on the pulse of the school. A sophisticated series of reviews is in place to help individuals and departments to evaluate their strengths and areas for improvement. At best these are thorough and have a positive impact on improvement.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The management of resources is effective and financial planning is very good and linked to the school's priorities. The bursars support senior management and governors in seeking best value and using available resources prudently.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children enjoy attending school.</li> <li>• Their children are expected to work hard; they make good progress and achieve high results.</li> <li>• They believe teaching to be good.</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed.</li> <li>• Behaviour is good.</li> </ul>	<p>A minority of parents feel that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the school is slow to respond to their concerns,</li> <li>• more demands could be made of the highest attainers,</li> <li>• the school does not always treat pupils with trust and are unhappy that pupils cannot stay in the building during breaks,</li> <li>• the range of day-to-day extra-curricular activities is limited.</li> </ul>

Inspectors agree with all the positive comments of parents. They believe systems are in place for the school to be responsive to parents concerns and that these usually work; they recognise that these sometimes break down but do not believe there is ever intended inaction. Inspectors believe higher attainers are given good challenges but agree that the style of these could sometimes be more varied. Inspectors did not spend enough time to be able to judge whether or not concerns about trust are justified. Behaviour amongst Years 7 to 11 is very good and on the evidence available inspectors can see no reason for making pupils leave the premises during breaks. Inspectors feel that at best, the extra-curricular provision in the main school is similar to that normally found. However, occasionally sessions are cancelled leaving pupils and students disappointed.

**INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM**

There are 586 students in the sixth form; it is one of the largest A-level sixth forms in the country. It is an open sixth form in which 60 per cent of students join it from other schools in the Ribble Valley and beyond. There are significantly more female than male students. The sixth form has grown significantly since the previous inspection. There are 54 students from ethnic minority backgrounds for whom English is an additional language; however, none is at an early stage of language acquisition. Four students have special educational needs. There is a very wide range of academic subjects at AS and A2 levels, supplemented by an extensive range of enrichment activities. The criteria for entry are a minimum of five grade Cs at GCSE. Overall attainment at the start of Year 12 is above average. Almost all pupils in Year 11 continue their education in the school's sixth form.

**HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS**

The school has an excellent and very cost effective sixth form. For the last three years results in A-level examinations have been very high, placing the school in the top five per cent of schools in the country. Consistently high results have improved steadily year by year. At this time of the year standards are well above average and on course to sustain these high results. Teaching and learning are very good in two out of three lessons and now and the proportion of excellent teaching is higher than usually found. Consequently, students' achievement is very good. The leadership of the sixth form is excellent. Nearly all students complete their courses and move on to higher education. Last year, 13 students gained entry to Oxford or Cambridge.

**Strengths**

- Results in examinations are very high.
- Achievement is very good as a result of very good teaching and the students' very positive attitudes.
- Excellent leadership gives a clear sense of purpose and direction.
- The school provides a very wide range of academic courses and a very good programme of enrichment activities.
- Support, guidance and the assessment of students' progress are very good.

**What could be improved**

- Despite some very good practice, a significant minority of lessons in most subjects take insufficient account of how students learn most effectively.
- Although independent learning is encouraged, some students still have too few opportunities to develop these skills, especially through the use of ICT and the Internet for research.

*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.

Subject area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	<b>Very good.</b> Achievement is very good as a result of very good teaching. The department ensures that students are helped to make progress in lessons.
Biology	<b>Very good.</b> Very positive students' attitudes, very good teaching and assessment strategies help students to achieve very good examination results.
Chemistry	<b>Very good.</b> Students achieve well above average standards because of very good teaching and their positive attitudes to work. Teachers' expertise is used effectively.
Physics	<b>Very good.</b> Very good teaching, demonstrating strong enthusiasm for the subject, leads to very good learning and well above average standards.
Business studies	<b>Very good.</b> Results are well above average. They are the product of very good teaching and the positive attitudes of students that strengthen their learning.
Computing	<b>Excellent.</b> High standards are consistently achieved because of excellent teaching and the dedication of students to their studies.
Physical education	<b>Good.</b> Standards and results are above average and students achieve well. Teaching and learning are good overall but some lessons do not challenge students sufficiently.
Art and design	<b>Good.</b> Standards are above average because teaching and learning are often very good. Students achieve very well. Accommodation restricts the scale and range of work.
Geography	<b>Very good.</b> Standards are well above average. Teaching and learning are very good and students make very good progress. Fieldwork is of a high quality.
History	<b>Very good.</b> Results and standards are well above average. Although teaching is usually very good, the range of active learning experiences is limited.
Politics	<b>Very good.</b> The results in 2001 were very good. The students achieve very well as a result of very good teaching.
Sociology	<b>Very good.</b> Results are well above average and represent very good achievement in relation to the students' prior knowledge. Teaching is very good.
Psychology	<b>Very good.</b> Standards and results are above average as a result of very good teaching. Students achieve very well as psychology is new to them in Year 12
English literature	<b>Very good.</b> Standards of work and examination results are very high because teaching is very good and students are enthusiastic about their studies.
French	<b>Very good.</b> Standards are well above average. Students achieve very well as a result of very good teaching.

In nine other subjects, twelve lessons were seen. Teaching in one theatre studies lesson was excellent; teaching was very good in classics and design and technology and consistently good in the other lessons observed.



## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	The support and guidance for students are very good. The use of assessment to track progress makes a very effective contribution to standards and achievement.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Leadership and management are excellent. There is a clear vision for further development. Planning has an unambiguous focus on maintaining high results and improving teaching and learning. Results are analysed and evaluated and the senior managers and governors are aware of the strengths and weaknesses.

## 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"> <li>• They really like the sixth form.</li> <li>• They value the visits and exchanges.</li> <li>• They believe the guidance and help they receive is very good; their progress is carefully checked.</li> <li>• They think teaching is very good and appreciate the quality of marking.</li> <li>• They value the Management Conference.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accommodation and space are too restrictive.</li> <li>• They do not get enough access to the Internet.</li> <li>• Some feel they are not always treated as adults.</li> <li>• Teachers do not understand students' need to do paid work when setting homework deadlines.</li> <li>• Form time is not always well used.</li> </ul>

Overall, students are very positive and supportive of the sixth form. Inspectors consider the students' views of the sixth form to be generally correct, although believe teachers are right to remind students that school work is a first priority.

## COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL**

#### **Results in examinations are very high; pupils' achievement is very good.**

1. Pupils enter the school at the age of 11 as a result of passing an admissions test. This means that pupils are amongst the highest-attaining 18 per cent of all pupils in primary schools in the catchment area. Their attainment on entry is, therefore, well above average. As pupils move through the school they continue to do well and sustain standards that are well above average. This maintenance of standards over five years represents very good achievement. Results in GCSE examinations have improved steadily year by year. The school meets the challenging targets set by governors. It is difficult to find like schools with which to compare these results, but they place the school amongst the top five per cent of grammar schools in the country. This is a considerable accomplishment. The school moves pupils forward successfully, thus adding value to the very good starting point pupils have at the beginning of Year 7.
2. Standards of literacy are high. Pupils' command of written and spoken language is fluent and accurate. Their work is well presented; homework is often produced using word-processing or other aspects of ICT. In English, written work is well planned over a range of genres. Pupils read well and with expression; they are very responsive to books. Similarly, pupils have very good skills of numeracy. They work things out at speed mentally as a result of being able to remember number rules accurately. Their investigative skills are good and they apply their knowledge of mathematics to the solution of real-life problems. Pupils' facility to use ICT and research on the Internet are well developed; however, opportunity to make full use and extend skills even further with the guidance of specialist teachers is limited owing to insufficient access to computers.
3. Very good achievement embraces most pupils in most subjects. Pupils are confident in their subjects and apply appropriate learning modes to them. For example, they know different subjects to some depth, sometimes to levels beyond those usually found for their age. In a Year 9 geography lesson, pupils responded very well to work about equatorial forests and the impact of their destruction on global climate and were able to use even A-level texts as part of their research. In mathematics, pupils also in Year 9, have very good algebraic skills and multiply algebraic terms confidently using negative and positive signs correctly. In a Year 8 music lesson, having learned at speed a two-part traditional African song, pupils were ready to improvise further harmonies themselves. The application of advanced understanding and skills is a feature of much of the work of pupils in Years 7 to 11. In a Year 11 English lesson pupils debated the arguments and counter arguments about abortion with great passion and clarity. They demonstrated the ability to think quickly and modify their arguments as they heard their opponents speak. A Year 10 physics group used graphs skilfully to plot work using different kinds of circuits and instruments; a parallel chemistry group grappled with electrolysis with equal confidence. They knew the names of electrodes and had a good grasp of particles and could discuss their characteristics. In French, Year 8 pupils comfortably used the language during the lesson, and in an English lesson had the ability to write soliloquies matching language to character and purpose around themes in Shakespeare's 'Richard III'.

4. A feature of pupils' learning is their willingness to persevere with difficult and challenging tasks, such as the algebraic equations in mathematics in Year 9. They respond well to teaching that expects them to stretch and extend themselves. They readily apply what they learn to new situations. This leads to achievement that reflects the progress gained in the acquisition of new knowledge, understanding and skill. Teaching usually matches work to pupils' needs with the result that learning is secure yet demanding.

**Teaching and learning across the school are very good and often excellent.**

5. Almost all teaching is good or better and a high proportion is very good. A significant proportion of teaching is excellent. This successful teaching is a distinctive feature of the school. It reflects the focus teaching and learning are given in the school development plan and is a continuing part of the school's effort to improve and develop its central practice. Pupils and sixth-form students value the expertise and understanding teachers bring to lessons. Most teachers are enthusiastic about their subject and transmit this in lessons. Teachers plan thoroughly and respond to the very good attitudes pupils and sixth-form students bring to lessons; lessons move at a quick pace and pupils are expected to work hard. The work usually challenges and extends pupils and demands intellectual energy and application. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and sixth formers. There are clear objectives of what pupils and sixth-form students should learn during lessons and this helps to make sure that high standards are maintained.

6. For example, in teaching the text 'Richard III' and expecting Year 8 pupils to write in a relevant way to the original, a confident teacher talked about the formal tone necessary for writing a soliloquy that acknowledged Shakespeare's conventions. Pupils were in no doubt that their choice of language was crucial to achieving the right impact in relation to the plot of the play and the characters concerned. Very good teaching extended this further through penetrating questions that deepened the pupils' reflection on characters and their motivation. The play text itself had been well taught for pupils were able to recall detail to help them in their own writing. In teaching about global warming to Year 9, the teacher provided a list of challenging activities from which pupils could choose; they had access to a variety of texts to help their research and further resources provided were excellent. This teacher knew when to intervene to support and deepen learning; for example, to point out detail about icebergs melting yet indicate this will not immediately affect sea level but seawater will expand as it warms. Teaching was confident with the result that it provoked interest and questioning in pupils. This is a feature of effective teaching and learning; the interaction between teacher and taught gives the pupils a focus and hold on their own learning. Lively delivery also motivates pupils to want to learn. In chemistry with Year 10, for example, the teacher used quick-fire questioning to recapitulate on earlier learning about electrodes, to get pupils to clarify their thinking and discuss the names of particles and charges. Developing complex concepts with pupils requires teachers to know their subjects well. This scholarship is a strength of the teaching in the school and is seen in most of its practice; the challenge for some teachers is to match this scholarship to a more acutely developed craft of teaching that knows how pupils learn. Interaction is a key. The questioning about electrodes, the identifying of tone and character in writing soliloquies through practical application, and knowing when to intervene to support and deepen learning about global warming are examples of interaction between pupils and between teachers and pupils. The debate about abortion was an exciting and impressive example of teaching and learning that were organised in a way that engaged and challenged pupils. By such means pupils make effective progress in

lessons. They leave rooms at the end of the hour with a buzz that is a marker that engaged learning has occurred.

7. In most lessons, teachers apply their excellent knowledge and enthusiasm for their subject to plan interesting and challenging lessons with learning objectives that are clear to pupils and students. In lessons seen, the range of methods used in 13 per cent of teaching is excellent and in almost 50 per cent is well varied; this teaching ensures that lessons are demanding and interesting, teachers have high expectations and pupils and students learn at a fast rate. Pupils work well together in pairs and small groups when this is required; most state that they enjoy active approaches to learning. They also are quick to praise the knowledge and enthusiasm of almost all teachers whatever teaching and learning approaches are used. Very good relationships lead to effective learning. In the lessons that are very good or better, about two-thirds of all lessons, teachers intervene whilst pupils are working to extend the learning and thinking of pupils and to ensure that progress is made in the lesson. Rather than just checking whether pupils are getting on with their work, teachers ask questions and discuss aspects of work that might be extended or improved; that is, they teach. Teachers have created learning environments in which pupils develop intellectually, physically, socially and culturally.

8. Homework is set assiduously and is usually effective as a challenging extension activity, often requiring demanding use of research skills on the Internet, in textual sources or through library research centres. The best teaching includes homework that reflects planning to meet the differing learning or examination needs of individuals and groups of pupils. It gives one-to-one support when necessary and offers opportunities for independence that are more frequent and better integrated than at the time of the previous inspection. Increasingly, pupils are required to think and make decisions about their learning. They are helped, however, to understand what they must do to improve their work. From time to time, groups of pupils' work and progress are looked at closely through a 'sweep' across all subjects by members of the senior management group. Pupils are commended for good progress and letters sent home celebrating this; if there are areas for concern, parents are invited to meet with staff to agree approaches that will support their children in achieving more consistent approaches to their work.

### **Pupils' attitudes to their learning are excellent.**

9. Pupils have very good attitudes to their work. They are responsive to the very good teaching they experience. They work well on their own and with each other. They exude a pleasant confidence that contributes to lively lessons and, when given the opportunity, which they often are, pupils enter into debate and discussion with enthusiasm and a desire to express their opinions. They do this with quiet respect for their classmates and members of staff. Pupils want to learn and respond well to the challenges provided in most lessons. As a result they develop very well as emerging adults as they move through the school. By Year 11 they are ready and willing to take on responsibility as prefects; earlier than this, from Year 7, they take seriously the opportunity to represent their form on the school council. A notable feature of council meetings is the confidence younger pupils have to express their views and suggest improvements; as they do their comments are listened to and appreciated by older pupils. Pupils behave well despite the cramped conditions imposed by an inadequate building at the Chatburn

Road site. Attendance is well above average; pupils enjoy coming to this school. Behaviour is very good and there are very few exclusions.

10. Parents are very positive about the school. They value its good features, and although a small number comment about the school only being interested in getting good results, the majority, whilst valuing the high standards also appreciate the overall ethos and ambience of the school. Parents are especially pleased that pupils are expected to work hard and encouraged to play hard and participate fully in the wide range of extra-curricular activities. This is why they are disappointed when some planned activities do not consistently take place. Despite occasional delays in responding to parents' concerns, the large majority of parents are pleased with the contact they have with the school, appreciate the information given to them about their children's progress through reports and consultation evenings and the current events detailed in the school newspaper 'The Royal Blazer'. This journal has a professional presentation and features many aspects of the general life of the school so that parents get to know what is going on and pupils gain pleasure from their successes and activities being celebrated within the community of the school.

**The headteacher's determination to ensure that all pupils enjoy the highest quality learning in lessons and from the broader life of the school is at the core of his excellent leadership.**

11. At the centre of the headteacher's excellence and sense of purpose in his leadership of the school is an understanding of and commitment to rich learning experiences. He applies these principles to the development of lessons yet extends them to the full range of learning experiences available to pupils and students by their membership of the community of the school. The school's development planning, idiosyncratic in its written form, is driven by a desire to enhance the way pupils and students learn. Key members of the senior management group understand this drive for improvement and play a leading role with the headteacher in seeking to raise the sights and aspirations of teachers. This is an exciting challenge since most teaching in the school is ripe for such a broadening of application. The focus is inclusive. It seeks to provide lasting, memorable and lived responses to learning that engage all aspects of pupils' emotional, intellectual and physical being. The aim is to harness the energy and curiosity of young people and emerging adults. It seeks to ensure that learning goes beyond knowledge and understanding to the impact that their acquisition can have on the way pupils and sixth-form students perceive their own lives in a global community, and to take them beyond the mere goals of examination success. The headteacher articulates this view of learning with clarity and enthusiasm; his colleagues know what he is driving at even though it may take a while for some to find a way to allow such ideas to infiltrate their daily practice. Such approaches demand an openness and willingness to experiment, make use of failures and celebrate successes. These are features of the headteacher that are readily recognised and articulated by many of his colleagues and governors. In seeking to lead the school towards its goal of being a grammar school of the twenty-first century, the headteacher has outlined the demanding task of linking the excellence and rigour of very good current teaching to the adventure and challenge of lessons where pupils and students have more autonomy. He has researched other schools where lessons might be learned. Some members of staff, too, are seeking to enhance their own professional skills by learning fresh approaches that will extend the present excellence. Through demanding targets in the excellent and useful annual reviews of members of the senior management group and those of subject departments, the headteacher has laid down a clear agenda. Some teachers already embrace it,

others nibble at the edges, a few back off. The senior management group and many heads of department are prepared to face up to such a challenge. There is a recognition that tradition alone will not maintain the quality and reputation of the school; appropriate innovation and change are also necessary.

12. The enrichment programme available to pupils and sixth-form students is a clear example of this wide vision. It is remarkable in its scope, adventure and challenge. It ranges from exchanges and educational visits to the four corners of the globe to specifically focused occasions such as the Management Conference for sixth formers or school concerts and theatrical productions.

13. The headteacher and senior management group recognise that this view of learning must pulse through the veins of daily practice. The school suffers from an acute lack of space. The accommodation does not compare with most schools. Key to a view of twenty-first century approaches to learning is access to ICT and the Internet. Whilst the ratio of pupils to computers is about average, space prevents it from being easily accessible. Computer suites are frequently used as general teaching spaces. Classrooms are not equipped with interactive computer systems that teachers can use in a more student-led approach to learning. Often the lack of space prohibits the use of more traditional active approaches to learning such as debate, group problem-solving, simulation or role-play. The school takes the acquisition of key skills of communication, number and ICT seriously at one level for these skills form part of the management conference, but ICT is too rarely a part of the demands made of students in lessons. Some staff use constraints as excuses. A more systematic sharing of good practice between teachers in the school is needed. Devising ways to unleash the energy that will bring responses to challenging circumstances is a major task for the leadership of the school. Senior management is sometimes too patient; it is not active enough in getting allies to the cause of personalised learning. Within the governing body there is expertise to engage, too, more actively with such a challenge. Governors are generally well informed and supportive but perhaps do not fully appreciate that they too can join the journey as critical friends. They might reasonably ask for more clarity and purpose in the development plan so that they can understand its implications more fully and devise more easily the criteria necessary to hold the school to account.

**Many pupils and sixth-form students take part in imaginatively chosen activities in school and the local community. They are also given extensive opportunities to travel the world.**

14. The community makes a good contribution to the curriculum of the school. Despite Clitheroe being a small market town, many firms and businesses provide pupils with opportunities for work experience. This is provided in the summer term for pupils in Year 10. Many pupils choose their own placements through family contacts. A small number are placed with the army for a residential week in Staffordshire. In Year 11, the school sets up a Young Enterprise Company; as well as entering enterprise competitions in the region, a particular strength of the scheme is the evident team-building skills it engenders. Here, too, the relationship with local companies is a strength. As a result of well-planned initiatives, pupils benefit from a good careers programme that prepares them well for the sixth form; the small number who leave school for employment are well supported.

15. As part of a programme of personal, social and health education, pupils benefit from programmes of drugs awareness and sex education. In both instances pupils are given information in

order that they can exercise informed choices. The school is preparing effectively for introducing citizenship next year; a modular ten-week course is presented where pupils have the opportunity to consider issues of exploitation in society, crime and racism. They also consider how communities learn to co-exist and need rules, whether in school or society at large. Decision-makers are identified and the working of parliamentary democracy examined for its strengths and areas that sometimes hold back progress. Within the programme for religious education, significant moral issues of the day are considered, especially in the way a culture's belief systems have an impact on moral views of right and wrong.

16. The breadth of the school curriculum is reflected in the very good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Community and charity work are very well represented. The traditions of this old-established school are sustained through annual ceremonial events such as the Commemoration Day when the school's place in the town is celebrated. Many of the townsfolk attended the school, are proud of it and keen to see it prosper. The school is meeting the challenge of these expectations in the context of establishing itself firmly as a grammar school of the twenty-first century. It is keen to make modern technology central to the way pupils learn and teachers teach, but with the same tradition of rigour for which the school is renowned. The relevance of this is how it connects to the lived culture of most pupils and sixth-form students. Their cultural development is well catered for by international visits and exchanges, frequent experience of the arts in school and through visits, yet the school also recognises that central to pupils' culture is their recognition of ICT as a means of seeking, storing, retrieving and representing information. This can sometimes be an individual and isolating process but with improved facilities it is recognised that it can be a socially interactive one. Nonetheless, pupils' social and moral development in the school is also encouraged in a way in which values are developed and they gain their own view of the world, some of it at first hand. Approaches to learning allow pupils to develop a moral stance: they feel strongly about the immorality of world poverty and the damage done by humans to the environment. Their study of tyranny in Year 9 alerts them to the ways in which people can devalue those who are different to themselves; their study of the Holocaust moves them to a keen awareness of this and the realisation of its implications offends them. They speak of their concerns about the world with feeling and empathy; they are not complacent because of their own relative comfort. They struggle to make sense of the codes of behaviour of their own and different cultures. The healthy ethos of the school is a direct result of the effort staff put into building an outward-looking social environment of trust and mutual respect. Pupils in Year 11 look forward to their visit to Ecuador, one of many visits to different cultures. Such opportunities are even more extensive in the sixth form; parents, pupils and sixth-form students value these but also recognise the more day-to-day provision the school makes for outward-looking awareness and personal growth.

### **It is a friendly and caring school.**

17. The values promoted in the school, therefore, contribute to its day-to-day ethos. Pupils come willingly to school, often enthusiastically, because they are valued as individuals, their aspirations are central to what the school stands for and teaching and pastoral support ensure that pupils are comfortable in the challenge of their endeavours. They are given opportunities to reflect on their own lives and their relationships with each other and the adults in the school who all, teaching and non-teaching staff, seek to provide a secure and positive learning environment. There are occasions when this reflection increases an awareness of a sense of community with its set of values,

principles and beliefs. For example, in a Year 11 English lesson, pupils debated the pros and cons of abortion. Pupils were aware of the strong religious views some cultures have of the issue and in such a strong historical context were aware of their own responsibility in taking an appropriate moral stance. Learning was impressive in this lesson because it was personalised; where do I stand on this issue? Pupils grappled with how people can respect views that are different from their own, whilst maintaining a commitment to what they consider themselves to be right. They not only gained in compassion for different viewpoints but also began to understand the nature of empathy and compassion as personal characteristics. Learning with this level of focus transfers to the way pupils view the community of the school itself. An outcome of this is the respect pupils hold for each other and adult members of the school. They value working in an harmonious environment. When inspectors spoke to pupils in Years 7, 9 and 11, each age group remarked on this as a feature of the school which they valued as much as any other. They enjoy working cooperatively with others who, whilst sharing similar values, sometimes come from a social or cultural background in which such values are expressed differently. An assembly taken by Year 9 on valuing mothers' contributions to the wellbeing of families took a particularly Christian viewpoint; such contributions have different forms of expression.

18. The school is effective in ensuring that pupils' health, safety and welfare are secure. Health and safety issues and risk assessments are applied in all aspects of the life of the school. Members of staff are well informed about child protection procedures and of the role of the designated member of staff. The school does not tolerate racist, sexist or social lack of respect. Pupils are well prepared for living in a global village, through the principles that underlie the school's aims and practically through the many opportunities to experience other cultures. Pupils' academic performance is carefully monitored and pupils generally feel secure in relation to the demands that courses make of them. They are carefully guided and suitable targets agreed with them. Teachers give them very good academic and pastoral support.

## **WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED**

**Very good rigour and scholarship that are the backbone of much very good teaching in all subjects are not often matched by equal focus on how pupils and students learn most effectively.**

19. Despite many examples of very good teaching and learning, some teaching fails to recognise that pupils and sixth formers learn in a variety of ways. They miss the chance to fit method to learning task. Little attempt is made to take account of modern technology or interactive approaches, even within resources that are quite sparse and the constraints of space. At the same time, some teachers who are effective in encouraging active learning through group or practical activity do not always bring to such activity the discipline and rigour found in the best traditional and direct teaching. For example, in a quite good lesson with Year 7 about 'Macbeth', learning was less effective as the lesson planning did not take sufficient account of how to link activities together and time them well to maximise the progress and understanding pupils could make. In contrast, it might be right sometimes to give a lecture followed by a handout of key notes, but it rarely is a dynamic way of learning. For example, little debate occurred when Year 9 made single-sentence prescribed notes in response to a video in religious studies about the Nüruberg Law of 1935, despite it being part of a study about the powerful concept of tyranny. In another lesson, poetry with



Year 11, discussions lacked the structure to bring rigour to pupils' learning and pupils were not encouraged to take notes to secure what simple analysis of the poems illuminated; this learning lacked sharpness and clear objectives in an ordered sequence. In a Year 7 mathematics lesson, pupils copied notes from the board about coordinates despite some having insecurity with negative numbers; this took time away from pupils grappling with the learning goals of the lesson in a practical way. In a chemistry lesson about the periodic table with Year 9, pupils worked well at a worksheet, but this might have been better as homework; the teacher was at something of a loss to know what to do as pupils worked independently using a textbook to find answers to the worksheet. In the best lessons, teachers know how to extend the learning of individuals in the second part of lessons. The expectations for this higher-attaining group were too low; the lesson lacked pace as all had to wait for the last to finish the worksheet task. The opportunity was missed to create a debate about the history, development and use to which the periodic table is put. This was an example of the pupils' commitment and endeavour to keep to task ensuring that learning occurred despite teaching that did not grasp ways in which pupils might learn more effectively through some practical application. Sometimes teachers lead pupils too readily. They do not allow pupils to question and show curiosity. For example in a mathematics lesson with Year 11 about three-dimensional trigonometry, the teacher led pupils through examples of the application of Pythagoras's Theorem and did not give them the opportunity to suggest what to do next but told them; as a result, some pupils were not sure where the results came from. This lesson is a good example of how pupils can learn sufficiently to do well in tests and examinations without having a real feel for the learning they are acquiring.

20. Lessons and teachers that follow the same pattern time after time sometimes lack the essential strengths of energy, enthusiasm and perception of learning needs based on a clear knowledge of what pupils know, understand and can do. When these are not taken into account, appropriate teaching methods are not considered sufficiently or the necessary shift of pupils' focus and concentration not acknowledged. Insufficient attention is paid to considering the individual learning needs of pupils and planning learning approaches to meet them. Learning in these circumstances is satisfactory rather than effective and demanding. For example, this often means that activities are always the same for the whole class and too often led entirely by the teacher; sometimes teachers tell pupils what they should know and understand rather than using questions, setting problems and practical tasks and expecting pupils to come up with appropriate outcomes. This can often mean that pupils are working at levels below those of which they are capable. This in turn leads to insufficient concentration and application and the focus of the lesson becomes hazy rather than sharp. Modern technology is rarely used to bring added dimensions to learning. Its scope as a research tool is not fully realised. Classrooms and specialist areas do not have common access to computer-assisted learning through, for example, the use of interactive whiteboards. Such facilities allow pupils to be partners rather than recipients in the learning processes. Teachers learn to trust pupils to find out and apply so that teaching can be about extending and deepening not telling and outlining. About a third of the current teaching in the school, whilst satisfactory and sometimes good, lacks the edge of sharpness and inventiveness that brings about the best learning and the most engaged pupils. At present, observing the mood of pupils leaving some lessons gives no indication that vital learning has occurred during the previous hour.

**ICT is not yet a dynamic and motivating force at the heart of learning in the school, despite pupils and students showing very good individual awareness of its potential.**

21. There are some examples of the successful application of ICT to support and enhance learning but it is not being used by all teachers in all subjects when the opportunity is there to do so. This is partly because the computer rooms sometimes have to be used for general teaching that does not embrace ICT as an enhancement to learning and teaching. In addition, although the school's overall ratio of pupils to computers is in line with national averages, there is no ICT facility in teaching rooms. It is not part of the toolkit of teachers even though pupils mostly have a sophisticated knowledge of its potential because of their use of it at home. This is despite the excellence of provision for computing as a sixth-form subject.

22. The school has recently stated a commitment to look at its provision and positioning of ICT facilities more closely. It recognises that as a means of interactive learning, rich in its immediacy of resources and information, it brings an added dimension to learning and teaching. Opportunities for such learning were missing in a number of subjects, notably biology, physics, business studies, art and design, geography, history, politics, psychology and French.

**There is not enough systematic sharing of the good practice of teaching and learning that exists within the school.**

23. Despite its many strengths, the teaching of subjects has a tendency to be insular. Departmental reviews uncover strengths and areas for improvement within departments. Not enough is done to share strengths when they are transferable within a department and especially across subjects. One department's area for improvement might be another's strength. The overall quality of teaching in the school is very good and sometimes excellent, but at present there are no planned procedures for striving to make all teaching as good as the best in the school. Some teachers are set in their ways; some of these ways have proved successful in ensuring that pupils and sixth-form students do well in examinations. However, without losing any of the rigour involved in such teaching, the quality of learning that is sometimes narrow is not as rich and enhancing as it should be. As a result, pupils and sixth formers do not always feel for the knowledge, understanding and skills they acquire, so that their learning is less readily a part of them; in a minority of cases it can appear to be merely bolted onto them simply for examination purposes.

**WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

24. In order to build further on the excellence apparent in the school, governors, headteacher and staff should concentrate on:

- (1) giving equal focus on how pupils and students learn most effectively so that it matches more consistently the very good rigour and scholarship that are the backbone of much very good teaching;  
(Paragraphs: 11, 13, 19, 20)
- (2) improving provision and use of ICT so that it becomes a dynamic and motivating force at the heart of learning in the school, in response to pupils' and students' awareness of its potential;  
(Paragraphs: 13, 16, 21-22)

- (3) introducing more systematic sharing of the good practice of teaching and learning that exists within the school.  
(Paragraphs: 13, 19, 23)

### **Sixth form**

- (1) taking more account, in a significant minority of lessons in most subjects, how students learn most effectively and providing more opportunities for learning that is inspired, pacey and demanding of the ways in which students and teachers interact;  
(Paragraphs: 16, 19, 20, 41, 74, 80-82, 94, 102, 116, 133, 139, 162, 166)
- (2) increasing the opportunities for some students to develop their skills of independent learning further still, especially through the use of ICT and the Internet for research.  
(Paragraphs: 16, 19, 21-22, 29, 34, 41, 47, 67, 87, 102, 120, 127, 144, 151, 162, 174)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### *Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection*

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 - 11	32
	Sixth form	78
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		53

### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection*

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
<b>Years 7- 11</b>							
Number	3	13	11	5	0	0	0
Percentage	9.4	40.6	34.4	15.6	0.0	0.0	0.0
<b>Sixth form</b>							
Number	10	41	24	3	0	0	0
Percentage	12.8	52.6	30.8	3.8	0.0	0.0	0.0

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

### *Information about the school's pupils*

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	<b>Y7 – Y11</b>	<b>Sixth form</b>
Number of pupils on the school's roll	603	586
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	12	7

<b>Special educational needs</b>	<b>Y7 – Y11</b>	<b>Sixth form</b>
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	9	4

<b>English as an additional language</b>	<b>No of pupils</b>
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	54

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	<b>No of pupils</b>
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	5
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	39



## Attendance

### Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.7
National comparative data	8.7

### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	59	61	120

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	59	59	59
	Girls	61	61	61
	Total	120	120	120
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	100 (98)	100 (98)	100 (98)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	100 (94)	100 (98)	99 (95)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	59	59	59
	Girls	61	61	61
	Total	120	120	120
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	100 (98)	100 (98)	100 (98)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	94 (95)	100 (98)	100 (98)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	47	73	120

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	47	47	47
	Girls	73	73	73
	Total	120	120	120
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	100 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	69.4 (67.7)
	National	39.0 (38.7)

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

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

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	122	148	270
	Average point score per candidate	26.0 (25.1)	25.0 (24.3)	25.1 (24.3)
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9 (17.8)	17.9 (18.8)	17.4 (18.2)

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	47	73	120	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Average point score per candidate	26.0	25.0	25.1	N/A	N/A	N/A
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.9	17.4	N/A	N/A	N/A

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

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	27
Pakistani	33
Bangladeshi	5
Chinese	12
White	1102
Any other minority ethnic group	10

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	16	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

### ***Teachers and classes***

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	69.92
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17

#### **Education support staff: Y7 – Y13**

Total number of education support staff	13
Total aggregate hours worked per week	345.5

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	72
---	----

#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13**

Key Stage 3	27.6
Key Stage 4	21.7

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2000/2001
----------------	-----------

	£
Total income	3 508 404
Total expenditure	3 474 953
Expenditure per pupil	2 955
Balance brought forward from previous year	3 453
Balance carried forward to next year	36 904

### ***Recruitment of teachers***

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	12.59
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	11.3

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1.21
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	1189
Number of questionnaires returned	222

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	37	55	4	3	1
My child is making good progress in school.	55	42	2	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	33	54	3	1	9
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	27	58	11	1	3
The teaching is good.	37	55	5	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	26	44	25	3	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	40	37	18	4	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	69	25	3	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	17	45	25	7	6
The school is well led and managed.	34	50	6	4	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	36	51	6	4	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	19	40	20	13	8

## **PART D: THE SIXTH FORM**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and students' achievements**

25. Overall standards at the start of the sixth form are above average. Given this starting point, the achievement of students is very good; they make very good progress as they move through the sixth form. Results in A-level examinations have improved and are now very high and place the school in the top five per cent of schools in the country. They reflect the sustained high standards found in lessons. In 2001 half of the grades were at the higher A and B level and well above the national average. The results in English literature and computing were very high compared to national statistics. They were well above average in biology, business studies, chemistry, economics, English language, English language and literature, German, physics, politics and sociology. They were above average in most other subjects except in art and design and design and technology where they were average. In classical civilisation, results were well below average. Although low, the results in classical civilisation represented good achievement for those students. The results in general studies were above average at both A and AS level and represent very good achievement. There was no significant difference between the results of male and female students or those from different ethnic backgrounds.

26. Course completion rates are high and 94 per cent of students move into higher education with many gaining their first choices. In 2001, 13 students gained entry to Oxford or Cambridge universities.

27. In the new AS examinations at the end of Year 12, many students obtained grades in four subjects within the grade range A to E. Some achieved five including general studies. These results are outstanding. Out of all the entries across all subjects, there was a 95 per cent pass rate; this was well above the national average. The best results were in art and design, biology, business studies, computing, English language and literature, history and technology. Results were relatively weaker in chemistry and mathematics. However, there has been a significant improvement in mathematics when students have re-taken the examination.

28. Statistical analysis indicates that the students achieve very well. Students' relative performances over a three year period show that, consistently, they achieve significantly higher grades in biology, computing, English language, history and physics. It achieves significantly lower grades in mathematics and geography. Inspection evidence revealed very small pockets of under-achievement in chemistry and physics when higher attainers were insufficiently challenged. In geography in the 2001 A-level examination, five students did not attain their expected grades but there is no under-achievement on the new course. Some, mainly female students, under-achieved in A-level biology, mathematics and statistics.

29. At present standards seen in lessons and the analysis of students' work are well above average and students' achievement is very good; they are on course to maintain high results in the external examinations. This very good achievement is the result of very good and excellent teaching that is very effectively planned and delivered enthusiastically by experts. In the lessons observed and

in the samples of students' work seen, standards are high in computing and well above average in all other subjects except art and design, mathematics, psychology and physical education where standards are above average. Students' standards in the key skills of communication and numeracy are well above average; most are adept in the use of computers although cannot always use ICT to a high standards owing to lack of access to equipment.

### **Students' attitudes, values and personal development**

30. Students' attitudes, values and personal development are very good and a strength of the sixth form. These mature attitudes ensure a very positive level of learning. All students enjoy sixth-form life and are enthusiastic learners. They all show great interest in their lessons and listen very carefully to teachers. When opportunities arise to be involved in lessons, students ask relevant questions and provide lively informative answers. They carry out their work with accuracy and it is generally well presented. Students are able to approach teachers for extra support when required and know it will be given. During independent study time, the majority of students show very good attitudes in using time effectively. However, some students say there are insufficient computers and Internet access to support their independent studies. The findings of the inspection confirm this view. In the lessons observed, students were very cooperative and always work well together. A particularly good feature of the school is the strength of students' relationship with staff. This is due to the very good opportunities to build links during the many curricular-focussed educational visits. In discussion with students, they generally are very clear about their long-term goals and have ensured that the steps they need to get there are in place. They know what they have to achieve and are committed to doing their best.

31. Students' personal development is very good. However, there are missed opportunities to involve the sixth form in the life of the main school, for example, as role models or mentors for younger pupils. This is largely due to the split site, although the school, whilst expressing regret, did not seem inclined to overcome this shortcoming. The Religious Education Conference has a significant impact on students' personal development and they display mature opinions on world issues, faiths and personal concerns. In addition, the Management Conference has helped students to mature and develop new key management skills. For example one student felt it had helped her to become more confident in communicating. Many students are involved in local and international community projects. This involvement develops students' understanding of the impact and contribution they can make to improve the lives of others.

32. Attendance is very good throughout the sixth form and closely monitored. This ensures students receive the best possible learning opportunities.

### **HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?**

33. The quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form are very good. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen during the inspection. In the lessons observed 3.8 per cent of teaching was satisfactory, 30.8 per cent was good, 52.6 per cent was very good and 12.8 per cent was excellent. The percentage of teaching that was good or better is similar to that found in inspections of sixth forms nationally; however, the percentage of teaching that is very

good or excellent, 65.4 per cent, is much higher than that found nationally, 36 per cent in 2000-2001.

34. The features which characterise the high quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form are similar to those observed elsewhere in the school: teachers' good subject knowledge and enthusiasm for their subject, effective planning, skilled questioning, good use of time and high expectations of pupils. In addition, there is good use of discussion to drive learning forward. Teachers are enthusiastic about their subject and this is transferred to students who, generally, are very keen to learn and do well. An improvement from the previous inspection is that more teachers are encouraging students to develop independent learning skills. In the sixth form, these strengths are more consistently evident than in the main school. Nonetheless, the opportunity for students to work independently, as in the main school, is hampered by their inadequate access to computers and the Internet. Students themselves remarked tellingly of their frustration over this. As in the main school, the lack of modern technology in classrooms, also limits the approaches to teaching and learning available to those teachers who would use such facilities. Despite these shortcomings, however, the quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form is very good overall and from time to time excellent.

35. Teachers have very good knowledge not only of the subject matter but also of the requirements of the examination specifications and how best to meet them. They therefore prepare students very well for these demands. Departments understand fully what students need for success.

36. Teachers' knowledge is used to help students develop understanding, learn effectively and sometimes experiment. In a physics lesson with Year 12 about predicting motion, the teacher introduced a kinematic equation in a clear overhead sheet about the logic of uniform acceleration and average velocity. Students brought their own knowledge of mathematics to this learning and appreciated that the teacher's very good subject knowledge gave intellectual authority to the lesson. In a French lesson, similar authority helped Year 13 students manipulate the language to express their ideas about the moral dilemmas associated with genetic cloning as they practised the past and future tenses. The teacher's use of the overhead projector provoked students to take a stance and the teacher's skilful questioning, using French, developed key vocabulary so that students were able to consider major issues emerging from the topic. In a Year 12 theatre studies lesson, fully attended, students worked in groups on short dramas of their own devising. They showed a clear understanding of the nature of high and low status roles and were aware of the scope of their own bodies to represent these. However, the teacher extended this much further by the introduction of masks that caused the learning of the students to increase in intensity; again, the teacher's secure theatrical knowledge gave professional integrity to the work and the students were encouraged, at a fast pace, to experiment with imagination at a new mode of physical expression. Good subject knowledge was also evident in a geography lesson, where students were studying why industries are located in particular places. Their knowledge was extended and deepened by the teacher, using excellent slides, introducing them to industries with high technologies, where criteria for siting might be different. In some instances, this knowledge was seen in the skilful use of exemplars. In a politics lesson, the difficult notion of the filibuster as a political weapon was illustrated by the students working in two groups in conflict, one introducing irrelevant factors to an imagined US senate discussion of significance so that the proposed bill of the other group was killed off. In this lesson, carefully planned role-play gave an immediacy to students' learning.

37. Sixth-form lessons are carefully structured within longer term planning which is well thought out. For example, in an art and design lesson with Year 12, the teacher led a brainstorming session on the preparation that students need to bring to their examination course work. The teacher helped students appreciate the scope for their individual talents to have expression and used a model that was both artistic and a means for students to think about their artistic learning and about how to get started on a piece of creative activity. Similarly, in a sociology lesson students were given clear guidance on how the examination criteria would be applied to their work. Using some sample course work, students themselves applied criteria to see how it might be assessed. They were introduced to an excellent course work manual in an accessible newspaper format that pinpointed for students how to structure examination work to best meet requirements. In an English lesson in which students were working on the poetry of Tennyson, the scholarship of the teacher enriched students' learning and encouraged them to draw parallels between poems and contrast the work of Tennyson and Blake. Students' detailed analysis of poetic language indicated effective learning about the subtleties of poetry. It involved challenging activities in groups where aspects of the poetry were discussed and researched and then fed back to the whole class. This work moved at a fast and demanding pace and led to vigorous discussion and presentations by students. In a practical project in a computing lesson with Year 12, students showed confidence in setting up a database at which they worked scientifically and purposefully. They were not dependent on the teacher but their confidence owed much to the respect they had for the teacher's informed presence. Later in the lesson the teacher drew out key new learning features successfully.

38. Planning often provides for the differing learning needs of students. For example, in an art and design lesson the teacher worked as a consultant to students working independently, offering guidance that was targeted at the varying levels of attainment in the group. In a mathematics lesson, higher-attaining students were pushed on to harder examples more quickly, whilst relatively lower attainers were well supported through watchful individual monitoring.

39. Sixth-form teaching shows the same adept use of questioning as seen in the best teaching elsewhere in the school. It is well focused, and question and answer in discussion sessions are used to draw out students' knowledge. Sometimes this is a deliberate revision of earlier work, and sometimes it uses students' knowledge and understanding to invite speculation. Probing questions often take thinking to higher levels. Teachers have very good instinctive ability to intervene with a question or remark when necessary to move thinking along.

40. High expectations are a significant factor in the very high results achieved. All students are challenged to make rapid progress. They are carefully supported as they move into the sixth-form ethos from their previous experience in Year 11 in this or other schools. There is a good balance between taught lessons and supported self-study.

41. In lessons where teaching, although satisfactory, was not of as high quality as in the majority of lessons, there is no one significant weakness. However, where lessons are more like lectures and the approach lacks variety, where teachers dictate or give out notes geared to examination needs rather than meeting such needs through a variety of teaching and learning approaches, students' learning rarely becomes part of them. It is rather bolted on or like an undigested meal. Despite the richness of the diet, its presentation lacks flair, appeal and the capacity for students to sample its various qualities. If students do not feel for the learning they acquire it rarely lives within them. Even

in the third of lessons deemed to be good because of the excellent scholarship of the teaching, a proportion of these lessons lacked the drive, energy and flair seen in the very best teaching in the other two-thirds of lessons seen in the sixth form. In most subjects, teachers have not considered sufficiently how learning might be more vital and enhanced through the use of modern technology. The facility students have to experiment with ICT and the Internet at home is rarely used to enhance learning in school. Students do not experience sufficiently a balance in their learning. Teaching and learning overall in these lessons rarely include the well-taught, scholarly direct teaching from a well-informed teacher, the inspired, pacy mixed diet in which students and teachers actively engage, or the rich use of technology that fosters individual research and provides opportunity to bring alive, visually and aurally, key aspects of a subject.

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

42. The quality and range of learning opportunities in the sixth form are very good and clearly designed to meet the learning needs and aspirations of individual students. Advanced Subsidiary [AS] and Advanced Level [A2] courses are offered. These are enhanced by a wide and impressive range of enrichment experiences available to students. However, there is no provision for compulsory religious education other than during the annual Religious Education Conference, although moral, ethical and cultural issues are part of general studies. The sixth form does not offer directly vocational courses; it is seen and valued by parents as a traditional academic sixth form. The view of the school has been that vocational education is well catered for elsewhere in the area. However, as it moves into being a twenty-first century grammar school, it would be unwise to fail to consider the part that advanced vocational courses (AVCE) might play in the portfolios of some students.

43. There is a good range of courses available in each curriculum area. In mathematics and science, students can study a range of mathematics courses, including mechanics, statistics and further mathematics, and any of the three sciences: chemistry, biology and physics. Design and technology is offered in various forms, including some imaginative approaches to textile design. Within the business areas, both business studies and economics are available.

44. There is a choice of art and design, music or theatre studies within the visual and performing arts area and students can choose from English language, language and literature or English literature, French, German or Spanish in the language curriculum area. There is a wide selection of subjects within humanities: classical civilisation, geography, history, politics, religious education, sociology and psychology. Students can now study physical education at AS and A2 levels. The requirement to teach key skills is met within subjects and they form part of the Management Conference held each year. All student study general studies at AS levels and 92 per cent choose to continue with it in Year 13.

45. The allocation of time to sixth-form subjects is adequate. There is sufficient time for supported self-study, although students are frustrated by inadequate access to computers and the Internet.

46. Schemes of work are well developed in the majority of subjects and offer learning opportunities for all students, irrespective of levels of prior attainment, ethnic background or gender. For example, long-term planning in politics shows a good balance between the acquisition of factual knowledge, discussion and debate, and students speak of the excellent fieldwork in geography and biology. In theatre studies there is an excellent balance between the scholarly study of texts and theatrical representation, students' performance and practical work. The subject often uses modern computerised technology for lighting, sound and television, and includes visits to theatres and contact with professional actors and directors. However, not all courses are fully developed to take advantage of the range of learning opportunities subjects provide.

47. Students have good opportunities to develop skills of literacy and numeracy. Opportunities to develop ICT skills are somewhat limited owing to difficulty of access to computers on a regular and planned basis. High standards of literacy and verbal communication contribute significantly to the achievement of high standards in many subjects, where students are given a good range of opportunities to develop such skills. Skills of graphicacy are applied well when relevant to subjects.

48. The school makes good provision for extended learning opportunities outside the examination courses through a programme of extension studies. This includes a full careers morning where students can choose sessions with practitioners from a range of careers. There are taster courses at universities and work shadowing as part of careers education with 300 placements for a week. This also includes work experience for language students in France and Germany through links established over ten years. Others spend a week with the army or on an archaeological dig in South Wales. In the last eleven years, each July a Management Conference is held when students are off their normal timetable for three days. This involves them working in small groups with advisers from industry; the sessions are designed to develop team building skills, ICT, communication, presentational and time management skills. Students who have attended this Conference speak highly of it, found it helpful and felt it to be relevant to the real world. The Industrial Careers Foundation issues skills certificates to students that are valued. Topics at the annual Religious Education Conference include the Holocaust, the nature of Faith, comparative religions and issues such as child abuse, abortion, euthanasia, racism, and meditation. Through this conference students gain a greater awareness of world and personal issues.

49. Form tutor time is effective. Sessions include the development of study skills, preparation for work experience, UCAS applications and checks on how well students are meeting their targets.

50. Very good opportunities exist for enrichment of the sixth-form curriculum beyond the school day, some of which are unique and imaginative. There is a wide range of activities linked to subject areas, such as foreign language exchanges, trips abroad and sport. Individual students achieve regional and national representation in sporting events. In the performing arts, students participate in concerts and dramatic performances; the school has just held a spring concert and an imaginative liaison between the pop group Queen and Shakespeare is coming together in a performance of 'Macbeth' shortly. The school has produced two CDs illustrating a range of its music work; there is also an active jazz band. Sixth-formers also raise considerable sums of money for charities.

51. Overall, however, the strength of the enrichment programme is its outward-looking nature. For example, 30 students go annually to Romania to teach English; the school links closely with



Romania Relief in setting up the nature of these visits. Students gain much from the experience as well as giving to, and appreciating from first-hand the needs of, underprivileged children in deprived orphanages. The school has come to call this programme 'The Fourth Dimension', it being a fourth component to their learning in addition to three AS/A2 subjects. In the past, students have also visited India to teach English to children living in remote villages, or canoed with handicapped children in Ottawa. Expeditions have been taken to India, Venezuela, South Dakota and the Alps.

52. Exchanges are also made with Finland and, shortly after the period of the inspection, a first exchange is to take place with a school in Boston, USA for twelve students. This was chosen since New England at the centre of American culture and political history. In 2003, an exchange is planned to Adelaide. This programme of exchanges is an extension of the programme begun in the main school. The school's Foundation ensures that they are open to all pupils and students by providing financial aid if this is necessary. The school is assiduous in making full risk assessments before undertaking visits abroad or in this country.

53. All of these activities form an important part of the school's very good overall provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of sixth-form students. Although governors and parents have particular expectations that the school will achieve good results, they also expect the personal development of students to be good. The headteacher began his address at the Presentation Evening last September by stating that the school is far more than its examination results, important as these are. Inspection findings show that the school is a widely rich learning environment in which young people can grow and develop in maturity and responsibility. Not least, much of this is based on the excellent relationships engendered in the school, including its sixth form. It is striving to develop a healthy ethos that gives students confidence through a culture of self-belief that is caring and supportive of others. Students new to the school when they enter the sixth form from other schools are quick to recognise a friendly, unthreatening ambience in which very good relationships are fostered by the staff with whom they make contact. The sixth-form council is part of this and plays a key part in organising events and maintaining an ethos of the sixth form to which students can associate. Provision for personal development also occurs through the curriculum and as part of lessons. In a biology lesson for example, students considered the moral and ethical implications associated with genetic engineering. Departments organise field visits, linked to areas of study, in this country and abroad. For example, the geography department visit the Alps to study glacial activity; students in the business studies and sociology departments have the opportunity to go to China for related study, and those studying politics to Washington to see something of American politics at first hand. This year, students visited New York and, whilst there, gave a school plaque to a Fire Rescue Station that lost many firemen because of the events of 11 September 2001. This visit personalised a major world tragedy for the students involved.

54. Such experiences help students discover their own codes of values and beliefs. The Religious Education Conference helps them to understand themselves and others, to take account of difference and respect the cultures that are different from their own. The many visits underpin and extend day-by-day values espoused by the school. Students begin to know what makes them tick, gives them a buzz and grounds them in values to which they wish to aspire. The breadth of the general studies course, as well as students' own chosen courses, gives students the opportunity to explore and develop moral, social and cultural values and their views of personal rights and responsibilities. Those who have been lucky enough to visit Romania or India can consider and form

their values in a broad context. Students are encouraged to consider what is right and fair and take a stand against inequality and prejudice. The school's aims, as well as to develop the talents of its young people, are committed to prepare them 'for life...and to cope with the many roles they will have to take'. In the context of their personal development the school wants to provide them with opportunities to 'engage in a broad programme of experiences in order to understand more about themselves and the world in which they live...and to live and work in ways that enhance their self-respect and sensitivity to the needs of others'. The school is doing very well in trying to achieve these aims. Students have the opportunity to experience a wide range of social contexts and learn from them. In the best lessons they learn in a variety of ways and get used to the give and thrust of giving and taking as they work in groups. Through the sixth-form council they take responsibility for the life of the community of the sixth form. The curriculum provides opportunities for them to place themselves in the context of a global society. In short, the school arranges a rich and supportive provision for students' personal development.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?**

### **Assessment**

55. Procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress are good; when appropriate they follow awarding-body requirements. In most subjects assessment material is built into AS and A2 schemes of work. In all subjects there is regular testing and helpful marking of assignments. Lesson times are used for evaluation of performance between teachers and students on a regular basis, and at a later stage with senior tutors. This enables students and teachers to know about their progress in relation to their agreed targets. In the first instance, these targets are general and relate to students' performance in GCSE examinations. As soon as possible, however, most teachers convert targets to subject-specific criteria. Students are given performance grades in every subject each term. They know how the minimum targets are worked out but find those that match specific subjects a better guide.

56. Procedures for monitoring performance through the sixth form are very good. They are at the heart of daily teaching and learning. Effective examples were seen during the inspection, as were teachers' record-keeping systems. The diagnostic marking of classwork and, especially, homework assignments play a crucial part in helping students recognise what they must do to improve and keep on track to achieve their agreed targets. Students say they do not find marking as useful when it does not match examination requirement grades. They also feel some teachers are slow to commend good work as well as indicate areas for improvement. Some complain they do not always get feedback of their homework. Once students have been offered places at courses of their choice at university, they are aware of the grades required to achieve their place. These are then linked to the target grade for each subject. These grades are regularly reviewed by students, subject teachers and form tutors. All subjects follow these procedures. All students are mentored by form tutors. When students achieve consistently excellent work they receive a Cause for Commendation letter. Students value this recognition of their achievement.

57. In all subjects, assessment information is used to adjust and develop the work of the department. Departments have their own versions of the generic school assessment policy. There is sometimes a lack of focus on the individual needs of pupils in particular subjects as the departments

sometimes simply use target-setting to seek to raise the department's overall performance. The school is beginning to analyse examination results in more detail to determine trends, such as any substantial differences between groups of students or between subjects. Most departments compare students' performance at GCSE with that at AS and A-level in order to determine the level of achievement and the degree of value that has been added during the sixth form.

### **Advice, support and guidance**

58. Students and parents are given very good induction and appropriate advice before joining the sixth form. However, some subjects, for example sociology, do not make clear advice in relation to the demands of subjects new to students. The 60 per cent of students who come from other schools integrate very well into this sixth form. The school endeavours to meet all students' chosen course requirements. Students receive an early induction interview to ensure they are settling in and to raise any concerns at an early stage. A useful induction seminar is also held for parents to help them to understand and support their son or daughter in the demands of sixth-form study. The school has recently used student surveys to help them respond to their students needs. This has resulted in further improvements to the information students receive about courses prior to joining the sixth form. During the early stages in the sixth form, appropriate guidance is offered to students on time management, study skills and note-making skills. This helps them settle quickly into new study practices. The 'cause for concern' forms are an effective tool to highlight quickly and support students who may not be making sufficient progress.

59. Careers guidance is particularly geared to the vast majority that go on to higher education. The size of the sixth form makes personal interviewing difficult, but nonetheless, tutors interview students once each term. Much support is offered to students through their form tutors, guidance sessions and careers conferences. Careers information for students is up-to-date and easily accessible. Students are provided with very good guidance in completing higher education application forms and also receive a very informative 'Higher Education Handbook'. Parents are also invited to an information evening on the application process and this ensures very good understanding and support for students from both home and school. Students with individual career demands are well catered for and the secretary in the careers department provides efficient support and advice to all students.

60. The work-shadowing opportunities for students are excellent. The school works particularly hard to create exciting innovative placements that motivate and energise students, for example: shadowing MEPs in Brussels or television news presenters.

61. Monitoring of attendance of students is very good. A register is taken at the beginning of each lesson and absences collated daily. Form tutors then closely follow up these absences. These procedures have resulted in a very high attendance level. The form tutors, senior tutors and head of sixth form oversee the process and are quick to highlight trends or concerns and act accordingly to support these students.

### **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

## **Leadership and management**

62. The leadership and management of this very large and successful sixth form are excellent. Its popularity has led to its growth since the previous inspection. It provides equal access to a wide variety of AS and A2 level courses for virtually all students who apply and meet its minimum entry requirements. As a result the sixth form is bursting at the seams and is a thriving community of 586 students. The sixth-form guide is excellent and the aims of the sixth form are very clear, succinct and appropriate. The application and induction procedures are very good and very few students leave their courses before completing two full years.

63. The head of the sixth form is a deputy headteacher. His excellent leadership provides a clear sense of purpose and direction. His vision for the future has an unambiguous focus on maintaining high results and standards whilst at the same time extending students' personal development. His attention to detail, energy and astuteness are characteristic of his day-to-day work. He is a superb role model to his staff and the students. An experienced team consisting of an assistant, a development officer, nine senior tutors and 30 form tutors support his open style of management. Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined. At subject level, leadership and management are very good in all the focus subjects except art and design, chemistry, history, physical education and sociology, where they are good. The sixth-form council of students is mostly down-to-earth and effective.

64. Teaching and learning are now monitored partly due to performance management but also because of a growing culture to improve further the existing high standards. Though the development plan appears vague in its presentation, it successfully specifies the aim of promoting and spreading more demanding learning styles that take account of modern technology and ensure that the needs of the different groups of students are met, with activity in lessons involving, when appropriate to effective learning, the cut and thrust of debate. The work of sixth-form tutors is well monitored by senior tutors and the head of sixth form. Working documents provide good guidance for their work with students.

65. The examination results for the school are analysed in detail and followed by useful departmental reviews. The very good use of data to set students a general target for all subjects is established. Subject-specific targets and the aggregation of these into subject and overall targets for the sixth form are not in place at present. The results of the different groups of students are not yet fully analysed. However, the termly checking of students' progress is rigorous, sets high standards and is effective. Departmental reviews pay insufficient attention to ways of improving teaching and learning.

66. The governors know the many strengths of the sixth form and are active in their role as critical friends. All the statutory requirements are met with the exception of a daily act of worship. The sixth form is very cost-effective.

## **Resources**

67. Resources for learning are good; the quality of the teachers of the sixth form, in particular, is an excellent resource. Accommodation in the sixth-form centre is inadequate; it is used well although

care is needed to ensure that ICT suites are available for use as often as possible and only used at general teaching or meeting spaces when there is no alternative. There is little technological provision to support learning in teaching rooms other than in ICT suites. There are shortages of accommodation and resources for art and design, physical education and theatre studies, although plans are now in place to use the Grand Cinema opposite the school for theatre studies. The breadth of the curriculum offered by these subjects is adversely affected, although it is not possible to determine that standards achieved in examinations suffer. Access to computers is difficult and severely limits learning opportunities.

68. The school defines its priorities for the sixth form within its development plan. Governors keep in touch with the progress of the budget during the financial year to ensure that monies provided for priorities are used accordingly. The bursar ensures that the purchase of equipment and resources for the sixth form is the result of seeking best value and competitive prices and after-sales service provision.

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

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

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

*GCE AS level courses*

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	87	77	62	33	15	2.5	1.5
Chemistry	67	94	N/A	49	N/A	3.2	N/A
Biology	73	99	N/A	66	N/A	3.7	N/A
Physics	54	98	N/A	61	N/A	3.6	N/A
Design and technology	14	100	N/A	43	N/A	3.3	N/A
Business studies	57	100	76	63	12	3.8	N/A
Economics	18	89	N/A	50	N/A	3.3	N/A
Computing	54	100	N/A	76	N/A	4.2	N/A
Physical education	41	95	N/A	34	N/A	2.9	N/A
Art and design	33	100	N/A	70	N/A	3.9	N/A
Music	9	100	N/A	44	N/A	3.7	N/A
Theatre studies	28	100	N/A	50	N/A	3.5	N/A
Classical studies	25	100	N/A	68	N/A	3.9	N/A
Geography	57	100	N/A	44	N/A	3.4	N/A
History	54	100	N/A	81	N/A	4.3	N/A
Politics	65	98	N/A	52	N/A	3.5	N/A
Sociology	65	89	N/A	51	N/A	3.1	N/A
Psychology	90	89	N/A	41	N/A	2.8	N/A
English language and literature	50	100	N/A	80	N/A	4.2	N/A
English language	31	100	N/A	71	N/A	3.7	N/A
English literature	35	100	N/A	51	N/A	3.6	N/A
French	58	97	N/A	66	N/A	3.5	N/A
German	34	97	N/A	53	N/A	3.5	N/A

***GCE A level and AVCE courses***

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	76	89	62	47	43	6.2	5.8
Chemistry	47	94	90	53	43	6.9	5.9
Biology	56	93	88	59	34	6.9	5.2
Physics	33	94	88	70	40	7.6	5.7
Design and technology	12	100	91	25	30	5.3	5.4
Business studies	62	100	92	52	32	7.0	5.5
Economics	11	100	89	55	36	7.6	5.5
Computing	34	100	86	68	23	7.9	4.6
Art and design	23	100	96	35	46	6.7	6.6
Classical studies	9	100	95	22	49	4.9	6.5
Geography	57	96	92	47	38	6.6	5.7
History	56	95	88	50	35	6.4	5.4
Politics	48	100	N/A	44	N/A	6.8	N/A
Sociology	44	91	86	57	35	7.0	5.3
Psychology	48	94	N/A	38	N/A	5.8	N/A
English language	36	100	91	61	30	7.1	5.3
English literature	29	100	95	69	37	7.9	5.9
English language & literature	43	100	92	65	30	7.6	5.3
French	36	94	89	50	38	6.6	5.6
German	16	100	91	75	40	8.0	5.8
Spanish	8	88	89	25	39	5.5	5.7

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

### MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

Mathematics, chemistry, biology and physics were focus subjects.

#### Mathematics

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

##### Strengths

- Teaching is very good; teachers' very good subject knowledge ensures good explanation of concepts and skills.
- Very good monitoring of progress helps students to improve their standards.
- Students' very good attitudes to learning underpin their very good achievement.
- The subject is very well led and managed with a clear commitment to improvement.

##### Areas for improvement

- Standards at GCE AS level are not as high as they could be.
- In some lessons, students are not given enough opportunities to contribute to learning.

69. The inspection covered the three advanced level courses offered by the school: mathematics with mechanics, mathematics with statistics and further mathematics.

70. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above average. These standards are achieved because the teaching is very good. Students' achievements in relation to standards at the start of the sixth form are very good. Very good leadership and management and very good attitudes shown by students also cause the quality of student' learning to be very good. Students make very good progress as they move through the sixth form.

71. The 2001 GCE A-level examination results were above average. They were similar to results in previous years. This represented good achievement in relation to the standards of students when they started the course. Students' achievement in mathematics and mechanics was very good. Results were well above average. In mathematics and statistics results were not as high. A significant number of students, mainly girls, did not achieve expected results. Results in further mathematics were above average. The results in the 2001 AS level examinations were slightly above average. They were not as high as expected in relation to students' standards at the start of Year 12. The 2002 January re-sit examinations have shown many students significantly improving their results. A high proportion of sixth form students regularly choose the subject and completion rates are usually very good.

72. The standards of work of seen in lessons by current students are above average. Male and female students do equally well. Students are successfully building upon their GCSE work into new topics. Students in year 12 are achieving very well. In pure mathematics students' show a good knowledge and understanding of calculus; they differentiate and integrate functions confidently. In mechanics they understand the concepts of speed, velocity and acceleration and can apply them to



travel graphs and equations of motion. Students in further mathematics use tree diagrams confidently and accurately to solve problems on probability. Work in students' files shows very good achievement by many students in topics covered earlier in the course.

73. In Year 13, students are achieving very well in relation to predictions based on their GCSE results. In the lessons seen, they are doing well as a result of their very good attitudes and the very effective teaching which demands much of them. All have successfully completed the AS modules over half with grade A or B. Students have a good understanding of the concepts and skills developed and can recall knowledge and apply it well to their written work. For example, in one lesson in further mathematics, students drew well on their knowledge and understanding of complex numbers to identify loci for points in the complex plane. Teaching is very good. It is carefully planned and lessons always have clear aims. Good links are made between lessons ensuring that students build upon their previous work. As a result students are highly motivated and work hard. They make considerable efforts to understand the work they are doing and their files have clear sets of examples and notes to help them review topics for examinations.

74. The knowledge of the teachers is strength of the subject. All teachers show a very good understanding of mathematics in their questioning and explanations and in the tasks they set. They introduce students to new concepts and skills in a clear and structured way. They set clear expectations for students and ensure that they are aware of what they need to do to achieve the best possible results in examinations. Teachers plan lessons well, keep up a good pace and provide appropriate levels of challenge. In some lessons, however, they do not involve students sufficiently when examples are being done. They do not allow students enough opportunities to contribute to the development of the solutions and miss opportunities to extend their thinking and learning.

75. The very good teaching and learning result from work in the subject being very well led and managed. The scheme of work is very well planned and effectively reflects the subject requirements, and sets the stage for very good teaching. There is a clear commitment to building on what has already been achieved and to improving standards. For example, the lower than expected GCE AS level results have resulted in a change in the way in which the curriculum is organised. Much of the consistency of approach to mathematics comes about because of the positive way in which teachers work with each other. Seven teachers share the teaching of the subject and they discuss regularly what they are doing and the progress of their students. The teachers are enthusiastic and committed to bringing about improvement. Very good assessment and monitoring of the students' performance as they move through the course, and the very good support and guidance to given to them as individuals, is reflected in the very positive views the students have of what is being provided for them. They are kept regularly informed of what they need to do to improve their performance. Improvement in the provision for the subject since the previous inspection is good.

## Chemistry

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

### Strengths

- Standards are well above the national average.
- Very good teaching and learning; teachers use their specialist knowledge to prepare students well for examinations.
- Students' positive attitude to work makes a significant contribution to their learning.
- Practical work is taught in a structured way and students have very good investigative skills.

### Areas for improvement

- A narrow range of teaching approaches in a small minority of lessons does not meet the individual learning needs of students effectively.
- There are insufficient opportunities for the development of independent learning skills.

76. Standards of work seen in chemistry during the inspection are well above average. These standards are attained because of very good teaching and learning and students' positive attitudes. The overall achievement of students relative to their prior performance at GCSE is very good. Students make very good progress in the sixth form.

77. In the A-level examination in 2001, the percentage of grades A to E and the percentage of higher A and B grades were both well above the national average. Results have steadily improved over the last few years. Some students underachieved in relation to their prior attainment at GCSE. In the new AS examination in Year 12, 94 per cent achieved grades A to E, with half attaining the higher grades A and B. There was no significant difference between the attainment of male and female students in either examination. The retention rate for chemistry is high.

78. The standard of work seen during the inspection is high and students are making very good progress. Carefully structured teaching builds on previous knowledge enabling students to develop their understanding of chemical concepts. This was seen in a Year 12 lesson in which students were investigating the reactions of solid metal halides with concentrated sulphuric acid. Students used previous work on oxidation numbers to work out the nature of the reactions observed. The teacher skilfully used questioning to build on students' answers in order to get them to clarify their thinking. This focused and enhanced their learning. Students were able to recognise the trend in reducing ability of the halide ions from their observations. The teacher's clear and confident explanation and the students' positive attitude and interest in the work led to a very good quality of learning.

79. Students' experimental skills are developed in a structured way, and these skills are of a very good standard. In a lesson where students were investigating the reaction of iodine with sodium thiosulphate, they demonstrated very good manipulative skills and made accurate measurements. Titration techniques had been very well taught and students had a good understanding of experimental error and of the accuracy to be expected from the different pieces of equipment used. The very good relationship between the teacher and students and the encouraging supportive manner of the teacher meant that the students gained confidence in the own ability and experienced

success. Students are able to interpret the information obtained from an experiment and recognise patterns and trends.

80. Teaching is very good and results in very good learning. A key strength of the teaching is the teachers' very good specialist expertise, which enables them to focus their teaching carefully so that students are extremely well prepared for examinations. Lessons are well planned and structured. The very good relationship between teachers and students engenders a positive attitude and interest in chemistry. This enhances their learning. Teachers are encouraging and supportive, making good use of praise to boost students' confidence. Homework is well used to reinforce learning. Written work is not always marked in sufficient detail to show students where their answers lack depth. The teaching methods seen during the inspection involved whole-class teaching with insufficient opportunities for students to progress at different rates dependent on their learning needs. There are insufficient opportunities for the development of independent learning skills.

81. Students have a very positive attitude to work, are conscientious and attentive and sustain concentration well. Their work is well organised and presented. They are co-operative and support each other well in group work. Students are not very responsive when answering teachers' questions or in asking questions themselves. More opportunities for students to actively discuss and debate topics would increase their scientific curiosity and improve their learning.

82. Teachers' expectations are appropriately high but in some lessons tasks are the same for students of all levels of attainment so that higher-attaining students are not sufficiently challenged and, in consequence, make less progress. A narrow range of teaching styles is used in chemistry and there is insufficient use of ICT to enhance student learning. The use of information about assessment is good. The department is well supported by dedicated technical staff. The subject is well managed but there is a need to identify specific strategies for further development. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. Standards have been improved and are now high.

## **Biology**

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

### Strengths

- The results at AS and A-level are well above average.
- The strategies used for assessment are good.
- There is good integration of practical and fieldwork in teaching and learning.
- Students bring very positive student attitudes to their work.

### Areas for improvement

- There is insufficient focus on the range of students' differing learning needs in some lessons.
- There is no use of ICT in laboratories.

83. Standards of work seen during the inspection are well above average. These standards are achieved because the teaching is very good. Students' achievements in relation to standards on entry to the sixth form are very good. The good assessment strategies and the excellent attitudes of

students also cause the quality of students' learning to be very good. Students make very good progress as they move through the sixth form.

84. A-level results in biology over the last three years have been well above average. In 2001, 93 per cent of students obtained a pass grade and one third of passes were at the higher grades, A and B. Male and female students did equally well, as did students from ethnic minority backgrounds. Almost all students completed the course. In relation to their GCSE results, most students did as well as expected, but about a quarter of students, mainly female, did less well than expected. Compared with other subjects, both in school and nationally, students do well in biology. In 2001, AS level results were very good: ninety nine per cent of students obtained a pass and almost half of the passes were at the higher grades, A and B. Departmental analysis shows that, compared with their GCSE results, most students did at least as well as expected. Over half of the female students, and two thirds of those from ethnic minorities, did better than expected. All male students did at least as well as expected, with some doing better than this.

85. Standards of work are well above average. Virtually all work is of at least pass standard, and a large proportion was at higher grade standard. There are no identified gender differences or underachievement of any group of students. However, although the ablest students are working at or beyond A grade standard, some work does not show the flair which would enable them to score virtually all the available marks. Students explain the use of restriction enzymes in isolating a gene and inserting it into a vector. The follow-up essay from this introduction to genetic engineering enables them to learn about ethical issues surrounding genetically modified food. They consider moral and ethical issues such as the acceptability of engineering an organism to create a product useful to humans. In Year 13 students argue why reflex arcs are advantageous. Their questions, for example about changes in eye-pupil diameter show they are thinking about their work. Students' attitudes to biology are very positive: they cooperate very well in practical work and enjoy tasks such as estimating body surface area and hence the total number of pressure receptors in skin. Learning in Year 13 is enhanced by the social and practical enrichment experiences of the residential field-course week in Year 12.

86. Achievement of students in relation to their attainment on entry to the sixth form is very good. Students have GCSE science or biology grades ranging from A\* to B. Work seen in lessons showed, that students sustained these very good entry grades. The good assessment strategy, which includes regular tests, and re-tests for those who do not achieve pass standard, helps students to do well. Self-assessment procedures, requiring students to reflect on their achievement and discuss it with their teachers at regular intervals, also help them to do well. There is a very good stock of textbooks in the library and laboratories, for students to consult or borrow, and a good range of periodicals and up to date books of general biological interest.

87. Teaching is very good, and students learn very well as a result. Half of the lessons seen were very good, and the remainder were good. Teachers know their subject very well. The key skills of communication and numeracy are well taught, but the use of ICT is unsatisfactory. Revision classes support students who are not achieving as well as they should. Students' learning is enhanced through the wide range of research tasks they are set, for example on the use of enzymes. These require reference to books, periodicals and the Internet. Students gain experience of writing scientific accounts, which include references and a bibliography. In a few cases, they do

presentations or a poster display, for example on products of digestion. Students enjoy this more varied work, which provides a challenge for the more able. In schemes of work and lesson planning, teachers do not always provide sufficiently for the range of student abilities. Teachers have very high expectations and make very good use of practical and fieldwork. In some cases learning is less good because there are insufficient resources, for example one spirometer for twenty-one students to measure lung vital capacity. In this lesson, use of ICT to record data would have made better use of time and helped facilitate learning. It is a significant disadvantage that there is no computer access in laboratories: ICT cannot be used as a teaching aid or tool to analyse experimental data. Teachers ensure a good pace in lessons. Students display high levels of interest and concentration. Their biological knowledge is very good, and they are helped to learn by the questioning approach that teachers encourage.

88. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. The subject is very well managed and the good leadership has helped in the development of the subject. Students now have more responsibility for their own learning and make good use of ICT in research for essays. Schemes of work show good use of practical activities and of resources such as videos, but are insufficiently detailed to show the range of resources to be employed by teachers.

## Physics

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

### Strengths

- Standards are well above the national average.
- Very good enthusiastic teaching results in very good learning.
- Students' positive attitude to work makes a significant contribution to their learning.
- Very good management and leadership.

### Areas for improvement

- The range of teaching and learning activities, although very good in itself, is limited with the result that personal investigation and opportunities for students to play an active part in class discussion and debate are insufficiently encouraged.

89. Standards of work seen in physics during the inspection are well above average. These standards are attained because of very good teaching and learning overall and students' positive attitudes. The achievement of students relative to their prior performance at GCSE is very good. Students make very good progress in the sixth form.

90. In the A-level examination in 2001, the percentage of A to E grades and the percentage of higher A and B grades were both well above the national average. Results have steadily improved over the last few years. Some students underachieved in relation to their prior attainment at GCSE. In the new AS examination in Year 12, 98 per cent achieved A to E grades, with 61 per cent attaining the higher grades A and B. There was no significant difference between the attainment of male and female students in either examination. The retention rate for physics is high.

91. The standard of work seen during the inspection is high and students are making very good progress. The teaching seen was at least very good. Some outstanding teaching was observed. Teachers give full rein to their enthusiasm for their own specialism, which powerfully increases students' motivation and interest. In a Year 13 lesson on cosmology, students were looking at evidence of a 'hot big bang' origin of the universe from cosmological red-shifts and were introduced to Hubble's Law. The teacher communicated the excitement of Hubble's discovery and of the debate about the age of the universe. In order to develop students' scientific curiosity, the teacher recommended further reading available in the school library. Students worked confidently on questions about the Doppler effect and their learning was very good.

92. A strength of the teaching is the teachers' subject knowledge and understanding shown in clear objectives and well-structured lessons with clear and lively explanation. This was seen in a Year 12 lesson on the equations of motion. The teacher used questioning well to assess student understanding of the terms, uniform velocity and uniform acceleration. The kinematic equations were then derived from basic definitions. The teacher was aware that some students would have met this topic in mathematics and a variety of question sheets were provided, so that the non-mathematicians could gain confidence in using the basic equations whilst the mathematicians could move on to more interesting applications. The teacher stressed the mathematical logic of the calculations while demonstrating their application to physics. The teacher pointed out common misconceptions, which helped students to gain confidence and experience success in well focused learning.

93. Students' written work is very well presented, and their use of scientific terminology is accurate and precise. Practical coursework is of a very good standard with high-quality data-handling and graph work. The assignment in Year 12, in which students had to research a material and then make a poster presentation, resulted in some excellent standards of presentation and information gathering. In Year 13, the research and presentation coursework produced a wide variety of choices and demonstrated some excellent application, persistence and initiative. Impressive bibliographies indicated students' dedication and some very high quality assignments have been produced.

94. Students have a very positive and mature attitude to work. They are conscientious and take responsibility for their own learning. Homework is well used to consolidate prior learning and to prepare for future topics. Relationships between students and teachers are very good and create an encouraging and positive atmosphere in which students can learn well and enjoy their learning. ICT is well used to enhance learning. Written work, however, is not always marked in sufficient detail to show students how to improve their work. A wider range of teaching styles is needed to better meet students' individual learning needs. High-attaining students are sometimes insufficiently challenged. Recent changes to provide opportunities for students to develop independent learning skills have been effective but now need further development. Students are not very responsive in class and this has a negative impact on their learning. There are not enough opportunities for students to actively discuss and debate topics in class.

95. Information about assessment is well used to track student progress. The department is well supported by dedicated technical staff. Leadership and management of the department are very good. The courses are well planned and specific strategies for development have been identified. Standards are high and have been improved over the past few years. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

## **ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING**

Design and technology was not one of the focus subjects but the product design course was sampled. In design and technology, examination results for 2001 were average with students performing as expected considering their GCSE examination results. Two lessons were observed. Teaching and learning were very good. In both, the teachers' secure subject knowledge and understanding and clear demonstrations led to students increasing their understanding of coursework objectives as well as widening their skill development of metal processes as for example by tapping



screw threads. Recently, two students have been short-listed for the prestigious Arkwright Scholarships, continuing the success of the department in this scheme over recent years.

## **BUSINESS**

The focus subject was business studies. Economics was sampled. Provision in economics is very good. Students achieve a range of skills and competencies within the subject. More males than females study the subject and they perform better in both year groups. Results are well above average. The teaching of economics is very good with well planned lessons and very secure knowledge and understanding of the subject. As a consequence, students make very good progress in their learning within each programme of study.

### **Business studies**

Overall, the provision for business studies is **very good**.

#### Strengths

- Very good teaching has a positive effect on results and the pace of learning.
- Students' very good attitudes support a strong learning ethos within and outside lessons.

#### Areas for Improvement

- The use and application of ICT within the subject is under-developed.
- There are insufficient opportunities for independent learning, particularly outside lessons.

96. Standards of work seen during the inspection are well above average. There are no significant differences between the performance of boys and girls. These standards reflect the results achieved in 2001 which were also well above average. The standards are achieved because teaching is very good. Students' achievement is very good, based on their level of attainment on entry to the sixth form. Excellent student-teacher relationships also cause the quality of students' learning to be very good. Students of all levels of attainment make very good progress due to clear and carefully considered schemes of work which are regularly updated. Retention rates are excellent.

97. Higher and middle-attaining students identify, apply and evaluate ways in which firms increase their effectiveness through management decisions. They have a sophisticated grasp of the implications of the competitive business environment and use both terminology and concepts with consistent confidence and accuracy. Course files are of very high quality and display very well developed study skills. Financial calculations are completed with consistent accuracy and detail, for example in cash flow forecasting and break-even analyses.

98. Lower-attaining students struggle at times with the theoretical aspects of the course, for example, in considering the wider environmental issues and their impact on business. Nevertheless, such students work very hard and are determined to improve. As with other students they are willing to challenge and initiate productive questions, for example the risk of instant take-overs when companies initially float on the stock exchange. All students of whatever level of attainment thrive on

group activity and respond well to situations where there are opportunities for peer group learning to take place.

99. Teaching promotes learning very well. Teachers have very secure knowledge of external accreditation requirements and this is a reflection of the greater emphasis placed on continuing professional development which has occurred since the previous inspection. Students are well tracked and assessed and have a very clear understanding of what they need to do to improve. Marking is of a very high standard and includes appropriate target setting. Lessons are planned in great detail and this maintains both the focus and pace of learning, for example in modules dealing with marketing and finance.

100. Very effective use is made of curriculum time and students are generally ahead of the expected place within the schemes of work. There are very well chosen case studies such as that dealing with the take-over of one large manufacturer and the problems of achieving lean manufacturing at another. The impact of these studies is to ensure students continually keep a 'whole company' perspective in their coursework. It also ensures that their investigative skills make consistently good progress through both the A and AS level programmes.

101. Management within the subject is very good. Team working and communication within the department are very strong and the quality of teaching continues to develop as a result of a clear vision for the subject. The curriculum has good quality and range, although local opportunities for learning outside the classroom have developed little since the previous inspection. Input by speakers representing the fast food industry and other sectors are well appreciated and add to the pool of information upon which students can draw to provide relevant contemporary examples in course and examination work. The department should continue to monitor the number and range of opportunities being provided since this is an important adjunct to student learning. Insufficient consideration has been given to incorporating and implementing higher order ICT skills which would enable, for example students to become more confident in trend analysis and the manipulation of aggregate data.

102. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. The standards have been maintained and are improving. Business studies is a popular option. The department has introduced the new AS programme of study effectively. The department does not give detailed consideration to planning and implementing effective ICT in ways that will strengthen learning within business studies. Similarly, although there have been some developments in extra-curricular activity, there needs to be more consistent opportunities for students to learn outside the classroom.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Computing was the focus subject during the inspection.

### **Computing**

Overall, the quality of provision in computing is **excellent**.

Strengths
-----------

- Students attain very high standards.
- Teaching and learning are excellent.
- Students display an excellent and mature approach to their studies.

Areas for improvement

- The subject is insufficiently attractive to many girls.

103. Standards of work seen during the inspection are very high. These standards are achieved because teaching is excellent. Students' achievement in relation to standards at the start of the sixth form is excellent. Students' excellent attitudes also cause the quality of students' learning in computing to be excellent. Students make excellent progress as they move through the sixth form.

104. In A-level examinations in 2001, results were very high. Students do considerably better in computing than they do in their other subjects. AS level results in 2001 were also high. All students gained a grade in the examination and almost four out of every five students gained grades A or B. Boys and girls achieve equally high levels. These results have remained consistently high in recent years. Virtually all students who sat the AS examination in 2001 continued with their studies in this subject. Those who chose not to continue did so for the very sound reason of specified subjects for university entrance. Retention rates are very high.

105. Work seen during the inspection confirms the standards recorded in last year's examinations. Students have developed very good programming skills. They plan their work well and competently deploy more difficult techniques such as nested loops and multi-dimensional arrays. They make very sound decisions when selecting an approach to a problem. They explain their reasons for their choice succinctly both orally and in writing. Students' evaluation of their work is also of a very high standard. They have developed a very good understanding of analyst/client relations. They use clients well to add to the extensive testing of their work. They demonstrate a high level of understanding of the needs of differing audiences as shown in the user documentation of their projects. The high standards attained in examinations reflect the excellent progress students make in lessons in computing.

106. Teaching of computing is excellent. All teaching seen during the inspection was at least good and three-quarters was very good or excellent. Teachers convey their enthusiasm for the challenges of the subject expertly to students. Teachers establish a very purposeful atmosphere in classes and students respond superbly in a most adult manner. Computing classes are a meeting of minds in which students and their teachers engage in very profitable discussions. One of many examples was seen in a year 12 class discussing examination project work based on a hospital. Students asked very perceptive questions to stretch their understanding. Teachers are highly skilled at developing students' skills to work independently. In many instances they recognise that the student does not require any input from the teacher. Where they do recognise support is required, this is at exactly the correct level so that an individual student is provided with the precise amount of information or support to maintain their learning.

107. Students speak very highly of enjoying the challenge offered in computing. They especially enjoy the satisfaction gained from producing a successful solution to a problem. Because of this personal satisfaction, many students in year 13 had produced coursework assignments which more

than met the very highest demands of the examination. From this challenge, students develop a great deal of independence. When they detect a fault in their work, they readily identify possible solutions. This was well exemplified by a girl in Year 12 establishing a relational database. When a link she had established was unsuccessful, she immediately conjectured as to the reasons and successfully rectified the problem without seeking any assistance from the teacher. She gained obvious satisfaction from resolving this difficulty herself. These excellent attitudes to their studies contribute greatly to the success students achieve. Although access to the Internet is not currently available in computing rooms (for reasons beyond the control of the school) students' very mature approaches ensure that they overcome this potential difficulty by accessing the web from other points.

108. Computing is a popular subject in the sixth form although about twice as many boys than girls take the subject. Girls taking the subject are highly pleased with their choice. The school would benefit from examining reasons why the subject currently appeals less to girls than to boys because girls who do take the subject make excellent progress. The most common reason for students choosing the subject is to provide a basis for further study and employment. In 2001 about one third of pupils who took A level in the subject entered university to read for a computing-based degree. One student did so at an Oxbridge college.

109. Most, but not all, students have taken a computing based GCSE course. Those who did not are not disadvantaged and make progress equal to the other students.

110. The subject has grown in popularity in recent years. There has been no decline in standards during this growth. However, increase in numbers has brought about some practical issues such as greater difficulty in arranging valuable visits because of the difficulties of accommodating larger numbers on such an activity. Students would benefit from more such visits through the opportunity to see equipment not available in school and to discuss applications with computer professionals. Some students benefit from such opportunities gained on work placements and these add to their learning.

111. The subject is very well lead. The excellent series of course booklets produced in the school provide students with most useful support. These booklets are very well structured, covering the entire course. They are highly accessible so that all students cover material in sufficient depth for the most demanding parts of the course. Students use these booklets very well, adding annotations and highlighting key sections for their personal use. Students are tested regularly on their learning. This provides students with a very good measure of the progress they are making. Students use their marked tests papers most maturely, adding detail to incomplete answers or annotating errors. Students are also set target grades. They appreciate this system and know exactly what is required for them to meet these targets.

112. Excellent progress has been made since the previous inspection because standards have been maintained at the highest levels and the number of students taking computing has increased significantly. The quality of teaching has also improved.

## **HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL**

Physical education was the only focus subject in this curriculum area.

## Physical education

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

### Strengths

- Standards seen and examination results are above average.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning is good.
- Students have positive attitudes to learning.

### Areas for improvement

- Not enough teaching is as good as the best.
- The marking of students' work is not challenging the highest attainers sufficiently.

113. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above average. These standards are achieved because the introduction of physical education as an advanced course has been very well planned, and despite little previous experience at this level, the teaching is good. The very positive attitudes of students also cause the quality of their learning to be good. Students make good progress as they move through the sixth form. Retention rates are high.

114. The subject was only introduced into the sixth form in 2000 and as yet therefore, no students have sat the A-level examination. 41 students sat the AS-level examination in 2001 and 14 obtained the higher A-B grades. This proportion is greater than the national average as is the students' average grade points score. However, students tended to do slightly better in their other subjects. Nevertheless, these results represent a considerable success for the students themselves as well as for their teachers in this first foray into examined physical education. This is all the more creditable when seen in the context of a lack of previous experience of the subject at GCSE level, for both students and their teachers. The initial success and popularity of the subject indicate that the school was right to respond to the wishes of both students and their parents to provide this course.

115. The key to the success has been the planning. Teachers have been well prepared through extensive training. The inclusion of an experienced science teacher with good understanding of the anatomical and physiological aspects of the subject specification, into the teaching team has been critical. Students have been able to quickly gain the foundation normally acquired through study at GCSE level and at the same time adapt their learning to the demands of AS and A-level. This was illustrated well in a very good AS-level lesson on cardiovascular and respiratory function. The teacher was very well prepared with anatomical models and a spirometer. The learning was well organised to provide students with a clear understanding of the anatomy and physiology of respiration and to enable them to use this in considering the importance of vital lung capacity in physical performance, as well as how to measure it. The pace of learning was very rapid, owing initially to a well-judged balance of teacher explanation and sharp questioning. Students were then able to measure each other's lung capacity using the spirometer and record this alongside other important variables. Those students not engaged in measuring and recording, reinforced their learning by completing a demanding written task. The pace of the lesson was very well managed so that all students completed their tasks and were very well placed to continue their investigations in the next lesson.

116. This pace and security of learning was not always evident in some otherwise satisfactory or good lessons where the teacher relied on notes and could not always capitalise on the opportunities to challenge and stretch students which arose during the lesson. Students appreciate the efforts of their teachers. They enjoy the subject and some are already considering continuing their study of physical education to degree level. They feel that they have been able to improve performance in their chosen specialist sports because of the A-level experience and that their understanding of sociological and psychological aspects has helped in this as well their increased understanding of exercise physiology. Some do admit, however, that despite accurate advice before beginning the course, they expected more balance between performance and theoretical aspects. Students also feel also that the marking helps them to improve. This was not entirely confirmed by the inspection evidence. Work is regularly marked and students' efforts are recognised and most are shown how to improve. However the highest attainers are not yet sufficiently stretched to do even better, which is indicative of the relative inexperience of some of the teaching at this stage. Teachers are quickly gaining confidence, however and a culture of self-evaluation is evident which has contributed to the good overall quality of teaching revealed by the inspection and which is the major factor in the above average standards reached by students.

117. Most students in A-level classes have a good depth of knowledge and understanding of energy systems and use appropriate technical vocabulary consistently well. The writing of the highest attainers is assured and makes good use of relevant up to date examples, for example in writing about deviance in sport. AS-level students have made rapid progress since starting the course. Most students produce good quality course work describing and evaluating local and national provision of their chosen sport and use their initiative well in researching information. Lower attainers in particular are well supported by teachers, who monitor their progress carefully, making good use of the information generated by the school's regular assessment procedures. Most students routinely use the Internet for research but find some difficulty in discriminating what is useful, because of the wealth of information, which is available.

118. Throughout the course, the relationship between theoretical aspects and performance is well established. This became evident in a very good A-level lesson, which dealt with the analysis of performance. Students had been very well prepared by previously attempting to use an exemplar form to analyse each other's swimming performance. The students' discussion of this process revealed an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the form based on their experience, and a good understanding of the nature of skilled performance. They were then well placed to critically examine a range of other analysis forms before beginning the task of creating one to meet their own requirements. Discussion with the students revealed a good understanding of both the skills required for their chosen aspect of the sport and an acute awareness of other sociological and psychological factors which they would need to consider, such as whether their subject was a beginner or elite performer.

119. Relationships between students and teachers and between the students themselves are consistently good in lessons and contribute to the atmosphere of industry and enjoyment in learning which characterises them. Most students participate regularly in their chosen activities in school, teams and outside, clubs and this contributes to their developing skills. The leadership and management of the department are good.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA**

The focus was on art and design, but theatre studies and music were also sampled. In theatre studies in one of the two lessons observed, teaching and learning were excellent; they were good in the other lesson. In the excellent lesson, the imagination, energy and pace in which the teacher encouraged students to experiment captured their sustained interest and enthusiasm; as a result, standards of work achieved were above average. Teaching and learning in the one music lesson observed were good, although in teaching modulation, obvious use of the keyboards was surprisingly overlooked as a means of applying knowledge and understanding musically rather than just theoretically.

## Art and design

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

### Strengths

- The quality of teaching and learning is very good.
- Use of sketchbooks supports students' effective learning.
- Students' have positive responses to the work of contemporary artists.
- The quality and range of decorative textile studies and abstract painting are well above average.

### Areas for improvement

- Accommodation is too cramped for students' needs.
- There is a lack of ICT provision for use in art and design.
- There are limits on the scale of two and three-dimensional work undertaken.

120. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above average. These standards are achieved because the teaching is very good. Students' achievement in relation to standards on entry at the start of the sixth form is satisfactory; it is held back significantly through poor accommodation. Students' attitudes are very positive in spite of the restricted space available and the very limited opportunity to use the art room outside their own lesson time. Students model their approach to art and design on their teachers' fine art and textiles practice as well as on the art movements they study. Current provision favours female over male students. The artwork of women artists is often on a smaller scale than that of males. There are no ICT facilities. Owing to lack of space, limited opportunities exist for large-scale two and three-dimensional work, in which male students often excel.

121. Standards of work seen during two Year 12 and two Year 13 lessons, from studying samples of work and from interviewing a representative sample of students are judged to be above average overall.

122. Students in Year 12 have benefited from a phased approach to more independent working, with a lot of support evident in the first unit on Cubist work and more freedom of approach in the second unit based on reflections and natural forms. In spite of this structure, many of the middle and lower-attaining students still rely too heavily on their teachers for support than might normally be expected by this stage; this was evident in the colour association brainstorm undertaken as one group prepared for the AS level examination. Students who attend the voluntary life classes benefit from regular exposure to the discipline of observational drawing. Drawing from observation is not a strong feature of students' work however, with many students relying on books, photographs or the Internet rather than starting from natural forms or the local urban and rural landscapes. Occasionally minds are closed to new ideas, as for example one student preferring to draw cars and resisting advice to consider other means of expression. Some students however, are well above average in both their visual and critical research. Their observational drawing is sensitive with regard to line, tone and form and their aesthetic response to tactile surfaces is of a high order.

123. Year 13 students have been well motivated by their visits to galleries in Salford and London and from their exposure to new ways of working as for example in one student's response to



deconstructing books and reusing pages in order to create new decorative forms. High levels of experimentation, using both sketchbooks and planning sheets, are impressive features of many students' practice. Annotated notes clearly add a further dimension in communicating the students' intentions as well as their evaluation of how successful they feel they have been. Personal studies are prime examples of how the gifted and talented excel as for example in one student's 'earth art' after visiting the Grizedale forest and studying the work of Andy Goldsworthy. Her woven nest constructed of hawthorn twigs and accompanying essay are of the highest standard. Lack of ready access to ICT during the creative process adversely affects middle and lower attainers. Whilst all students use the Internet for research, only a few higher attainment take the initiative and use computers for graphics or presentation.

124. Teaching is very good and occasionally excellent. Teachers as fine or decorative artists are very good role models. Students benefit from their enthusiasm, knowledge, understanding and skills. Higher attainers, in both year groups, are currently allowed more independence of action than middle and lower attainers. This is because higher attainers are trusted to plan their time and make considered decisions whereas other students are perceived to be unable to maintain such consistent behaviour. Whilst this approach is often justifiable it does lead to too much dependence, on teachers, by some students. Boys with special learning difficulties for example, who find planning on paper difficult, do not have sufficient opportunities to model responses by using computers or to produce three-dimensional representations of evolving ideas that might help develop their independence. Whilst one teacher has expertise in using computers other teachers are less confident. On two occasions, during the inspection, teachers read aloud for students who were quite capable of undertaking this task. In the excellent lesson all students needs were fully met with quality exemplars from previous examination responses stimulating learning and motivating students' minds to consider the full range of possible outcomes open to them.

125. Students enjoy art and design lessons and speak highly of their teachers' commitment to them as learners. Higher attainers recognise that they are treated like young adults but middle and lower attainers feel that relationships in the subject are more formal than if they had gone to a further education college.

126. During the period 1999-2001 standards at GCE have varied from above average to average. In 2001 all students gained a pass grade but the number gaining the higher A-B grades was below average. Similarly in 2001 all students gained a pass grade at AS level with a high proportion gaining A-B grades. There is no significant difference in boys' and girls' performance at examination level although more girls than boys take art and design.

127. The subject makes a very good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. Assessment procedures are good and examination objectives clearly shared with students. In the best teaching students views are listened to and they are encouraged to find solutions to problems. Occasionally teachers are too ready to put forward their own ideas without allowing sufficient time for reflection and for tentative first thoughts. The subject is led well by a teacher with vision and expertise in examining at this level. Her task is not made easy by the split site, and her other pastoral responsibilities limit time for monitoring teaching and learning. Whilst art and design accommodation has improved since the previous inspection, the subject's popularity has outgrown the present provision and is adversely impacting on further raising of standards. ICT resources are

needed as well as space for larger scale work and opportunities for students to work independently outside of lessons.

## HUMANITIES

Within this group of subjects the focus was on geography, history, politics, sociology and psychology but classical civilisation and religious education were also sampled. In religious education results have been below the national average but the standards of work seen are slightly above average. In the lesson observed students were analysing the response of different ethical systems to present medical issues. Teaching and learning were good and as a result students were making good progress. Although the results in classical civilisation were well below average in 2001 they represented good achievement for the students who began the course with relatively low GCSE standards. In the lesson seen standards were well above average as the students increased their learning about the role of women in Roman society. The teacher's expertise and enthusiasm ensured that the students made very good progress.

### Geography

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

#### Strengths

- Standards are well above average.
- The quality of teaching is very good and students achieve very well.
- Fieldwork enriches students' learning.
- Very good leadership and management.

#### Areas for improvement

- The quality and range of teaching and learning styles are too narrow in a small minority of lessons.
- Some teachers do not use ICT sufficiently to support students' independent learning.

128. Standards of work seen during the inspection are well above average. These standards are the result of very good teaching and the very diligent response of students to their learning. Their achievement in relation to standards at the start of the course is very good and students make very good progress in the sixth form. Geography is a popular subject and retention rates are very high.

129. In work on population, higher-attaining students in Year 12 describe the pattern of migrant workers into Western Europe. They analyse these movements in terms of the social, economic and political factors that influence voluntary and forced migration, though some do not give due emphasis to persecution and prejudice. Detailed notes include many examples of past questions and provide a very good base for revision. Work is rigorously marked with comments on how to improve. There is little difference between the standards of middle and lower attainers. In both cases, work lacks some detail. For example, answers outlining evidence for the theory of plate tectonics are too general.

130. In lessons, students make very good progress in response to very good and sometimes excellent teaching. The very best teaching involves students in a variety of learning activities. For example, in a lesson on coastal environments students compiled case studies annotating photographs and making notes from a video. The lesson was planned in detail to ensure a rapid pace of learning.

The teachers' expertise and insistence on the use of correct technical language enabled students to apply their knowledge and understanding of coastal processes accurately to three different coastlines. This excellent lesson was concluded with homework to increase learning using geology maps and web sites. After conducting fieldwork in Blackburn students used ICT to produce scattergraphs of various socio-economic data. They extended their learning using an Ordnance Survey map to draw a sketch map, and further developed their understanding by producing a choropleth map to show the distribution of ethnic minority groups. This very good lesson enabled the students to apply geographical skills to their learning.

131. In the AS examinations last year the results were above average in terms of points scores. All the students passed and almost half attained the higher A and B grades. The results indicated very good achievement.

132. In Year 13, higher-attaining students write essays of high quality on the processes and pressures on land use in the urban fringe, making comparisons between countries at different stages of economic development. Lower attainers fail to mention the difference due to local and national planning regulations or the lack of these. In physical geography, all students produce detailed work on the cause, location, effects and response to hurricanes. Some incorrectly ascribe the cause of tidal waves to hurricanes but this is corrected by marking. Folders of fieldwork carried out in the French Alps are detailed, meticulous and are of excellent quality. They are neatly presented demonstrating the pride students have in their work. The written work of lower attainers lacks clarity and conciseness and is sometimes repetitious.

133. Very good and occasionally excellent teaching, as in a lesson with Year 12, involves students in a variety of learning activities. Such teaching combines learning theory with practical examples that require the application of techniques, such as the location of modern high-tech industry through building up case studies alongside the use of the location quotient. Students in this lesson were given appropriate details and guidance, including the use of ICT, and challenged to work independently. On the other hand, when teaching is no better than satisfactory, there is too much exposition whilst students simultaneously take notes from the board. Learning about sustainable development in fragile tropical grasslands through watching a video is not reinforced through sharing ideas through discussion and debate. In this lesson, students were less actively involved in their learning. Although they were set a good homework task to consolidate their learning and encouraged to use the library, no reference was made to specific texts or the use of ICT for further research.

134. The A-level results improved in 2001 and were very close to being well above average in terms of the average points score. Half of the 57 students gained the higher A and B grades and only two failed. There was no significant gender difference. Statistical analysis suggests that achievement overall was very good but a small number of students did not attain their expected grades. Requests for an explanation from the examination board have been ignored. As a result, the department has changed the syllabus and examination to one that provides more progression from Years 10 and 11 and is more responsive to students' needs.

135. The course has a very clear focus on the inter-relationship between the physical environment and human geography. Consequently, learning has a strong influence on students' personal development particularly in terms of moral, social, cultural, economic and political considerations.

136. Geography is led and managed very effectively and, as a result, improvement since the previous inspection has been very good. The teachers are well qualified; keep up-to-date with developments and share good practice. They form a dynamic team and are committed to raising the achievement of students. Procedures for assessment are very good; students have a general rather than a specific target grade for geography and their progress is checked regularly. Teaching and learning are evaluated and the development plan is an effective guide for further improvement. Accommodation and learning resources are very good and support learning very well but lack an inter-active whiteboard.

## History

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

### Strengths

- The trend in results since 1998 has been very good.
- Over four-fifths of the students who sat the new AS-level examination in 2001 obtained the higher A-B grades.
- Students achieve well in comparison with their previous attainment
- The teaching of history is very good. Subject knowledge is a strength and marking is used particularly well to extend students.
- Students are industrious and have positive attitudes to learning history.

### Areas for improvement

- Students do not make sufficient use of ICT for research.
- Despite very good teaching, learning styles offered to students are too narrow.

137. Standards of work seen during the inspection overall are well above average; in A-level classes standards are well above average and above average in AS-level classes. These standards are the result of very good teaching. Students are hard working and have positive attitudes to the subject. This causes the quality of their learning in history to be very good. Students achieve very well as the move through the sixth form and retention rates are high. There has been good improvement in the provision for history since the previous inspection. The leadership and management of the subject are good.

138. The standards of students' work seen in A-level classes represents an improvement in comparison with the A-level examination results from 2001, which were above average. This was due to the performance of female students whose results overall were average largely due to the fact that three students failed to obtain a pass grade. Other than these three female students, there was no significant difference in the performance of males and females. Students' achievements, in relation to their above average starting points in the sixth form are, therefore, very good overall. Male students' results were well above average and have been so consistently since 1998. Apart from the most recent results, this has also been the case for female students. Students' performance in history, despite this decline, tended to be better than in their other subjects, as was the case in 2000. The proportion of students obtaining the higher A-B grades was remarkably similar in the two courses which were taught, American History and British History. All the students who took the new AS-

level examination in 2001 obtained at least a pass grade. Over four-fifths of the candidates obtained the higher A-B grades.

139. Standards have been maintained whilst the numbers of students choosing to study history have increased steadily. The increasing popularity of the subject means that group sizes are relatively high for sixth-form classes. This makes it difficult to offer students the amount of consistent individual involvement normally found through, for example, discussion, debate and presentations. The evidence from students' files indicate some inconsistency in the provision of a variety of learning experiences. However, students themselves do not feel disadvantaged and consider that they have reasonable opportunities to participate fully in the learning opportunities provided in lessons. They confirm the findings from other inspection evidence, that they do not have sufficient opportunities in school to use computers, particularly for research. They also feel that they are made to work hard and their thinking is stretched. This is confirmed by the evidence from most lesson observations, and from the analysis of a representative sample of students' work. It is clear that teachers have good specialist knowledge of the periods taught and a good understanding of the assessment criteria for history. The latter is used very effectively in enabling students to understand how best to use their knowledge, understanding and historical skills in the examinations for which they are being prepared. Examples which illustrate this well were found in a very good A-level lesson which investigated whether Thomas Cromwell's reforms during the reign of Henry VIII should be considered revolutionary, and in the teachers' marking of students' work. The marking in general was very thorough and detailed, giving students a good indication of what they needed to do to improve and also analysed well the reasons why they had answered questions successfully. A very significant strength of the marking, however, is that fact that the highest-attaining students are not allowed to rest on their laurels. They are pushed very hard to continue to improve work, which is already of high quality. The lesson about Cromwell had a number of strands. In the first, students were given confidence to cope in the challenging position of being the first to sit the new A-level examinations. In the second, her analysis of recently marked pieces of work was punctuated by very sharp questioning which effectively illustrated the points made. Students were challenged to support their views by providing very specific evidence, for example, for the way in which the status of the House of Lords changed during the sixteenth century. Students were clearly shown how to attain well and were challenged to reach the highest levels of written answers. The third strand made use of a simple but very effective idea in using a time line to order the complex series of events being studied. In addition to handling this task very well, students quickly realised the value to be gained from the earlier part of the lesson by taking extensive notes. Not all lessons were so effective and occasionally, in otherwise satisfactory or good lessons, the pace of learning was inconsistent or the level of challenge could have been improved. Teachers use the school's effective assessment processes well to monitor the progress of individual students.

140. Higher attainers use their detailed knowledge and understanding well in writing at length and with good style, for example about the "Pilgrimage of Grace". Their work shows evidence of wide reading and they use quotations appropriately from the work of historians such as Dawes and Dickens. These qualities are not so evident the work of a minority of students. The majority of students have very positive attitudes to learning. Notes are taken assiduously and some students naturally provide their own amendments in response to teachers' comments about their work.

141. Students in AS-level classes are making good progress in the development of their knowledge and understanding and their use of historical skills. Most are maintaining progress towards the challenging minimum target grades, which are set for them, and some are already working beyond them. Many write at good length and are developing a good style evident, for example, in essays on the Nazi policies towards minorities. Evaluation is even-handed and knowledge and understanding are used to support their analysis of sources of information. A minority of lower-attaining students tend to summarise the information gained from source material rather than analyse it, and some have weaknesses in writing, particularly in the precise use of language. Their files tend not to be as well organised as those of higher-attaining students. However, effective teaching is already pushing students in Year 12 to work towards the level demanded by A-level. For example, in a lesson which investigated anti-Semitism in Germany in the 1930s, students worked well in groups, to assess the evidence in sources to support an intentionalist or structuralist interpretation of Hitler's intentions towards the Jews.

## Politics

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

### Strengths

- The quality of teaching and learning is very good.
- The achievement of students is very good.
- The leadership and management of the department are very good.

### Areas for improvement

- There are limited opportunities for the use of ICT to increase independent learning.

142. Standards of work seen during the inspection are well above average. These standards are achieved because the teaching is very good. Students' achievement in relation to standards at the start of the sixth form is very good. Students' very positive attitudes also cause the quality of students' learning in politics to be very good. Students make very good progress as they move through the sixth form.

143. Results in politics have been well above the average for other social science subjects in recent years. In 2001, almost half of the students gained the higher grades A and B and all passed the examination. In the new AS level examinations, nearly all of the students gained grades A-E. In work seen, students are maintaining these standards and building very well on their overall GCSE performance. Politics is a popular subject choice and the retention rates are high.

144. The quality of students' learning and achievement is very good. This is the direct result of the very good teaching they receive. They have a very effective understanding of political concepts and are able to relate these very well to both the British and American systems which they study. They have a firm grasp of the contrasting roles and powers of the British Prime Minister and the American President. Their files are full of appropriate information, reflecting the thorough teaching they are receiving. They have very positive views towards the subject, emphasising that it is very interesting and well taught. The amount of independent work they can undertake is limited, however, by

restricted opportunities to use ICT. Computer terminals with Internet access, which would increase the scope of both teaching and learning, are not available in the classrooms.

145. The quality of the teaching is very good. The teachers have very good subject knowledge, which the students respect. Lessons are well planned, with clear objectives, which are shared effectively with the students, who respond with very good levels of interest. There is an appropriate use of humour. Pace is good and there is a good variety of activity. An excellent example of the use of role-play was seen in a Year 13 lesson, where four students were used very effectively to illustrate the part played by the 'Filibuster' in American politics. This was followed by a lively discussion, which included effective comparisons by the students of the British and American systems of representation. Teachers illustrate very well the moral dimension of political issues and students respond by putting forward mature views, which they back up with evidence from their own studies. In a Year 12 lesson, students considered well the question of the 'neutrality' of the civil service and the moral dilemmas which can result. The teaching is very positive in encouraging and supporting students, who mostly contribute well, but there are some who are passive.



146. The enrichment in the subject is very good. There are regular visits to the U.S.A., where students see the most important political sights and meet high-ranking officials. There are several very impressive photographic displays of these visits on the classroom and corridor walls. There are also visits to London for political conferences and to tour the Houses of Parliament. Visiting speakers for the sixth form include the previous Prime Minister, John Major, in 1994 and the present Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, who is also a local Member of Parliament, in 2001. There are very appropriate wall displays to stimulate students' interest in the subject, including collections of very sharply observed political cartoons.

147. The quality of leadership and management is very good. There is a clear educational direction for the subject. All the teachers are specialists and possess great expertise. There is very good departmental consultation and the staff work well together in order to raise standards. The progress of the students is very well monitored, with appropriate targets set for improvement, which are indicated by constructive comments added to the work and by discussion with individuals. The teaching is also very well monitored, with the results being thoroughly discussed and reported. There has been good improvement since the last inspection, with schemes of work having been revised to include tasks, which more closely match the needs of higher attainers. New textbooks have been purchased and there is a good variety of resources for students. Although the teaching accommodation is good, storage is very cramped and restricts the expansion of resources.

## **Sociology**

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

### Strengths

- Very good teaching has a positive effect on standards and students achieve very well.
- Students' very good attitudes enhance their progress in lessons.

### Areas for Improvement

- The department does not seek the views of students sufficiently when planning future development.

148. Standards of work seen during the inspection are well above average. These standards are reached because the teaching is very good. Students' achievement in relation to standards on entry to the sixth form is very good. The quality of teacher-student relationships is very good and has a significant impact on the motivation of students who take their work seriously and work hard. The curriculum is well planned and well enriched, ensuring that students achieve well in their knowledge and understanding of the subject. Retention rates, whilst satisfactory, are lower than for many other subjects; sociology is sometimes the fourth subject in a student's priorities.

149. Higher-attaining students recognise the dynamic nature of the subject and are able to separate and compare conflicting perspectives, for example on the political and social influences which have shaped the modern English education system. They maintain very good files and show excellent study skills in selecting and synthesising information, for example in the health module of the course. Those of middle and lower attainment are less secure in their grasp of what the course requires but they remain able to contribute well to sessions dealing with the evaluation of

coursework samples. The department does not sufficiently consider introducing periodic formal checks on the quality and quantity of recorded notes for these students, to ensure they are consolidating their learning. Lower-attaining students are also less confident in their appreciation that sociology is best represented by the sum of its debates and they are consequently less well versed in presenting alternative explanatory models.

150. The quality of teaching and learning is consistently very good. This contributed to results achieved in 2001 that were well above average. In the best lessons, teaching is imaginative and very well paced, for example in a lesson introducing the notion of longitudinal studies applied to social issues. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge allied to a clear understanding of all aspects of accreditation. This has a strong influence on students' abilities to evaluate their work and that of others, for example in a lesson tackling underachievement in education amongst ethnic minority children. Activities are varied and expectations are high. When given the opportunity, students display very good independent learning skills, for example in planning research designs for coursework on the sociology of education.

151. Students have a high degree of confidence in their teachers and feel very well supported in their studies, though some properly complain of the limited access to ICT facilities at the present time within the school. These relationships are very significant in maintaining the high motivation exemplified in the quality and quantity of work produced outside lesson time, for example on class differences, in the education module at A-level.

152. Student learning is considerably enriched by the extra-curricular opportunities offered. In the current year, some students have been able to pursue their study of cultural and social differences as a result of a visit to Beijing. There are regular up date and study conferences at neighbouring institutions of higher education. The department provides students effectively with activities that will extend their vocational and applied knowledge of the subject. Progress in acquiring knowledge and understanding is also promoted by effective assessment and target setting. Students are rightly appreciative of the well presented personal sessions that give termly feedback on how well they are doing.

153. Leadership and management of sociology are very good. Schemes of work are well matched to the learning needs of students and the department is sensitive to being inclusive and has amended modules of study to ensure that both boys and girls have equality of access to all elements of both programmes of study. This ensures that boys and girls of all levels of attainment make very good progress in their knowledge, understanding and the application of their learning to case studies, for example in one on crime and deviance.

154. Resources are adequate. They enable students to be made aware of the need to use a range of materials including a limited range of journals. This assists their level of knowledge and understanding, particularly of key debates, for example on positivism and interactionism.

155. Improvement within the subject since the previous inspection has been good. Results are well above average and improving. This is occurring in a context where the attainment on entry has remained broadly similar with the majority of students performing only slightly above the national

average at the start of their sixth form studies. ICT is now appropriately planned for although further opportunities for its use in deepening learning both in A and AS level options are required.

## Psychology

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

### Strengths

- Teaching is very good.
- Students receive very good additional help, support and guidance.
- Clear and logical presentation of information, ideas and arguments are central to work in psychology.
- Analysis of evidence and interpretation of data is put to good use.
  
- Areas for improvement
- Use of Internet in the classroom is too limited.
- Despite teaching that is otherwise very good, independent learning skills are insufficiently a part of students' regular practice.
- Not enough attention is paid in psychology to developing key skills of communication and ICT.

156. Standards of work seen in psychology are above average. These standards are the result of very good teaching. Students' increasing knowledge of psychology shows the quality of their learning to be very good. Schemes of work provide a range of learning experiences that allows students to consolidate previous learning and progress further in psychology. As a result students' achievement overall, in relation to their standards when they began in the sixth form, is very good. Retention rates in psychology are good.

157. Standards in Year 12 are above average. Students show an interest in psychology and have positive attitudes to research. They can also express their disapproval of unethical work such as that conducted by Zimbardo. They listen attentively to teachers and to each other. Students answer questions willingly, using subject-specific vocabulary. In a good lesson on social influence defining complex phenomena by examining parts opposed to holism, students, for example, looked at parts of Miligram and Zimbardo's work and the whole ethics of the research. Their accounts of research are presented carefully. Most show good initiative and plan and organise their work without direct supervision. Students produce graphs and charts using questionnaire results, interpret and comment on figures and complete an external audit. Students respond positively to suggestions for improving their work. The higher-attaining students read more widely than the prescribed lists, and this develops their ability to seek and verify evidence. Most students use electronic sources to gather current information. All students read their textbooks and the well prepared teachers' notes to enhance their writing to make it factually accurate. They received excellent notes on anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa as eating disorders. Students are well motivated to organise their time and develop their study skills. Clear, helpful teacher guidance forms an equally important feature of the good standards achieved by most students.

158. Standards in Year 13 are above average. Students show knowledge and understanding of psychology in relation to current theory and practice. The majority of students, but especially females, make effective use of relevant psychology vocabulary. Males and females use computing methods to select up-to-date data. The higher-attaining students appreciate the views of the various theoretical writers on behaviour. A class examined, in depth, the development of psychology as a

science, from the writing of Descartes, Locke and Hume. Europe was not overlooked, by an examination, too, of the work of Weber, Helmholtz and Fechner. Good writing, discussions and arguments occur in class. Students gain a clear understanding of the definition of reductionism and the different types - physiological, biological, environmental and machine. This lesson led to the next on whether the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Students were capable of the intellectual challenge involved in this idea. Students are gaining a clear understanding of the importance of ethics in psychology research that govern in-depth experiments on humans. Case study work is used to develop communication skills. Students are able to undertake research individually and in groups. Coursework assignments encourage key skills development.

159. Examination results at the end of Year 12 and Year 13 are above average. In Year 12 the proportion of A and B grades is well above average. In Year 13, the A and B grades obtained are below average. In the past most students have achieved grades that are above average. This represent good achievement and 'value added' by the end of Year 13 in relation to their attainment on entry to the sixth form. Students in Year 12 have no knowledge of psychology at the start of their course. Male and female students perform equally well in their examinations.

160. The quality of teaching is very good. Teaching is inclusive, ensuring that all students are challenged and supported effectively and are fully involved in the lesson, including both high attainers and those with a learning need. There are sufficient opportunities in some lessons for students to think analytically or creatively and to reason. A video was shown of the television programme 'ER' to test eye witness testimony to good effect. All students receive oral and written feedback targeted at improving their work. Students are expected to be engaged and to contribute through a range of opportunities for participation. Group work is purposeful, focused and well paced. Routines are established which support independent learning. However, in many cases, students remain dependent on the teachers. Lessons are well structured. A variety of activities is used so that pace and momentum are maintained. Teachers offer students good individual help. As a result of this very good teaching and the very positive attitudes of students the quality of their learning is very good. They are curious, experiment with ideas and seek to improve on their previous best performance.

161. Leadership and management are good. The teacher in charge of psychology monitors all the work associated with the subject. A variety of strategies is used to monitor the quality of learning in the classroom. These include informal classroom observation, sampling students' work and the moderation of assignments. The subject leader is aware of the developments taking place in psychology. Planning is good and it is effective. High expectations are communicated to all students. There is a cycle of meetings to review students' progress and the meeting of targets. These meetings reach decisions on any changes that are required as to content or the method of delivery. These arrangements are effective in promoting higher standards. All teachers contribute to the raising of standards.

162. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. Students are now more actively encouraged to study outside class time and to utilise a wide range of psychology information including Internet access. However, the facilities in school are insufficient to permit the level of use now required in the teaching of psychology. Where appropriate the cross-curricular themes of equal opportunities and citizenship receive attention. The nature of psychology lends itself to develop a

number of issues related to the above aspects of learning and teaching takes account of this. Students analyse their data; look for relationships and possible correlations. The students' facility in using the key skills of communication, numeracy and ICT is under-developed and this shows in aspects of their work in this subject. Students' personal development is hindered because they place too much reliance on teachers.

## **ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION**

English literature and French were the focus subjects. English language and English language and literature were sampled. Results in these subjects are very good. German was also sampled. Results in German were well above average.

### **English literature**

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

#### **Strengths**

- Teaching is very good. Teachers have very high expectations and make lessons challenging.
- Students learn very well. They achieve very good standards in their notes and essays and gain outstanding examination results.
- Students have very positive attitudes to the subject. They work hard, enjoy lessons and are enthusiastic about English literature.
- The teacher in charge of sixth form English plans programmes of study carefully. This ensures that all students have clear routes to follow in their learning so that they can achieve high standards.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- Teachers do not always structure lessons to make best use of the final minutes.
- In a minority of lessons, teachers do not plan activities to ensure that all students are fully involved.

163. Standards of work seen during the inspection are well above average. Teaching is very good. Students work very well and are enthusiastic about the course. The overall achievement of students in relation to their standards on entry to the sixth form is very good.

164. Set against their levels of attainment on entry to the sixth form students' achievement in English literature is very good. Results in the 2001 A-level GCE examinations were in the top five percent of schools in the country and were better than those of the previous year. AS examination results for 2001 were also well above national averages. More than half the students who took the examination achieved either A or B grades. In the case of the other eighty or so students who took the alternative AS subjects, English language or combined English language and literature the proportion of students gaining A or B grades was even higher at around three-quarters of those entered. Comparisons made with their GCSE English grades two years earlier show that students make very good progress over time. There is no significant difference in the performance of male and female students, although there are many more of the latter who choose this subject. Students with special educational needs also make very good progress.

165. Work seen during the inspection is well above average. When talking in class students are articulate and well informed. They make thoughtful contributions to discussions and show themselves able to think as they speak, responding to the interventions of others and drawing appropriate parallels between different texts in order to make a case. Students show evidence in their folders of much painstaking research of the background to set texts and they organise their notes meticulously. They make judicious use of the Internet to extend their studies. Essays are consistently well planned to provide focused answers to questions raised. They are analytical and show clearly that students have excellent detailed knowledge of the texts and are able to select appropriate detail to support their arguments. Lower-attaining students quickly build up good critical skills, helped by useful departmental frameworks for study, such as those provided for Robert Bolt's 'A Man for All Seasons' and William Blake's poetry. Students often show their enthusiasm for literature in the originality and liveliness of their written responses. One very good example of this was seen in the excellent work on Mary Shelley's 'Frankenstein' in which students were asked to relate the text to wider issues by imagining what a psychiatrist's view of Victor might be. By the end of Year 13 students write confidently and accurately using a wide range of critical terms and with very good understanding of how writers work and why they write as they do. This is particularly evident in the scholarly and penetrating essays that students produce in response to their study of American literature such as Alice Walker's 'The Colour Purple', F. Scott Fitzgerald's 'The Great Gatsby' and Arthur Miller's 'Death of a Salesman.'

166. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have excellent knowledge of the subject and students respond enthusiastically to their teaching. In a lesson on Geoffrey Chaucer's 'The Merchant's Tale' the teacher was able to hold the interest of students for a full hour, despite the fact that their own direct involvement was limited. This was because she made her explanations of the text clear and memorable so that students had a vivid representation of the poet's meaning. In a very good lesson on Tennyson's poem 'Godiva', the teacher made her high expectations of students apparent by involving them in the challenging task of analysing in pairs an aspect of the poem and delivering in the same lesson a presentation to the rest of the group using their own transparency for the overhead projector. The results were most impressive and showed just how quickly these enthusiastic students could work when teaching was of high quality. Relationships between teachers and students are very strong. A lesson on Shakespeare's 'Measure for Measure' focused on using available knowledge about the character of Angelo to build up an argument. Students enjoyed the teacher's imaginative use of a Humpty Dumpty analogy to make the point that they needed to be resourceful and flexible in their use of evidence. However, just occasionally teachers' lesson plans do not fully consider ways of involving all students in activities. The final minutes of lessons are not always well used to reinforce learning. Elsewhere in English language and combined English language and literature lessons standards of teaching and learning are similar to those in English literature.

167. English literature is a very popular AS and A-level course and more than two hundred students in the sixth form are currently following one of the three English courses. Very few students drop out of courses before they are completed. Students are extremely positive about all aspects of the English literature course. They like their teachers, respect their very good teaching and enjoy lessons. They know where they are in levels of attainment and find the review system to be very effective.

168. The organisation of sixth form English literature by the second in department is very good. She is enthusiastic and committed to raising standards, as are all teachers of the subject. She has established imaginative teaching programmes that cover examination specifications very effectively. They are backed up well by engaging materials for use in lessons. Procedures for identifying and supporting under-achieving students are informal but effective. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good and A-level results for 2001 were the highest in recent years.



## French

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

### Strengths

- Attainment in Years 12 and 13 is well above average. Students make very good progress in lessons and the highest-attaining students achieve very high standards.
- Teaching and learning are very good and often excellent.
- Frequent opportunities to work informally, to practise new language and to engage in debate are major factors in enabling all students to increase their confidence and independence in manipulating the language to express their ideas.
- Work experience in France and frequent access to native speakers are very effective in increasing students' confidence in using the language.

### Areas for improvement

- Access to ICT to support and extend students' learning is inadequate.

169. Standards of work seen during the inspection are well above average. This is the result of very good teaching and the very positive attitudes of students to their learning. Students' achievement in lessons compared with their attainment on entry to the sixth form is very good. The subject is very well led and managed and the overall provision for the subject ensures a very good quality of learning.

170. Over the last four years results for A-level French have varied from below average in 1998 to well above average in 1999. The most recent A-level results in 2000 and 2001 were above average. This represents good achievement in examinations for the majority of students. Retention rates for both courses are high. Since the previous inspection results achieved in examinations have improved steadily.

171. In lessons and students' files, standards are well above average and students make very good progress at increasing their range of language and deepening their understanding of contemporary French society and culture. Male and female students do equally well. The majority speaks confidently, manipulating the language to express their ideas with relative ease. Higher-attaining students speak and write fluently. They use a very good range of vocabulary and structures in speaking and writing to recount events and construct well organised arguments on a variety of contemporary and moral issues, such as the French education system, racism, the use of animals in research and the benefits and dangers of cloning.

172. The quality of teaching and learning is consistently very good and often excellent. All students achieve very well. They increase their range of language and structures because teachers present new language very clearly. Teachers provide very effective support for lower-attaining students, whilst very effectively challenging higher-attaining students through skilful questioning and demanding tasks. Presentations and activities are well thought out and sequenced, gradually removing support so that students increase in confidence and independence in using new structures for themselves. Students make excellent progress in speaking and responding because of the imaginative use of resources such as the language laboratory and pair and group work. These

approaches enable students to practise exchanging their views informally with each other, closely monitored by the teacher, before participating in more formal discussion and debate. They participate with enthusiasm in speaking tasks and are engaged by activities. Discussion and debate are lively and students show interest in each other's views and respond confidently and spontaneously. Lower-attaining students occasionally encounter difficulty in expressing their ideas in debate but succeed in communicating their views because of the sensitive support teachers give them. Students develop their listening skills very effectively and identify the main points and specific detail from recordings. Higher-attaining students achieve this with little need for repetition because they are very well prepared for tasks by class discussion and are accustomed to predicting what they are about to hear. They consolidate learning of new structures very effectively through the use of whiteboards to practise manipulating the language to express their ideas rapidly. Teachers use this device very effectively to assess how well students have assimilated new language and identify where further explanation or practice is required. Students rapidly increase their understanding of topics and the issues involved and widen their range of vocabulary through skimming and scanning texts and reporting back their findings and opinions to others.

173. Students' views are very positive, they are fully informed about their progress and those joining the sixth form from other schools settle in quickly. They appreciate the opportunities they are given to develop their skills, particularly the opportunity to undertake work experience in France and the contact they have with native speakers within the school. They have very good relationships with their teachers and respond well to the high level of challenge they are set.

174. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. Teachers frequently exchange ideas and as a result there is a high level of consistency in the quality of teaching and learning. Students' progress is effectively monitored and students are regularly informed about their progress through very thorough marking, linked to examination criteria. Frequent oral feedback in lessons gives students clear guidance about how to improve. Although teachers work hard to ensure all students get individual attention in lessons, the large numbers in teaching groups make this difficult and progress is sometimes slowed as a result. The department expects the students to use ICT to support and extend their learning. However, there is no access to computers within the languages area so that students have to use ICT in homework tasks and cannot benefit from specialist guidance in accessing information as a result.