

INSPECTION REPORT

THE CARDINAL VAUGHAN MEMORIAL SCHOOL

The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea

LEA area: Kensington and Chelsea

Unique reference number: 100506

Headteacher: Mr Michael Gormally

Reporting inspector: Mrs Helen Hutchings
7541

Dates of inspection: 26th February – 1st March 2002

Inspection number: 193015

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:	Comprehensive
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	11 - 18
Gender of pupils:	Boys 11 - 16 Mixed 16 - 18
School address:	89 Addison Road Kensington London
Postcode:	W14 8BZ
Telephone number:	0207 603 8478
Fax number:	0207 602 3124
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Reverend Vincent Brady
Date of previous inspection:	February 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities (sixth form)	Aspect responsibilities (sixth form)
7541	Helen Hutchings	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it? What should the school do to improve further?
9563	Jeanette Reid	Lay inspector		How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
12003	Andrew Marfleet	Team inspector		
3643	Derek Jones	Team inspector		
31441	Maggie King	Team inspector		How high are standards? How well are pupils taught? How good are the curriculum and other opportunities offered to students? How well does the school care for its students? How well is the school led and managed?
30749	Heather Boyle	Team inspector	History Sociology	
31863	Adrian Cornelius	Team inspector	Geography	
10063	David Gutmann	Team inspector	Leisure and tourism	
28175	Jackie Goodman	Team inspector	Art	
31100	Geoff Hunter	Team inspector	Classics Mathematics	
13122	Stephanie Matthews	Team inspector	Business education	
18999	Linda Peck	Team inspector	French	
20767	Jeremy Royle	Team inspector	Music	
15372	Patricia Walker	Team inspector	English	
19983	Haydn Webb	Team inspector	Biology Chemistry	

The inspection contractor was:

PPI Group Ltd
7 Hill Street
Bristol
BS1 5RW

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
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	5 - 8
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM	9 - 11
PART B: COMMENTARY	
WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL	12 - 17
WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED	17
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	18
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	19 - 24
PART D: THE SIXTH FORM	
RESULTS AND STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS	25
STUDENTS' ATTITUDES, VALUES AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT	25
TEACHING AND LEARNING	26
CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS	27
THE SCHOOL'S CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS	27 - 28
PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS	28
THE EFFECTIVENESS OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT IN THE SIXTH FORM	28 - 29
PART E: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM	30 - 49

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The Cardinal Vaughan Memorial School is an 11-18 Roman Catholic comprehensive school of average size for boys, aged 11 to 16 and admits young women into the sixth form. It is in the Diocese of Westminster and the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. The school is popular and oversubscribed, with 516 boys in the first five years and 272 in the sixth form, of whom 93 are young women. Pupils are all of Catholic background and come from a wide geographical area but represent average social and economic circumstances. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is broadly in line with the national average. Boys have a wide range of attainment on entry, although only a small number have very low attainment, which is above average overall. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is below the national average although the percentage with statements of such need is in line with the average. About half of the pupils come from ethnic minority backgrounds and 17 per cent of pupils speak English as an additional language, which is high in relation to national proportions, the languages being mainly Spanish, Portuguese, Polish and Italian. Five pupils are at an early stage of learning English.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The Cardinal Vaughan Memorial School is a very successful school whose pupils attain exceptionally high standards as a result of very good teaching coupled with very good leadership and management. The school's aims, of educating all pupils to their full capacity, the gifted as well as every other child, within a clear Christian foundation are realised through the dedication and genuine care for the pupils shown by all staff. The school has only minor areas for development. Because of its significant strengths, it provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils achieve very well. They attain standards at the end of Key Stage 3 and in GCSE and A-level examinations which are well above national averages.
- Pupils have excellent attitudes to school. They are highly motivated and work very hard.
- Teaching is very good overall. The consistency of good teaching leads to pupils learning very well in all subjects.
- The curriculum is of a very good quality, offering a broad and balanced range of learning opportunities, including an impressive provision for extra-curricular activities.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is very good. The pastoral support and genuine care shown by all staff for pupils is very high and is reflected in the quality of relationships at all levels.
- The partnership with parents is exceptionally supportive and is a major factor in contributing to the school's strong climate of learning.
- The leadership and management of the school by the headmaster and senior staff are very good. All aspects of school life are being very successfully maintained and improved within a strong Catholic ethos.

What could be improved

- Accommodation is only just adequate to meet the current needs of the school and does not provide stimulating learning environments in all subject areas.
- The use of information and communication technology and Internet to improve home school liaison further.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the school was last inspected in February 1997 it has made a number of improvements. Performance in external examinations has been sustained at very high levels and is well above national averages throughout the school. Teaching was reported as a strength in the last inspection report and it has improved further since that time. The school has made good progress in addressing the key issues identified in the last report. The provision for information and communication technology across the curriculum has been addressed well, as has the deficiency in the design and technology curriculum. The number of computers has increased significantly and these are used well in subjects across the school. The school has plans to extend current use of the Internet to improve administration and ease of communication with parents. The arrangements for design and technology have been revised and the teaching of this subject is now secure. Pupils' individual learning needs are understood well by their teachers, who provide suitable tasks and good support and guidance. There have been significant improvements in accommodation, although some provision remains just adequate and some areas of the school are not stimulating environments for learning. Given the very good management and quality of education already provided by the school, it is in a good position to improve even further.

STANDARDS

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

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

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

The overall standards attained by pupils throughout the school are well above national averages. The overall attainment of boys in GCSE is very high; the proportion achieving grades A*-C in GCSE examinations is very high, being in the top five per cent of schools nationally. Results in the national tests at the age of 14 in English, mathematics and science in 2001 are well above the national average and the proportion achieving the expected Level 5 in English is in the top five per cent of schools nationally. The improvement trend over the last three years for these subjects is above the national trend. Throughout their time in the school, boys make very good progress in their studies. In Key Stage 4 progress is excellent; in 2001 the progress boys made from Key Stage 3 to GCSE, based on average total points score per pupil, was very high in comparison with similar schools nationally. Results in A-level are well above national averages; in no subject have results been below the national average in the last two years. All students who take vocational qualifications achieve accreditation.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Excellent. Pupils are highly motivated and work very hard.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Behaviour is consistently very good in lessons and around the school. Boys have a real desire to succeed.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Boys show initiative, responsibility and social awareness. They form warm and productive relationships with one another, with teaching staff and with other adults.
Attendance	Very good. Attendance levels are very high when compared with national

	averages.
--	-----------

The exceptionally positive attitudes and values held by the boys are significant factors in contributing to their very good academic progress. Boys entering the school take on these good attributes very quickly. Boys move around the school in a calm, purposeful manner and go quickly from one lesson to another. They arrive in school punctually and this contributes strongly to the calm atmosphere for learning.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Over nine out of ten lessons are good or better and in more than four in ten are very good or excellent. None of the teaching is unsatisfactory. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is very good across the school and boys have the basic skills necessary to achieve well in all the subjects they study. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and use this effectively to plan for the progressive development of pupils' knowledge and understanding. All groups in the school receive appropriate levels of support to meet their needs.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. The curriculum is of a very good quality, meeting all statutory requirements. There is an impressive range of extra-curricular activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Pupils' needs are identified thoroughly on entry and their progress is monitored closely. The needs of lower attaining boys, as well as the more gifted, are provided for very effectively.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Very good. Pupils with English as an additional language receive very good and appropriate support.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. A strong emphasis is placed on all these aspects of pupils' development and the school is successfully providing a very full range of opportunities for pupils' personal development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. The care shown by teachers for the pupils is an especially strong aspect of the school's provision.

The school's curriculum provides for a very wide range of extra-curricular experiences in addition to a very good quality of academic education. All groups work well together; both parents and form tutors use the home-school diaries exceptionally well to ensure that all relevant parties, including pupils, are kept well informed about matters relating to pupils' academic and personal development.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headmaster and senior team have successfully created an atmosphere in the school where all adults work together as a united team, with a strong sense of direction.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. The governing body sets a clear framework for the values and work of the school and are very active in monitoring all aspects of school provision.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The school monitors its performance closely and effective action is taken to improve identified weaknesses.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Resources are deployed well for the benefit of pupils.

The school has worked very hard, and with professionalism, to improve attainment further from the previous inspection. It is well-staffed and spending is clearly focused on identified priorities to improve learning and the school environment. The school seeks best value in all its spending and use of resources. Generally good use is made of accommodation, but this is only just adequate to meet the current needs of the school.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All parents who responded to the questionnaire consider that the school expects children to work hard and do their best. Virtually all parents consider that the school has high expectations, is led well and provides good teaching. A similar proportion considers that their children like school and behaviour is good. The vast majority were very positive about the progress that their children make at school and that they are helped to become mature and responsible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A very small proportion felt that pupils are not given an appropriate amount of homework and that they do not feel comfortable to approach the school with problems.

The school's partnership with parents is exceptionally strong. Almost ninety five per cent of parents who responded to the questionnaire are satisfied with all aspects of the school and parents who attended the parents' meeting overwhelmingly expressed the same view. The inspection team supports these highly positive views. Some parents expressed their regret that there are few opportunities for pupils, particularly younger boys, to enjoy outdoor games during the lunch break because of the restricted nature of the school site; however, the school has taken care to arrange a number of extra-curricular activities during the lunch hour to meet other interests. Boys are given significant amounts of homework but they generally feel that they are able to cope with this and that it helps them to achieve well. Teachers make every effort to respond immediately to parents where there are questions or concerns.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The mixed sixth form of this boys' school is larger than average, with 272 students on roll, and is growing rapidly. About 80 per cent of Year 11 boys stay on into the sixth form and are joined by girls from other local schools who form about 40 per cent of the sixth form. A few boys are also admitted from other schools. The school offers a broad range of GCE AS and A2-level courses. A small, growing minority of students follow vocational courses, a few of these at intermediate level. Vocational courses are available at local further education colleges and a local Catholic sixth form college. Entry requirements for A/AS courses are a minimum of 6 B grades at GCSE level, leading to a well above average level of attainment on entry. Entry requirements for vocational courses are 5 C grades in GCSE for advanced level and 4 D grades for intermediate level courses. The retention rate on courses is very high, with almost no students dropping out after the initial settling-in period in Year 12. Completion rates to the qualification at the end of the course are also very high.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

This is a very successful and cost-effective sixth form. Standards are well above national averages and have remained consistently high over many years. Achievement is good overall and very good for those in the middle and lower end of the attainment range that the school admits. Teaching and learning are at least good and often very good. The atmosphere created by those with responsibility for the sixth form is highly conducive to learning and helps to sustain a powerful community with warm, supportive relationships. All students are encouraged, challenged and supported to make progress and their attitudes are excellent. Existing data is not fully used to support students' progress and enrichment programmes vary in depth across the curriculum.

Strengths

- The standards of attainment in almost all courses are well above average.
- Students of middle and lower attainment within the range of attainment the sixth form admits achieve very good results in relation to their prior attainment.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good and very good in art, geography, mathematics, music and sociology.
- Students' attitudes to school and to learning are extremely positive and mature and they have very good, warm relationships with each other and their teachers.
- Very good leadership of the sixth form ensures a clear educational direction and an excellent reflection of the school's aims.
- A strong sense of an inclusive community is created within the sixth form, encompassing those of other faiths and those admitted from other schools.

What could be improved

- Develop the use and analysis of data to provide better information to school and department managers about the achievement of individuals and different groups, in order to set challenging targets and focus priorities for further improvement.
- Extend the excellent enrichment programmes already present in some subjects, such as music, to provide additional challenge across the wider curriculum for gifted and talented students.

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Very good. Improved standards since the last inspection. Very good teaching and a good range of subjects offered. Very good assessment arrangements and management.
Chemistry	Good. Results are good. Teaching is good, especially subject knowledge, planning and high expectations. Marking is rigorous and the course is very well managed.
Biology	Good. Results have been average and are improving under the dynamic leadership of a new head of subject. Teaching is good, especially subject knowledge, planning and expectations.
Business	Good. Standards are above average. Teaching is good with good subject knowledge and preparation of resources. ICT is well used.
Leisure & tourism	Very good. Improving standards and good teaching. Students make very good progress both in school and during well-planned visits and work experience.
Art	Very good. Very good breadth and depth of the curriculum including enrichment. Well-planned courses offer challenge and rigour. Teaching and management are very good, leading to very high standards.
Music	Excellent. Examination results are very good and the exceptional range of extra-curricular activities provides challenge to all performers. Teaching is very good.
Classics	Good. Results are above average and teaching is good. Students enjoy the subject and work very hard. They make good progress, often from a base of no GCSE study.
Geography	Good. Standards are above average and students achieve well in class and on fieldwork. Teaching is always good and sometimes very good. Management has improved and there is now very good monitoring of student progress and teaching.
History	Very good. A-level results are well above average and have improved over the last 3 years. Very good teaching and consistently high expectations of work and behaviour lead to students' excellent attitudes and command of subject knowledge.
Sociology	Very good. Standards of work seen are very high. Very good teaching and high expectations lead to high productivity. An emphasis is placed on high standards of learning through the development of examination techniques.
English	Very good. Attainment is very high and teaching is very good. Marking is rigorous and informative and students have a very good understanding of examination requirements.
French	Good. Standards are improving and teaching is good overall. Students concentrate well, participate in lessons and collaborate effectively. Management has improved since the last inspection.

In other subjects sampled, teaching was good or very good. Examples of good and very good teaching were seen in computing, economics, physics and technology.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Students are well supported and guided. Induction into the sixth form is thorough. The monthly reporting system tracks students' progress and rigorous marking provides clear feedback on how to improve. Advice on university admission is excellent.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	The excellent leadership ensures clear educational direction and outstanding reflection of the school's aims in the life of the sixth form. Departments are monitored to ensure high standards and values are maintained. There is a good awareness of areas for improvement. The sixth form is cost effective.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• They are well-taught and challenged.• They are encouraged to study independently.• Teachers are very accessible to help and support them.• Their work is thoroughly assessed.• Good information is provided on their progress.• Clear information is available about the courses and the sixth form.• The range of courses and their match with their aspirations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Additional advice and information could be provided on future options beyond school.• More opportunities to express their views about the sixth form.

Well over 90 per cent of students say they enjoy the sixth form and would recommend it to others. In discussions, students were confident and articulate and solidly behind the school and its values. The inspectors found the highly positive views of the students are well-founded. They found that advice and information on application to university is very good, but less information is provided on careers and other options. The inspectors found that, although there are no formal consultative systems for obtaining students' views, the opportunity is there for students to put these to staff. Students are given considerable responsibility, particularly in community service and work in the main school.

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

Boys achieve very well. They attain standards at the end of Key Stage 3 and in GCSE examinations which are well above average nationally and when compared to similar schools. Attainment in the sixth form is also well above national averages.

1. The attainment of boys on entry to the school is above average overall, based on an analysis of their results in the Year 6 National Curriculum tests in their primary schools. Most boys have reached the expected Level 4 in English, mathematics and science when they join the school. Their results in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in these subjects in 2001 are well above the national average. When compared to schools with similar intakes, as measured by the levels of free school meals, results are high in all three subjects. The proportion achieving the expected Level 5 in English is very high, being in the top five per cent of schools nationally. The proportion achieving the higher Level 6 is well above the national average in all three core subjects. The improvement trend over the last three years for these subjects is above the national trend. Boys also achieve very well in their other subjects.
2. In the 2001 General Certificate of Education (GCSE) examinations, the proportions of boys gaining five or more A* - C grades is well above the national average for all schools. When making comparisons against all schools nationally and with similar schools, attainment using the average total GCSE points score, is very high and among the top five per cent of schools in the country. Starting from a high base, the improvement trend over the last three years is in line with the national trend. An analysis of the results for individual subjects shows a very consistent pattern of success.
3. Throughout their time in the school, boys make very good progress overall as a result of very good teaching and the very high work ethic embedded in the life of the school. In Key Stage 4 they make excellent progress and their progress throughout the key stage is very high in comparison with other pupils who have reached similar levels of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3. Boys' reading and writing skills are very high and the presentation of work is excellent. Boys from different ethnic minorities, those with special educational needs and those identified as gifted and talented make very good progress and all are fully included in the life and work of the school.
4. Students' results in the sixth form are again well above national averages. In the General Certificate of Education at Advanced Level (GCE A-level) in 2001 over half the grades achieved were A or B, compared with a national rate of less than 40 per cent. The results in English literature are amongst the top five per cent nationally. Students who follow vocational courses in the General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) gain full certification. These good achievements are a result of a combination of above average levels of attainment on entry to the sixth form and very good teaching, focused on examination success.

Pupils have excellent attitudes to school. They are highly motivated and work very hard. These factors are significant in the academic progress they make.

5. Across the whole age range pupils have excellent attitudes towards the school and the provision it makes for them. The school's Catholic ethos pervades all school activities. Boys listen attentively in lessons and are confident to ask questions and provide thoughtful answers to teachers' questions. They listen with respect not only to their teachers but also to one another. The boys take on these attributes very quickly when joining the school; in Year 7 lessons they raise questions and issues in a mature manner and their contribution to discussions is well above what might be expected of this age group. Boys have excellent work habits; they undertake their homework tasks very conscientiously; come to lessons fully prepared; collaborate well to share ideas and help one another and work out solutions to problems together.

6. The boys have a real desire to succeed and their behaviour is very good in lessons. Behaviour management is very good with firm control by teachers. As a result, no unsatisfactory behaviour or attitudes were seen during the inspection. Boys move around the school in a calm, purposeful manner and go quickly from one lesson to another. When incidents of bullying occur and are reported to the school, parents say that teachers give good and sensitive support to the boys. There has only been one permanent exclusion in the last year, although the school uses temporary exclusion as a sanction when a boy's behaviour falls below the high standard expected within the whole school community. Exclusions are monitored by ethnicity to identify any possible patterns and reported on regularly to the governing body.
7. The boys show initiative, responsibility and social awareness. Teachers support these initiatives, such as running lunch-time clubs. Boys form warm and productive relationships with one another, with teaching staff and with other adults; boys are often seen together helping one another and discussing their work. There is a high level of racial harmony within the school. Boys are involved well in a wide range of extra-curricular activities and are encouraged to initiate and take part in fund-raising for charities.
8. Attendance levels are very high when compared with national averages. Boys arrive in school punctually and this contributes strongly to the calm atmosphere.
9. Parents are very pleased with the attitudes and behaviour that the school promotes. Almost all of those who responded to the questionnaire confirm that their children like coming to school and that the overall behaviour of the boys is very good.

Teaching is very good overall. The consistency of good teaching leads to boys learning very well in all subjects.

10. The quality of teaching in the school overall is very good. Over nine out of ten lessons are good or better and more than four in ten are very good or excellent. None of the teaching is unsatisfactory. Almost all the teaching seen in English, mathematics and science was good or better. The high quality of teaching in all subjects is a very significant factor in the very good progress that boys make. The school's expectations of teaching are very clear to all teachers so that, although there has been a high turnover of teachers within the last two years, the quality of teaching has been maintained and improved. Teaching was reported as a strength when the school was last inspected and it is better now than at that time.
11. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is very good across the school and boys have the basic skills necessary to achieve well in the subjects they study. Teachers across the school reinforce literacy and numeracy skills, regularly correcting inaccurate grammar and spelling, and teaching subject-specific vocabulary. Across the school, teachers develop pupils' subject-specific skills rigorously so that boys have the capacity to explore and think about deeper issues.
12. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge. They use this theoretical knowledge very effectively to plan for the progressive development of boys' knowledge and understanding and to make them aware of the aims of the lesson. Teachers give clear and coherent explanations; pupils' understanding is quickly developed as a result and learning is made interesting for them. Teachers use their knowledge particularly effectively when probing during question and answer sessions.
13. All teachers plan their lessons very well to take account of the varied needs of different groups of pupils, including those with additional learning needs and those for whom English is an additional language. Staff are aware of the needs of these pupils and they are given good support and guidance. This is an improvement since the previous inspection when it was reported that pupils' individual education plans were not being used fully within subject areas. Work is pitched at a challenging level for all groups. Teachers consistently make very high demands on pupils to put in their best effort and they rise well to the challenge. This brisk pace is complemented by high intellectual challenge and these high expectations are an important factor in contributing to high levels of achievement.

14. The management of boys is excellent and there are very warm and productive relationships between pupils and teachers. It is rare for teachers to have to remind boys of the expected standards of behaviour and, when it proves necessary, this is done in a quiet and non-confrontational manner. High levels of concentration on the part of boys further improve the pace of lessons, so that it is only necessary for teachers to say things once.
15. Homework is used very well and is most successful when adapted to meet boys' individual needs, such as in a Year 11 design and technology lesson, where each boy was set his own homework task. The school's expectations of the quality and quantity of homework assignments are high, but boys respond well to these. They organise their work well, meet tight deadlines successfully and take a pride in their work. Marking of boys' work, both class and homework, is regular, helpful and informative and helps boys to improve.

The curriculum is of a very good quality offering a broad and balanced range of learning opportunities, including an impressive provision for extra-curricular activities.

16. The overall curriculum policy is very well thought out. The quality and range of learning opportunities are very good across the school. All statutory requirements are met for the National Curriculum, religious education and for acts of daily collective worship. Sex education is provided through science and religious education lessons. Strategies for literacy and numeracy are securely in place. The provision for information and communication technology across the curriculum, which was an issue at the time of the last inspection, has been addressed well, as has the deficiency in the design and technology curriculum.
17. Boys are placed in streamed classes for all subjects in Year 7 and thereafter there are more opportunities for teaching groups based on boys' achievements in individual subjects. The needs of lower attaining boys as well as the more gifted are provided for effectively; the latter are able to study more subjects and the former receive in-class support, often from extra teachers. Boys' needs are identified thoroughly on entry and their progress is monitored closely. Boys with special educational needs and with English as an additional language receive very good and appropriate support.
18. The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is excellent. It provides over and above the requirements of the National Curriculum by the inclusion of Latin for the two top streams and an additional modern foreign language for some boys in Year 9. Other boys experience a taster course in classical civilisation. From Year 9, boys who show particular aptitude are able to study physics, chemistry and biology as separate subjects. There is no discrete provision for drama on the timetable, although drama is provided within English lessons in accordance with the National Curriculum.
19. Curricular provision for Years 10 and 11 is very good. The emphasis is on ensuring a basic compulsory core curriculum in addition to giving boys the opportunity to take as broad a range of subjects as their interests and aptitudes allow. Boys are able to choose from both GNVQ and GCSE examination courses as part of the option arrangements. Apart from the GNVQ option, there is no provision for work-related education, which might be thought more relevant to the small minority of less academic boys. However, the school has been given The Excellence in Work-Related Learning Platinum Award by the Learning and Skills council and leads the local consortium in the Excellence in Cities Initiative. Drama is not offered as a GCSE course, but there are many opportunities for boys to participate in public speaking. A large number also perform in annual school productions, typically musicals, produced by staff from the English and music departments. Work experience provides Year 10 boys with the opportunity to be excellent ambassadors for their school, as well as to experience the world of employment.
20. There is a strong commitment to providing boys with a wide range of experiences in addition to the good quality of academic education. The programme of personal, social and health education across the school enables boys to explore personal and sensitive issues within a secure and supportive context. There is an impressive programme of lunch-time and out of school activities, which are organised carefully to meet the needs of a wide range of pupils' interests.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is very good.

21. As a Catholic school, a very strong emphasis is placed on the spiritual development of its pupils; it is firmly embedded in the everyday practices within the school. The attention given to prayers at the beginning and end of lessons encourages pupils to reflect regularly on the purposes of learning and their part in it. Teachers create frequent opportunities for reflection on a wide variety of issues across the curriculum. The school's formal practices of worship are conducted in a manner which encourages dignity and respect amongst the school population.
22. The approach to moral development is clearly reflected in the school's behaviour policy. The code of conduct records a very full range of sanctions but this is balanced by a good rewards system. Adults in the school present very good role models and are consistent in their application of a whole-school approach, so that expectations are understood and happily subscribed to by the school population. This provides excellent conditions for boys to socialise together. There are opportunities for pupils to take a role in the smooth running of the school, for example as librarians, eucharistic servers, dinner assistants, homework monitors, playing the organ for mass, and as house captains. Wider community involvement is achieved through organising social events for local old age pensioners and acting as volunteers to support the handicapped on trips to Lourdes.
23. The school is rightly very proud of its provision for all aspects of the arts and sport and it uses these as one means of fulfilling its overall aims and aspirations to educate every pupil to his full capacity, the gifted as well as every other child, within a clear Christian foundation. There are displays beyond the school of the art produced by the boys, although further opportunities could be taken to display this more widely in the school. Music in the school is exceptional. Ten per cent of places in Year 7 are offered to boys who demonstrate outstanding musical aptitude and this helps the school maintain its tradition of high quality performances, choral and orchestral. The range of music and the number of concerts are impressive, in and out of school, at masses and other services as well as on the concert stage. Most recently his Holiness Pope John Paul II commended a choir performing in the Vatican.
24. As was the case at the time of the last inspection pupils are taught to respect the views and values of others and to celebrate the school's cultural diversity. Although there is limited formal planning for the development of the multi-cultural awareness, there are a number of opportunities occurring naturally within subjects. Pupils have a good understanding of racial issues; it is planned that this will be further developed through the citizenship programme. Overseas visits and many visits within this country effectively supplement work done in history, geography, languages, technology and business studies and provide good opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of European culture. Theatre trips are used well by the English department. Summer schools and residential weekends are featuring more and more. Community service, charitable work and sport feature strongly in the life of the school. Last year 243 extra-curricular fixtures were played and the school's strong reputation for sporting excellence has been recognised through a number of awards, for example, the Sportsmark Award 1999-2002 and the Football Association Charter Standard for Schools.

The very high quality pastoral support, formal and informal, and genuine care shown by all staff for pupils are strengths of the school.

25. The care shown by teachers for the boys is an especially strong aspect of the school's provision. Those staff who have leadership responsibilities for this work are dedicated and experienced, and earn the justified trust and co-operation of the boys. This is reflected in the warm relationships amongst all groups and at all levels in the school. The structure of pastoral care, administered by a capable team of heads of year and form teachers, ensures that the boys are well guided and supported both educationally and personally. Teachers know the boys very well and the systems for monitoring and promoting their academic performance are very good. Boys are interviewed each term by an assistant headteacher to ascertain how well they are progressing in each subject and to set personal targets.

26. Very good attention is paid to health and safety. Health and safety audits are carried out regularly and identified issues reviewed weekly by the senior management team. Child protection procedures are in place.
27. The introduction of citizenship as a National Curriculum subject has been very well planned. A useful audit of existing coverage in all curriculum areas has been carried out and fully documented. A pilot project is being run in Year 7, prior to a wider introduction to all year groups in September 2002. The scheme of work and support materials ensure good support for teachers of this new area of the curriculum. The units offer valuable possibilities for boys to document their own ideas, opinions and research a broad range of relevant issues. Some units further complement boys' oral skills by giving them the opportunity to make group presentations. The teaching of citizenship has been thoroughly monitored and formal feedback provided for teachers.

The partnership with parents is exceptionally supportive and is a major factor in contributing to the school's strong climate of learning.

28. Parents overwhelmingly support the school in all respects. Large numbers wrote in detail to the inspectors to express their appreciation of all the school provides for their boys and of the opportunities it offers. Attendance at both formal and informal occasions, such as parents' evenings and school performances, is extremely high. Parents' evenings are well organised and structured. Parents say that teachers clearly know their boys well and that comments at these evenings are constructive.
29. Communication between home and school is exceptionally good at all levels, although some parents experience frustration with the school telephone system. This aims to put parents directly in touch with the appropriate department by using a touch tone system, but is time consuming for the caller. Teachers nearly always respond immediately to parents when there are questions or concerns. The information sent home to parents is of high quality. The two written reports to parents each year give full details on their boys' personal development. Each subject report says what the boy has learned, gives details on progress, and many teachers give specific subject targets.
30. Pupils' school diaries are exceptionally well used to ensure that parents are aware of what their boys should be doing and when. The current targets for each subject are listed in the back. The regularity with which they are signed by both parents and form teachers is impressive and is a clear indication to pupils that their efforts are valued and is a major factor in contributing to the school's strong climate of learning.
31. Parents make a strong contribution and encouragement to boys' learning. Consultation evenings are very well attended and parents give their support to the extensive homework programme. They are generous in supporting specific projects, such as the planned development to improve accommodation for music. The Vaughan Parents' Association plays an extremely active role in the life of the school, supporting fund-raising and social events. Many members provide work experience placements and mentoring for those who might benefit from the opportunity.

The leadership and management of the school are focused very successfully on maintaining and improving the high levels of attainment.

32. The leadership and management of the school by the headmaster, senior team and middle managers is very good; management activity is focused very successfully on ensuring the school's strong Catholic ethos and high quality relationships at all levels, as the basis for achieving high academic standards. All adults in the school work together as a united team and have an exceptionally strong sense of direction and understanding of the aims and values of the school's work. There are high expectations of both teachers and pupils. The school's performance is monitored very well and effective action taken to improve identified weaknesses. The school has worked very hard, and with professionalism, to improve attainment further from the previous inspection, as confirmed by recognition by a number of external awards, for example, Investors in People status and a Department of Education and Skills School's Achievement Award.

33. The governing body sets a clear framework for the values and work of the school and is very active in monitoring all aspects of school provision. Presentations by different departments are given at each meeting of their curriculum committee so that the group is aware of all the curricular issues facing the school and is able to provide informed advice to the full governing body. Other committees work with equal dedication so that the full governing body uses the strengths of its individual members to the best possible advantage.
34. Resources are deployed well to improve the quality of education for the benefit of pupils and the school succeeds in getting the best value from its use of all its funding sources. Currently the school is spending at levels beyond its annual income, but it is doing so based on substantial contingencies accumulated while it had grant maintained status. There are clear plans to use these funds to further improve accommodation and the school is seeking planning permission to extend the school buildings. The school is very well-staffed.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Accommodation is only just adequate to meet the current needs of the school and current provision does not provide stimulating learning environments in all subject areas.

35. The last inspection report encouraged the school to maintain vigorous efforts to improve accommodation. This has been done, improvements have been made and care is taken to maintain existing accommodation well. A new building was opened in 1998 and this provides a number of classrooms and improved facilities for art, design and technology and information and communication technology (ICT). Most recently a mezzanine floor in the main hall increases sixth form access to ICT and private study. The use of these facilities provides good models of study for younger boys. The school's decision to change the organisation of the school day is effectively minimising movement around the school and making the most effective use of current accommodation. Every attempt is made to make the limited outdoor space attractive, although younger boys and their parents regret that it is not possible to enjoy outdoor games during break and lunch times because of the restricted playground space.
36. However, more remains to be achieved. Some general classrooms are used by a variety of subject teachers and in some cases the rooms have not been developed as stimulating learning environments through the use of display or subject identity, as in other specialist accommodation. The school has already identified priority areas and secured funding to improve facilities for music; in turn this would release space in Addison Hall for much needed social facilities for older pupils.

The use of information and communication technology to improve home school liaison further.

37. The school has fully addressed the key issue identified in the last report to improve the use of ICT in the curriculum and has identified further possibilities to use ICT in the current school development plan. These stated plans are being implemented and further ambitious possibilities have been identified to use new technologies as a tool to improve home-school liaison. These include improving administrative systems so that parents can access key information, for example, about homework.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

38. No major areas have been identified as key issues for improvement but, in order to sustain the current improvements and further develop the very good quality of education provided, the governing body, headmaster and senior management team should now:

- (1) maintain their efforts to implement the existing plans to extend accommodation to provide a better overall learning environment (paragraphs 35 and 36).
- (2) further develop the use of new technologies in line with current planning (paragraph 37).

Sixth form

- (1) develop the use and analysis of data to provide better information to school and department managers about the achievement of individuals and different groups, in order to set challenging targets and focus priorities for further improvement (paragraphs 42 and 60).
- (2) extend the excellent enrichment programmes already present in some subjects, such as music, to provide additional challenge across the wider curriculum for gifted and talented students (paragraphs 58 and 141).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	29
	Sixth form	46
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		33

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
--	-----------	-----------	------	--------------	----------------	------	-----------

Years 7 – 11

Number	1	11	15	1	0	0	0
Percentage	3	40	53	4	0	0	0

Sixth form

Number	2	15	21	8	0	0	0
Percentage	4	33	50	17	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	733	272
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	96	19

Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	18	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	71	2

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	153

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	1
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	13

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.1
National comparative data	7.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001	124	0	124

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	121	112	115
	Girls	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Total	121	112	115
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	98 (95)	90 (94)	93 (86)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	70 (71)	82 (86)	64 (57)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	120	117	104
	Girls	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Total	120	117	104
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	97 (91)	94 (92)	84 (87)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	81 (49)	86 (74)	72 (62)
	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)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	2001	127	1	128

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	110	126	126
	Girls	0	0	0
	Total	110	126	126
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	86 (84)	98 (98)	98 (99)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	58.5
	National	39.0

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

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

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	50	26	76

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	51	26	77
	Average point score per candidate	19.9 (19.7)	23.4 (20.6)	21.1 (20.1)
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9 (17.8)	18 (18.6)	17.5 (18.2)

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	50	26	76	1	0	1
	Average point score per candidate	20	23.4	21.2	12	n/a	12
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.9	17.4	9.8	11.4	10.6

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

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	37
Black – African heritage	51
Black – other	14
Indian	13
Pakistani	2
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	10
White	673
Any other minority ethnic group	88

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	7	0
Black – African heritage	5	0
Black – other	1	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	30	0
Other minority ethnic groups	10	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)	57.0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	14.9

Education support staff: Y7– Y13

Total number of education support staff	7.0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	240

Deployment of teachers: Y7– Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	72.2
---	------

Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	21.2
Key Stage 4	20.0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

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

	£
Total income	3851098
Total expenditure	3900759
Expenditure per pupil	4584
Balance brought forward from previous year	830292
Balance carried forward to next year	776561

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	27.8
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	31.5

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1.0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1.0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	1.0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	888
Number of questionnaires returned	476

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	68	30	1	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	76	20	2	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	77	21	1	0	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	65	29	4	1	1
The teaching is good.	80	19	1	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	66	28	4	1	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	75	20	4	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	92	7	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	70	27	3	1	0
The school is well led and managed.	91	8	0	0	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	81	16	1	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	63	31	3	1	2

Summary of parents' and carers' responses

Parents who attended the parents' meeting were overwhelmingly supportive of the school in all respects. Many wrote in detail to express their appreciation of all the school provides for their boys and of the opportunities it offers. The inspection team supports these positive views.

Other issues raised by parents

A few parents expressed some concerns. Inspectors acknowledge that boys, particularly younger boys, are not able to play outdoor games during lunch time because of the restricted nature of the school site. Boys are given significant amounts of homework but they generally feel that they are able to cope with this and that it helps them to achieve well. The quality of information sent home to parents is of high

quality and gives detailed information on progress and attainment. Teachers make every effort to respond immediately to parents where there are questions or concern.

PART D: THE SIXTH FORM

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

39. The A-level results have been well above national averages for each of the last five years. This is equally true for boys and girls. In some subjects, numbers are too small to make valid comparisons with national data. The strongest subjects over recent years are computing, economics, English, technology, geography, history, mathematics, physics and physical education. In English in 2001, the results were in the top five per cent of schools nationally. In no subject have results been below the national average in the last two years.
40. In the lessons observed, standards in A-level groups were well above average in almost half the lessons and above average in more than a third. The standard of work in books and portfolios is also high in most subjects.
41. The small numbers of students following vocational courses have also usually attained results above the national averages. Observed standards in business are above average. In leisure and tourism, and travel and tourism they are average.
42. Students do well in their studies. Almost all achieve results in line with or better than those expected, based on their prior attainment at GCSE. This is particularly true of those with middle or lower prior attainment. This success is a clear reflection of the good teaching, very positive attitudes to learning and the high degree of collaboration and mutual support between students. Overall, achievement is good; students make good progress overall in relation to their prior attainment. Achievement is very good for those of lower prior attainment on entry and satisfactory for those students with the highest level of prior attainment. The school does not analyse results by ethnicity or gender. However, there appears to be no significant difference in progress made by students of different ethnic groups or gender.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

43. Students carry their excellent attitudes and behaviour forward from the main school and further develop these within the framework of the sixth form community. In more than four-fifths of the lessons observed, their attitudes were very good or excellent. This is also reflected in their approach to assemblies, registration and private study, as well as their demeanour around the school. Their relationships with each other and with their teachers are exceptional and this makes a significant contribution to the effectiveness of their learning.
44. Student behaviour is exemplary. A very effective tracking and support system ensures a highly positive approach to learning. Students work hard in lessons and in private study and take completion of assignments very seriously. They share ideas and collaborate with each other in the learning process. Students' own views are exceptionally positive. They report that they are fully supported and expected to make progress and achieve beyond their expectations. Their positive views are fully endorsed by the inspection team.
45. The development of their personal and learning skills is very good. They benefit from supported private study during their first year in the sixth form, which inculcates good learning habits that they put to good use in the greater freedom of the second year.
46. Well over 90 per cent of students who completed the questionnaire say they enjoy the sixth form and would recommend it to others. Their views are uniformly positive about the sixth form and about learning. In discussions, students were confident and articulate and solidly behind the school and its values.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

47. The overall quality of teaching is good. More than four out of five of the lessons observed were good or better, with almost two in five being very good or excellent. Good teaching was found in all subjects, and no teaching was unsatisfactory. Specific details of the teaching in the subjects inspected are reported in the final section.
48. Certain characteristics are common to all the teaching. These include, firstly, the excellent knowledge and understanding of teachers of their subject and the examination requirements, linked with their enthusiasm for their subject and for learning. Secondly, expectations are high and the assumption is that all students will work hard and achieve well. Thirdly, the relationships are uniformly very good so that teachers are able to manage the lessons extremely well, maintaining a good pace and a high level of concentration; for example, in an excellent Latin lesson, the teacher's superb knowledge of, and evident love for, the poem Catullus 64, combined with perfect pace, enabled all students to read with understanding, translate and identify allusions to epics. Students were clearly interested, enjoyed the work and made outstanding progress on a challenging task.
49. In the best lessons, good planning, resources and pace lead to excellent learning and very good structuring of student's independent learning. This was exemplified in a technology lesson starting a project on design. Excellent use of PowerPoint to motivate and interest students, a very good resource sheet to structure the assignment and perceptive questioning of students led to very good progress and a clear framework for students' independent work beyond the lesson. In an art lesson the teacher gave very good examples of composition based on the ideas of Patrick Caulfield so that students were encouraged to experiment with ideas. The teacher's high expectations meant that they worked at a good pace and were clear how to continue their developments beyond the lesson. In a travel and tourism lesson, a very good simulation in a vocational context of a marketing consultant being asked to prepare a report for the English Tourism Organisation outlining the factors contributing to a successful tourist attraction, led to a number of varied suggestions by students who were gradually challenged to deepen their thinking. In a sociology lesson, the teacher's explanation of theoretical principles and appropriate terminology was clear and succinct, skilfully highlighting links and cross-references with other topics studied. This reinforced students' knowledge and understanding and enabled them to explore Hamilton's arguments in depth.
50. The key skills of information and communication technology and communication are effectively taught during Year 12. Information and communication technology is relatively under-used in the teaching of many subjects. For example, in a lesson in accountancy, cash flow statements were prepared by hand by students, even though the lesson took place in a room of networked computers with spreadsheets available. By contrast, in a business studies lesson analysing what makes a good presentation, the teacher made good use of the interactive whiteboard and the students showed skill in using PowerPoint. Students are encouraged to use the Internet, as well as the library and most make excellent use of these for research. In a geography lesson on the north-south divide, students were directed to appropriate resources and references such as the Brandt report. In private study sessions, many Year 13 students were using the library and the mezzanine floor of computers dedicated for their use.
51. The liberal studies programme of debates and speakers is constructed well. Students enjoy the opportunity to question thought-provoking speakers and participate enthusiastically in debates such as 'this house believes children grow up too early'.
52. In the few lessons where teaching was satisfactory rather than good or better, there was over-direction by the teacher, a lack of questioning to elicit student progress and limited student activity beyond listening.
53. Homework and project work are very well used to support students' learning. This is set and marked thoroughly in all subjects. However, insufficient use is made of prior attainment to track

individual achievement over time and to analyse achievement by gender, ethnicity and prior attainment.

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

54. The quality and range of learning opportunities is good. The school provides more than 20 AS and A2-level courses including further mathematics, Latin, classical civilisation, accounting and politics. Only two vocational courses are offered at advanced level and only one at intermediate level. Entry demands onto courses are high; four D grades in GCSE for admission to intermediate course, five C grades for advanced vocational courses and six B grades for AS level. This gives an attainment entry to all courses which is well above average.
55. Almost all students take entirely academic courses. All students follow a key skills programme in Year 12 and religious education throughout the sixth form. This is also used to help them prepare their communication portfolio. Personal and social skills are further developed through the liberal studies programme of debates and speakers.
56. Courses match the aspirations of students and their parents well and guidance ensures they choose wisely. The rationale for the curriculum is well thought through in the light of other provision locally.
57. Students are given a very full range of opportunities to take responsibility. All students are prefects and assist in the lower school with a range of duties such as at break-time. Almost all students take part in the exceptional community studies and fund-raising programme. They help younger pupils read, assist in local hospitals and schools and take part in the intergenerational programme 60+. Students on vocational courses undertake work experience at home and abroad. There is scope to extend the work-related programme to include those on academic courses and students' views support this. Students are encouraged to run their own clubs and activities. There is an impressive range, especially in music and sport. Some students are senior prefects and a head boy and girl and their deputies represent the school at a number of functions.
58. In many subjects, extra sessions take place in lunch-time and after school. Enrichment in some subjects is exceptional. For example, in music there is a very full range of choirs, bands and ensembles that perform at a high standard and in art there are visits to exhibitions and galleries. However, more planned enrichment across other subjects in the curriculum would benefit those of higher prior attainment to be challenged to their fullest potential.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

Assessment

59. Marking is rigorous and exemplary, giving detailed feedback on how to improve further. Sixth form managers have an excellent overview of individuals and rapid action is taken where there is evidence of under-achievement or failure to meet deadlines for assignments. The monthly reporting system provides a very good structure for assessing and monitoring progress. Following each monthly report, the head of year speaks to every student, congratulating those who have done well and supporting and encouraging others. The information is shared biennially with parents and carers.
60. Examinations at the end of the first term are used to set targets for each student in every subject, and future monitoring is against these. At the end of the academic year, results are analysed in each subject and strengths and weaknesses are identified. However, insufficient consideration is given to students' prior attainment at GCSE when setting the targets for final outcomes at the end of the sixth form. While much data on prior attainment is available, it is not yet analysed to draw conclusions on the achievement of individual students in relation to their prior attainment and set challenging targets. For example, targets are set only at the end of the first term in the sixth form.

Advice, support and guidance

61. The quality of support and advice to students is very good and appreciated by them and their parents. Individual in-depth interviews with every applicant to the sixth form ensure that they are placed on appropriate courses and the superb prospectus gives very clear information about the sixth form. An induction period in September supports the transition. Assemblies take place on three days each week and are used to inform students further about what the sixth form has to offer. Guidance on the transition into Year 13 starts half way through the lower sixth and smoothes this process by its thoroughness.
62. The heads of Years 12 and 13 play a key role in monitoring students' progress through the monthly report system. There is also good liaison between subject teachers and the heads of years. Established systems and procedures ensure that concerns or worries are quickly detected and acted on. The excellent relationships ensure that students are able to talk freely with their form tutor, subject teacher or sixth form managers. There is also a school counsellor who is well used for a range of personal problems.
63. The quality of advice and support for university applications is excellent. Form tutors play a full and active part in this process. Although there is a careers officer who is available for interviews and at parents' evening, the extent of information and advice about longer-term career options is more limited for those on academic courses.

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

64. Parents expressed very positive views of the sixth form provision at the parents' meeting. They feel privileged that their sons and daughters have the opportunity to attend the school.
65. About three-quarters of the sixth formers replied to the questionnaire and they painted a very positive picture of the sixth form. They consider that they are taught very well and challenged to do their best at all times. They find their teachers very accessible and willing to spend a great deal of time with them. Their work is thoroughly assessed and they are well informed about progress. They are helped to study independently and to overcome problems. They say that the printed information is clear and helpful and they enjoy the sixth form and would recommend it to others.
66. Students' reservations were in only two areas. One quarter felt that the school does not respond to the views of sixth formers. Almost one quarter felt they are not well informed about future courses, options and careers.
67. The inspectors fully endorse, and see good reasons for the students' very positive views. Although there are no consultative mechanisms for students to express their views, there are a number of examples of changes that have been made in response to the views expressed by some students. The advice and support on university applications is excellent. Inspectors consider that there is scope to extend the advice and information available on longer-term career options and employment.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

Leadership and management

68. The leadership of the sixth form is excellent. The direction of the sixth form is clear to everyone and the aims and values of the school are outstandingly well reflected in the life of this area of the school. Two equally dedicated and hard working assistants and a head of department, who has specific responsibility for female students' welfare, support the director.

69. The introduction of the new A/AS-level courses has been well managed and the governors' curriculum committee takes a full role in planning the curriculum and monitoring the work of the sixth form and departments, especially their examination results. Performance management is in place and governors also visit departments and observe teaching. The school development plan has appropriate priorities related to the sixth form and good progress has been made on these.
70. There is extensive data available on students' prior attainment and their results at the end of their courses. At present, insufficient analysis of this takes place, so that subject and sixth form managers are not sufficiently clear about the achievement of individuals and groups of students. Better use of this data would enable departments and the sixth form overall to focus on areas where achievement is less good and prioritise to secure further improvements.
71. The sixth form is cost-effective. The financial implications of any proposed changes, such as the addition of a mezzanine floor to provide space for private study using computers, and the introduction of new advanced levels in accounting, politics and sociology, are carefully considered.

Resources

72. There are a suitable number of very well qualified teachers in all subject areas, ably supported by technical and administrative staff. The school has few recruitment difficulties but there has been some illness, which has recently affected some departments, notably mathematics.
73. The accommodation is sufficient, though cramped on the relatively small site. It is inadequate in music and the school has plans to address this. A number of subjects find it difficult to create a stimulating learning environment as, apart from the practical subjects, there are few specialist rooms and teachers carry equipment and resources around the split site.
74. The overall provision of resources is satisfactory. There are ample textbooks and a good library. Resources for music are very good. Students have easy access to information and communication technology, including the mezzanine floor dedicated for use by Year 13 students.

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

In the inspection, 13 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	4	100	62	0	15	2.3	1.5
Physics	1	100	52	100	4	4.0	0.9
Leisure and tourism	1	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	12.0	10.0

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	22	100	87	55	43	6.7	5.8
Chemistry	8	100	90	40	43	6.0	5.9
Biology	21	81	88	29	34	4.8	5.2
Physics	8	100	88	50	40	7.3	5.7
Design and technology	7	100	91	43	30	7.1	5.4
Economics	21	100	89	50	36	7.4	5.5
Computer studies	14	100	86	43	23	6.7	4.6
Sports/PE studies	9	100	92	33	25	6.0	5.1
Art and design	4	100	92	50	46	8.0	6.6
Music	2	100	93	0	35	6.0	5.7
Classical studies	29	100	95	52	49	7.1	6.5
Geography	15	100	92	60	38	7.1	5.7
History	24	96	88	54	35	6.8	5.5
Religious studies	5	100	87	80	34	7.6	5.3
Other social studies	1	100	87	0	34	6.0	5.3
English literature	32	100	95	78	37	8.1	5.9
German	8	100	91	25	40	5.8	5.8
Spanish	1	100	91	100	39	10.0	5.7
Other languages	2	100	93	100	56	10.0	6.8

Intermediate vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		Average point distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Leisure and tourism	4	100	73	25	n/a	n/a	n/a
Part 1 business	1	100	n/a	0	n/a	n/a	n/a

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Students enjoy their mathematics and work hard.
- Teaching is very good.
- Students are appreciative of the help and guidance given to them by their teachers.
- The department is very well staffed and led.
- Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient use is made of national and standardised data to assist in raising standards even further.
- Teachers are obliged to teach in different rooms around the school. This makes it more difficult to prepare lessons using practical equipment or an overhead projector.

75. The school offers courses leading to mathematics and further mathematics at AS level and A2 level. Students study a combination of pure mathematics, mechanics and statistics. Key skills are taught up to Level 2 for students of subjects other than mathematics who have not gained grade C or better at GCSE. Lessons in pure mathematics and statistics were observed for Year 12 and in mechanics for Year 13. The students' work was scrutinised and a representative sample of students interviewed. No key skills work was inspected.
76. A-level results in recent years, including 2001, have been well above national averages. There has been no significant difference between the grades obtained by male and female students. Students achieved similar results in mathematics to those in their other subjects over four years prior to 2001. In 2001, mathematics results were significantly better.
77. The standards of work seen during the inspection reflected examination results and are well above national norms. All students can manipulate algebraic expressions and equations well. They have a very good grasp of basic calculus. Year 13 students cope readily when differentiating or integrating logarithmic and exponential functions. Students of further mathematics can integrate functions using partial fractions and integration by parts. Students' knowledge of mechanics is very secure. Year 12 students, for instance, show that they can both resolve forces and find their resultant. They produce good work on the effect of friction on a body resting on an inclined plane, with only occasional careless errors caused by wrong identification of the appropriate angle to use. Most students find statistics more straightforward than the other fields of study. Concepts such as variance and standard deviation are well understood and applied.
78. Students make very good progress during their time in the sixth form. Acceptance on the courses is dependent upon success at grade B or better in the GCSE higher level examination. Good provision is made to ensure that any gaps in knowledge or understanding remaining from GCSE

are filled, so that almost every student achieves well in relation to their prior attainment. Almost all students studying for further maths, for instance, who have mostly gained an A or A* at GCSE, achieve grade A or B at A2 level after one year of study. No one has been ungraded for several years. More advanced work on university 'Step' papers has enabled students to gain places at prestigious universities to read mathematics or related subjects for their degree.

79. This high level of success is due to very good teaching. Teachers have excellent knowledge and understanding of both subject matter and examination requirements so that the students' efforts are sharply focused. The students are expected to work hard both in lessons and in homework; consequently a substantial volume of high quality work is produced from both. Very good use is made of regular end of topic tests. These are marked very thoroughly with full comments to examination standards so that the students recognise their own mistakes, learn from them and improve. Students are encouraged to think for themselves. A clear example of success in this respect is the very effective learning of statistics by Year 12 students; they made good progress during a period when they were working independently because their regular teacher had been taken ill and it proved difficult to find a satisfactory substitute.
80. The students' success also results from their attitudes and behaviour that are very good. They enjoy their mathematics and are very appreciative of the help and guidance given them by their teachers. In class, they listen carefully and discuss problems sensibly with their peers. Most answer questions orally with confidence. The substantial amount of work in their folders testify to the effort they make.
81. Teachers' day-to-day assessment of students' work is very good and outcomes are very well used. All tests are marked fully, as are the twice-weekly exercises set for homework. Detailed mark sheets are filled out and used to identify both individual strengths and weaknesses and any shortcomings in the schemes of work being taught. The use of national and standardised test data, to identify and evaluate student and departmental achievements within a wider context is, however, underdeveloped so that teachers are not always looking at students' progress against external benchmarks.
82. Mathematics in the sixth-form is taught by a fully qualified, experienced team of teachers, very well led by a strong and positive head of department. There are good procedures for monitoring the teachers' marking and adherence to the departmental schemes of work. All teachers are observed in the classroom at least once every year.
83. Due to the constricted nature of the building, there are only two rooms specifically allocated for the teaching of mathematics. This means that teachers use rooms that are widespread. It is more difficult in these conditions to prepare for lessons requiring the use of practical materials or equipment such as the overhead projector. It also means that the quality of display in some rooms does not match the undoubted quality of the students' work.
84. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The number of students following mathematics courses has risen substantially. Results, too, have shown improvement.

SCIENCES

The focus was on chemistry and biology, but physics was also sampled. In physics, examination results were well above the national average in 2001. One lesson was observed and this was taught to a very good standard. Physics is a popular and successful subject and the standard of students' work is very good in comparison with the course requirements.

Chemistry

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

Strengths

- The standard of teaching is good.
- Teachers have very good knowledge of their subject.
- Students are dedicated to their studies.
- Students of all abilities and interests are well supported.

Areas for improvement

- Opportunities to use ICT fully in the collection, processing and interpretation of data.
- Tracking students' individual achievement in terms of gender and prior attainment.

85. In both Year 12 and Year 13 committed and interested students are working to standards above course requirements. They achieve the full range of A-level pass grades. This is an improvement in standards since the last inspection. Previously the percentages of students gaining GCE A-level grades A-B and A-E have been above the national averages. In 2001 the grades achieved by students were broadly in line with the national average. The standard of work of current students is above course expectations. There are more male than female students, but both groups achieve equally well.
86. A combination of students' dedication and interest and the pace, rigour and advanced preparation of the lessons lead to high attainment. Good learning took place in a challenging lesson for a Year 13 group, where students were studying the chemistry of vanadium. They confidently performed a range of experiments, applied their previous knowledge to understand the reactions observed and advanced their understanding of reduction and oxidation reactions. There is consistency in students' good understanding across organic, inorganic and physical chemistry. Analytical chemistry is carried out with a sound understanding of the properties of the materials involved. Results are recorded and the tolerances and limitations of accuracy are appropriately considered. Students follow the strands of theory connecting physical chemistry to the observed properties of materials and their reactions. They understand how this relates to atomic structure and the energy levels of the electron orbits within the atoms of each common element in the periodic table.
87. Students are highly motivated and involved with their studies. They are very attentive and concerned with the quality and accuracy of their work. They work independently when required to do so, for example when researching for their studies. However, they are less inclined to discuss and explore challenging concepts and to think beyond the immediate course requirements. They work very well together in practical sessions, supporting each other in their learning. Their practical work is good, although inexperience was observed in some students when they were using a burette.
88. Teaching is good. Teachers know their subject well and they teach with enthusiasm. Explanations are clear and the terminology of the chemical processes is used to good effect. However, in the lessons observed some opportunities were missed to relate the chemical properties observed to industrial applications and everyday examples of their effects. For example, the colourful chemistry of compounds of the transition metals did not lead to illustrations of their use as pigments.
89. Teachers know their students well and they all receive encouragement and support appropriate to their interests and abilities. Lessons are taught with sufficient depth to challenge and extend the learning of the highest attaining students. Very good teaching was seen in a lesson on the reactions between solutions of ammonium and sodium hydroxide in turn on solutions of salts of the transition metals. The students were given a clear understanding of what they were expected to achieve and good encouragement and support while they worked independently. They recorded their observations accurately and compared these with that expected from chemical theory.

90. The subject scheme of work is good and planned well to ensure continuity and the development of learning from Year 12 to Year 13. Students are frequently given the opportunity to continue with their experiments at times outside lessons. Information and communication technology is not used fully to enhance the students' understanding and interpretation of data and to monitor experiments by direct sampling through sensors.
91. The curriculum leader for chemistry manages the post-16 provision very well. Although assessment is good in enabling students to review and improve their own work, the progress of individual students is not carefully tracked to monitor any differences in progress between students with different GCSE backgrounds; for example, by gender or against their prior attainment in other schools. The support provided by chemistry technicians ensures that the appropriate equipment is available to ensure that learning can take place effectively.

Biology

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

Strengths

- Teachers use their good subject knowledge effectively in their teaching.
- All elements of the biology course are taught with enthusiasm and interest.
- Students of all abilities achieve well.
- Students have excellent attitudes to their learning.

Areas for improvement

- Opportunities to use information technology fully in the processing of data and making predictions through computer modelling.
- Tracking students' individual achievement in terms of gender and prior attainment.

92. In both Year 12 and Year 13 group sizes are appropriate and students work to standards above course requirements. This is an improvement on standards since the last inspection. Results have been above the national averages in recent years, although in 2001 these fell to below the national average. The department had significant staffing changes which led to disruption in students' learning. Currently standards are once again good against course expectations and both male and female students are achieving equally well.
93. Students learn well. Very good learning was seen in a Year 13 group where students grasped the difficult skills of chromosome identification and grouping when they cut out prints of chromosomes to assemble a karyotype for a male and female individual. They successfully moved on to identify karyotypes for individuals with Down's syndrome and Klinefelter's syndrome. Coursework and practical activities are thought provoking and challenge all students. Written work shows that students have a good command of all the elements of the course, ranging through cell biology, zoology and plant physiology. Diagrams from in-vitro and in-vivo observations are prepared to a good standard. Students show confidence in using the microscope and other advanced equipment for monitoring and analysis. They can interpret data from field observations showing an in-depth understanding of the accuracy and relevance of the data gathered. The majority of students in Year 13 fully understand the process of energy transfer within the mammalian cell and compare this to energy conversion in the plant cell. On a macro scale they can discuss this conversion of energy in terms of the interdependence of all forms of life on earth.
94. Teaching is good. High expectations for learning are prevalent. Teachers are good role models and they teach with an obvious enthusiasm. They have a very good command of the subject and consequently inspire the students to work with insight and diligence. Scientific language is used well. Explanations are clear and teachers provide many illustrations from the natural world. A lively Year 12 lesson on the structure of the mammalian ovary and testes, empowered the students with a good understanding of the formation of gametes before they examined and accurately drew these processes from sections under a microscope. The teacher ensured that

- information was recorded accurately and that all students received good support to ensure that they understood the concept fully.
95. Students are highly motivated and involved with their studies. They work well together, exchanging ideas and supporting each other's learning. They are very attentive and sustain their concentration throughout the lesson. Students work well both independently and with others, but they are not always given sufficient opportunities to discuss ideas together to deepen their understanding.
 96. The leadership and management of post-16 biology is good. The course is well planned overall, although ICT is not used fully as an aid to students' understanding. Students' work is marked well and marking makes it clear how they can learn from mistakes and make further progress. However, teachers do not analyse progress to identify any possible variation in the achievement of different groups of students. The technicians responsible for A-level biology provide good support by their maintenance and management of the more advanced equipment required for these courses.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

No subject in this category was inspected in detail. The school offers AS and A2-level courses in full design and technology. Work was sampled in this subject. Results have been well above average in both 2000 and 2001. One lesson was observed and the teaching was very good. The teacher introduced a project on product analysis making very good use of PowerPoint and examples of effective product design. Students were able to understand product life cycles and were very well prepared to start independent work on their project.

BUSINESS

The focus of this inspection was business studies AVCE. The school also offers AS and A2 in economics and accountancy and work was sampled in these subjects. In economics, results were very high in 2000 and above average in 2001. One lesson was observed and teaching was good. The teacher's very good knowledge of the subject and the syllabus requirements enabled him to draw out responses from students, making them justify their answers to examination questions by explaining why some multiple choice options were wrong. Accountancy is a new subject and no students have yet completed external examinations. One lesson was observed and the teaching was satisfactory. Students were supported in constructing cash flow statements from data provided, although the opportunity to use spreadsheets on the computers in the room was missed.

Business studies

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

Strengths

- Standards in BTEC National in 2001 were above average.
- Increasing numbers of students are opting for business courses.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and experience in industry and commerce.
- There are good links with local business and high quality provision for work experience.
- Use of information and communication technology is good.
- Good quality handbooks and study guides are available for students.

Areas for improvement

- Opportunities for students to have an active role in all lessons and that lessons are not too teacher-centred.
- The range of books for all aspects of the course.
- Improve the accommodation.

97. In 2001 students achieved better results at BTEC National than other centres. All students completed the course gaining at least a pass grade. Of these 45 per cent were awarded

distinctions and 43 per cent merits. These results were part of a trend that saw results improving year on year. In 2001 a group was entered for the first part of the AVCE qualification, for the first time, and the department found the results disappointing. These students are now in Year 13 and the standards of work seen indicate that results in A2 will be close to the national average, provided that students complete all parts of the course. The present Year 12 has many higher attaining students and standards are above the national average.

98. The achievement of students is satisfactory in relation to results in previous tests or examinations, particularly for those students who are using English as an additional language and those who have special educational needs. Students' attitudes to the subject are generally good. A minority fail to work hard enough and some do not complete set work, which has a detrimental effect on progress in some classes. The female students in Year 13 achieve well.
99. Students are making secure progress as a result of good teaching. They respond well to questioning and have good recall from previous lessons. In Year 12 they show a clear understanding of the way in which modern information communication technology and software such as PowerPoint can be used to prepare a high quality business presentation. The majority of students work well on set tasks for assignments; their general knowledge of business practice and theory is good. They were observed preparing for three weeks of work experience and demonstrated that they had a good knowledge of different types of business organisations. The highest attaining students can give examples of how a business might actually be altruistic in its aims and show a clear understanding of what is meant by total quality management; all students show that they understand mission statements and quality circles.
100. The majority of students in Year 13 have the detailed knowledge and the higher levels of understanding to meet the examination boards' requirements. They show that they have a secure understanding of the theory of human resource management and higher attaining students can clearly analyse the way in which a work force can be motivated. In a lesson on business law, students clearly understood the difference between private and public nuisance although many of them found some of the vocabulary difficult. Students are skilled in using ICT as part of their learning. They are expected to make business presentations and use packages, such as PowerPoint, to deliver information well. During the inspection they were observed developing skills in the use of interactive whiteboards.
101. Teaching is good. In the lessons observed teachers showed that they had very good subject knowledge and provided a good quality of learning in the classroom. A particular feature of the department is the amount and quality of the support for students outside the classroom through support classes and links with industry. All students undertake periods of work experience. This is very well planned and provides students with valuable insight into business and industry. Year 13 students have recently returned from work experience in France. They are particularly appreciative of this aspect of their course and believe that they are well supported by the business studies staff.
102. Teachers promote high quality learning by carefully balancing activities in the classroom and by using case studies to support students as they develop their depth of understanding of business theory. They use questioning and simulation well. Assessment is rigorous and ensures that students are clear about their strengths and about how they can improve. In the most successful lessons there is a clear challenge for students and they are actively involved in all aspects of the learning. However, in some lessons the teacher leads all the activities so that students are merely passive listeners.
103. The department has a range of good resources, many of them produced within it. These are used well. Handbooks and study guides are good and the students value them. Like many centres the department has found it difficult to access books for some aspects of the new course, particularly business law. However, it has full access to high quality information and communication technology resources. The existing accommodation is only just adequate for the size of groups and does not provide the kind of business environment which is now usually found in business

studies departments elsewhere. During the inspection one lesson was adversely affected by noise from outside because the classroom is adjacent to the hall that is used for music lessons.

104. The department is managed well. New and unqualified teachers are supported well and the new courses have been introduced effectively. Planning is good and documentation is comprehensive and readily accessible. Improvement since the last inspection has been good in the introduction of new courses and the recruitment of more students. There is real vision for a future when new accommodation will enhance the department's existing high profile in the school.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The school offers AS and A2-level computing courses. Examination results were well above average in both 2000 and 2001. Work was sampled and in the one lesson observed teaching was good. A very good simulated scenario, advising a primary headteacher on a network, was used as the basis of group work to enable students to research and evaluate cabling, topology and hardware requirements. Students made good progress in the lesson and were well placed to continue their work both independently and collaboratively.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The focus of this inspection was leisure and tourism. The school also offers AS and A2-level physical education. In physical education, results in 1999 and 2001 were well above average.

Leisure and tourism

Overall, the quality of provision in leisure and tourism is **very good**.

Strengths

- Teaching and learning is good and teachers have very supportive relationships with students.
- Students' learning is enriched by the school's very good links with local tourist organisations.
- Students' use of ICT is very good.
- The majority of students achieve very well.

Areas for improvement

- GNVQ students' use of spreadsheets.
- The numeracy skills of students.
- Accommodation is currently cramped for some classes and adversely affects the quality of learning because teachers are not able to use all the methods to meet students' individual needs.

105. The Advanced Certificate of Vocational Education (AVCE) double-award course in travel and tourism is run over two years and is equivalent to two A levels. The new AVCE course began last year in Year 12, after a gap of a year since the previous advanced leisure and tourism. GNVQ students completed their course successfully and obtained above-average results. After their first year, current AVCE students' attainment was in line with national expectations.

106. A one-year GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism course has run for several years, and in 2001, the four students completed the course successfully. The quality of their work was below the national average but in line with teachers' expectations, based on students' GCSE points scores. These students are now taking the AVCE course and are achieving very well. Three of the four current students in Year 13 had also successfully completed the intermediate course, and are in the third year of their studies. They hope to go on to university or careers in the travel industry. Very few students fail to complete courses they have started.

107. In lessons and work seen, current AVCE and GNVQ students are achieving well, and often very well, from their GCSE starting points. They are working at standards in line with national expectations. Year 12 students on both courses are preparing very well for a three week period of

work experience following lessons in which they gained a good knowledge and understanding of marketing in the travel industry. They have developed good customer service skills, both through role play in class and, for many students, their part-time jobs in local leisure and retail outlets. Intermediate GNVQ students produced very clear marketing reports for a local sports centre, using a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis technique well to evaluate strengths and weaknesses of the centre's competitive position. Students made very good use of ICT to present their work attractively, importing photographs from the centre's web site well, and word processing accurate descriptions. They effectively planned and ran a party for local disabled children, each of the group taking a management role in organising the event. Their reports were well-presented and very readable, showing very good achievement in both their knowledge of event planning and the key skills of communication and team working. Little evidence was seen, however, of spreadsheets to record or model financial information. Students' application of number skills was only just satisfactory. The arrangement, where intermediate and advanced students work together in most lessons, has a positive impact on the standards being achieved by intermediate level students. Their work and understanding is enhanced by several topics from the AVCE course, including business planning and marketing.

108. AVCE travel and tourism students in Year 12 worked very effectively in groups to plan a quiz evening for parents and an outing to Legoland for disabled children. They gained good report-writing skills and made very effective use of ICT to draft their reports. In a very good lesson seen, students developed good skills of analysing tourism flows to the developing world and could assess the factors leading to the rise in tourists travelling to worldwide destinations. Students evaluated direct and indirect costs of tourism to the host countries and used good mapping techniques to compare tourist numbers to the local population. This enabled them to suggest improvements in infrastructure to cope with the 'flood of tourists'. The quality of students' written work and oral debate was above average, suggesting that students' standards, from GCSE, have increased over the last two years.
109. Year 13 AVCE students produced well-designed questionnaires for a forthcoming visit to Tower Bridge, in order to produce a report on visitor attractions. They discussed the external impact of tourism on the attractions, using techniques of PEST (Political, Economic, Social and Technological) analysis effectively. They clearly understand how tourist attractions seek to adapt to increasing visitor numbers. They independently researched a second tourist attraction of their choice, using libraries and web sites, to draw conclusions which were well-founded from the research. Their evaluation skills are less secure, as they find it difficult to make synoptic links between different travel and tourism themes. However, considering that some in the group had special educational needs in earlier years, their achievement over time is very good.
110. Teaching and learning is good, and in a third of lessons very good. Teachers have very supportive relationships with students and plan lessons very well so that individual students can reach their potential. In the best lessons, students worked in groups and were given challenging activities to develop their knowledge and understanding of the tourist industry and their key skills of communication, number, team working and ICT. Teachers create a very good climate for learning and students develop very good attitudes to their learning. In one very good Year 13 lesson, students were helped to develop a good critical understanding of the impact of tourism in the West Indies by the teacher's very good application of relevant business techniques. Students are required to make oral presentations, for example, after their recent week's work experience in Nimes, students made their presentations in French; students worked very well together and individuals, who had difficulties with their vocabulary were given very good support by their peers and the teacher. Students are encouraged to be independent rather than 'spoon fed'. In some lessons seen, the cramped accommodation did not encourage the most appropriate teaching methods; for example, although they provide good quality handouts, teachers employ too many didactic methods with the larger classes so that students lose concentration because they find the more abstract concepts difficult. In all lessons seen, teachers planned thoroughly, had very good subject knowledge, related very well to students, and regularly gave homework to extend class tasks effectively. Students are appreciative of the way in which teachers mark their work constructively so they knew how to improve.

111. The leadership and management of leisure, travel and tourism are very good. Teachers work very well together as a committed team and frequently meet, formally and informally, to monitor the progress of individual students. The monthly progress reviews are very good practice and help students know how they are doing in individual units. AVCE students, who do not get overall accreditation at the end of Year 12, unlike AS students, are less sure of the overall grade at which they are working. Teachers regularly check each others' marking. The departmental schemes of work and assessment procedures are very good and meet examination boards' requirements very well. The excellent contacts built up with local leisure and tourism outlets include Heathrow, Legoland, the Tower of London, large London hotels, travel agents and local leisure and health clubs. These provide ample opportunities for students to undertake visits and work experience and to plan special events. The department is building up student numbers and has good capacity for further improvement.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

The school does not offer any courses in health and social care.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Art and music were the focus of this inspection. The school does not offer any other courses.

Art

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

Strengths

- Students' work is well above national averages.
- Teachers' planning is very good and teaching is consistently very good.
- The department is very well managed.
- A very good range of extra-curricular opportunities provides valuable enrichment for students' learning.

Areas for improvement

- Target setting using value-added data.
- Students' use of ICT for creative work.

112. Standards of work overall at GCE A-level, AS and A2, are well above average, based on examination results and work seen during the inspection. In both 2000 and 2001, the number of students taking A-level Art was too small to make a reliable comparison with national standards. However, the overall average points score has been above the national average point score, for students taking A-level art over the last four years. The number of students following the AS and A2 courses for entry in 2002 is greater than the numbers entered for each of the previous three years. The standards of the work of these students seen during the inspection, were well above average standards. There is no significant difference between the performances of male and female students.
113. Students in Year 12 begin the AS art course with a very good base of technical skills in drawing and painting and with experience of working in three dimensions. These skills are developed through experimentation based on an analysis of artists' styles, techniques and use of materials. For example, artists such as Giacometti, Moore, Delaunay, Degas and Hockney are carefully selected by teachers to encourage students to experiment with a range of techniques while developing their own ideas. Technical elements such as perspective are tackled through the development of complex compositions based on buildings or other man-made structures. By the time they reach Year 13, students are able to make personal annotations which are analytical rather than descriptive and which show their interest in exploring issues and ideas inherent in the work of the artists they study. Expressive skills are well-developed in drawing and surface

treatment and students experiment confidently with a range of materials and techniques, including ceramics, wire, plaster, papier maché and print.

114. Teaching is very good. Lessons are conducted at a good pace, which encourages students to focus on their work. Students are given very clear instructions and useful examples, which provide a sound framework for the development of individual ideas. Teachers have high expectations and encourage students to adopt a rigorous approach to research, the development of ideas and the use of technical skills. Teachers' planning integrates the work of artists as a point of reference in all projects. However, there are few planned opportunities for students to develop their skills in using ICT for producing creative work. A very good range of extra-curricular activities, including gallery visits, participation in workshops and exhibitions outside school and opportunities to work in the art department outside lesson times, offers valuable enrichment of students' learning experiences in art.
115. Students are thoroughly involved in their work and enjoy the opportunity to develop ideas in directions which interest them individually. They are articulate and thoughtful when discussing their work and develop very good relationships with each other and with teachers. All students make considerable efforts to pursue their interest in art independently; for example, all students produce sketchbooks of a very high standard and use these constructively for recording ideas and experimenting with materials.
116. The subject is very well led and managed, providing a clear vision for the department and a consistent approach by teachers, whose skills are well-used. Assessment procedures are good. Students are given regular and useful informal feedback and guidance during lessons. The assessment framework gives students a clear picture of their progress measured against examination assessment objectives. However, value-added information needs to be made available to the department so that a system of target-setting for students can be established. Since the previous inspection, the strengths identified in teaching, standards, use of materials, progress and students' attitudes have been maintained.

Music

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

Strengths

- Very good quality teaching and learning.
- Very high standard and provision of the wide range of extra-curricular activities.
- Above average attainment.
- Students' very positive attitudes to the subject.
- Students' instrumental performing skills.
- Overall management of the department.

Areas for improvement

- Accommodation for the department, in particular the ICT suite.
- Broaden the provision of music courses further to cater for non-instrumentalists.

117. In the 2001 GCE A-level examination the two students entered both achieved pass grades and the average points score was above the national average. However, the numbers entered for a number of years have been too low to make statistical comparisons reliable but all entered achieved pass grades. Numbers have now increased significantly over the past two years to a combined total of twenty-two students studying the A and AS level in the sixth form, demonstrating the growing popularity of the subject. The AS-level course had its first set of results last year. All thirteen students achieved grades between A and C, with two thirds achieving A and B. The retention rate has been good with all students now completing the A2 course.
118. The work seen in lessons, examination of previous work and discussion with students in Years 12 and 13 show that standards overall are above average. Students in Year 12 have a good

understanding of harmony and use this, with their sound knowledge of chord progressions, to develop their creative work. This was noticeable during a Blues composition session. Here students quickly established a piano accompaniment, using the appropriate chord sequence, and added an inventive melody in the Blues idiom to fit harmonically with the chord progression. Students in Year 13 have good harmonic knowledge and understanding, successfully harmonising chorales, in the style of Bach, using sophisticated harmony procedures such as suspensions. Students have good performing qualities. They are well advanced with their recital performances, with carefully planned programmes to display their full potential. Students have a good understanding of historical developments; they discuss confidently the different elements of different periods of music, talk about their preferred listening with deep understanding and about the different styles and textures of a wide range of music. Gifted students make good progress; the wide and varied range of extra curricular activities providing challenging music to extend their performing skills. Students use ICT effectively to support their composing and harmony development. There is no difference in the progress and achievement of female and male students.

119. Students learn very well because of the very good quality teaching. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use their individual skills well to demonstrate styles of music. They have high expectations of students, planning work that is challenging to extend students' knowledge and understanding. Students respond well to this approach, commenting favourably about the individual help and guidance that teachers provide and the personal interest in their musical development. Teachers use ICT well to assist learning. An example of this was during a Year 13 aural dictation session; students were able to place the notes on the musical stave, listen to the phrase to check its accuracy and amend where required, leading to improved aural development.
120. Students are well motivated and their attitude to the subject is excellent. They play a full part in the musical activities organised by the school and the smaller ensembles specifically for sixth form students. They respond well to the opportunity to help younger students' instrumental development by mentoring their progress and helping with ensembles. Students take full advantage of the open house policy of the department, using its resources during break-times and after school, contributing well to their independent development.
121. The overall management of the department is very good. The head of department has a clear vision about future developments and the need to maintain and develop the high standards already established. The extra-curricular activities are a particular strength. These activities provide a rich and varied range of musical experiences, not only for musicians but other students in the sixth form. These ensembles are of a high standard, are well supported by students who comment that they are proud to be associated with them.
122. The department has a well-equipped ICT suite to support students' creative development. This room however is poorly ventilated, resulting in students becoming restless towards the end of sessions and slowing progress. Although the overall provision for music in the sixth form is excellent, the courses offered are academic, attracting in the main students who are instrumentalists and those who have achieved well at GCSE. Provision would benefit further by offering a less academic course, such as music technology, to attract those students who have a broader musical interest.

HUMANITIES

The focus of this inspection was classics, geography, history and sociology. The school also offers religious studies and politics. In religious studies, results in 2001 were well above average. Politics is a new course and no students have yet completed external examinations.

Classics

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good.
- Relationships are very good, based on mutual respect.
- Students enjoy classics and work hard.
- The department is very well staffed and departmental leadership is good.
- Improvement since the last inspection is good.

Areas for improvement

- Increased use of pupil tracking using national and standardised data.
- Further refinement of the schemes of work for the new classical civilisation syllabi.

123. The school offers courses leading to classical civilisation and Latin at AS and A2 level. Ancient Greek is offered as an optional subject outside the normal taught curriculum time. If they wish, students may enter for GCSE in this subject. Most choose to study it simply for pleasure and interest. The focus for the inspection was classical civilisations. Lessons were observed for Years 12 and 13. Work was scrutinised and a representative sample of students interviewed. One lesson in Latin was observed during the inspection; in this teaching was excellent. A well qualified, enthusiastic and knowledgeable teacher held the students' attention and interest so that they gained a very good understanding of a difficult piece of Latin verse. Students perform well at A2 and AS level in Latin, although there are no national comparators available to confirm this.
124. Results have continued to be above national averages since the last inspection and were again in 2001. There has been no significant difference between the grades obtained by male and female students. Students achieve similar results in classical civilisations to those in the other subjects they study. There have been no ungraded entries at AS or A level in recent years and it is very rare for a student who begins on the classical civilisations course to fail to complete it. In fact, several choose to migrate to the study of classics from other courses. In most years students have gained places at prestigious universities to read Classics or a related subject for their degree.
125. Improvement since the last inspection is good. The department continues to provide well for students who enter the sixth form with a range of previous experience of the classics. Some have studied Latin language and classical civilisation at GCSE; others have no prior experience at all.
126. The standards of work seen during the inspection reflected examination results and were above national norms. Most students write fluently and cogently, although there is a tendency for some to lapse into vernacular usage such as "he was fed up with...." rather than "he tired of..." or "he grew disenchanted with...". Occasionally, weaker students miss important points or are inclined to ramble in their arguments. Most display very good subject knowledge of, for example, Greek or Roman political institutions, and use their knowledge in effective argument. The majority also displays the ability to detect bias as, for example, when Tacitus shows disapproval of the activities of emperors, such as Nero.
127. Teaching is good, displaying an infectious enthusiasm, which inspires the students so that they take great pleasure in the lessons and in their own personal study and reading. They work hard and do their best because they are enjoying what they are doing. Teachers have an excellent knowledge and understanding of their subject. This ensures that students are provided with a rich diet of salient detail to embellish the essential facts that they must learn in order to succeed in their examinations. It also informs nice touches of humour which enlighten lessons such as that on Aristophanes, 'The Poet and the Women', where jokes and finer points were explained with relish and clearly understood. The students develop very effective independent learning skills because teachers encourage them to write their own notes from lessons and from private reading. Frequent testing, both by essays and by short answer tests, ensures that students learn and retain secure, detailed subject knowledge. Homework is frequent and well chosen. It is also very fully marked with detailed annotations. This ensures that the students are very clear as to what they do or do not know and what they must do to improve.

128. The students' very good attitudes and behaviour are a major contributory factor to their success. They think very highly of their teachers and the way in which they are helped to progress both in lessons and in the substantial amount of time which teachers find for them outside normal lesson times. Those learning Ancient Greek were especially grateful to be given the opportunity to do so.
129. The department consists of extremely well qualified teachers with a love of their subject and benefiting from good, informal leadership. Two of the four teachers were recruited to the school following its involvement in initial teacher training programmes. Letters from the university education department attest to the quality of support that students are given by the school, as do the views of the students themselves. Governors, too, are very supportive of the work of the department. They visit lessons on a regular basis and the teachers value the opportunity to discuss and explain what they are doing.
130. Marking and assessment of the students' work is done regularly and is used well. All tests and homework are marked fully. Tracking of individual students against national and standardised test data is, however, less effectively carried out. Schemes of work for the new curricula are in place, but, as yet, lack sufficient detail. This is recognised as an area for improvement and is currently under continuous development.
131. One classroom is largely used for teaching classics and benefits from a very good departmental library which the head of department has built up over time. This is well-used by the students, both for reference and for borrowing, and incorporates a substantial number of very useful and interesting texts including most volumes of the Cambridge Ancient History.

Geography

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

Strengths

- Standards on A level courses are above average.
- Students achieve well; class work and fieldwork are of a high standard.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- The department is well led and managed.

Areas for improvement

- Encourage a greater uptake by male students.
- Improve the role of ICT in teaching and learning.
- Rationalise human resources in the department to provide greater effectiveness in teaching.

132. Geography caters for 15 students following AS and A2-level courses. Young women who have joined the school for sixth form studies make up 80 per cent of the cohort. Standards overall are well above average. Results have been consistently good over the past four years. The 2001 results were again well above average, with all 15 students gaining pass grades and 60 per cent gaining grades A and B. Disappointing grades in one module depressed the overall results.
133. Lesson observations and an analysis of student work files confirm that the standards achieved by students following the A-level course are well above average. Much of the A2-level work showed a positive progression over the two-year programme of study, with the work of AS students exhibiting a considerable potential of very high standards for next year.
134. Students show good levels of knowledge and understanding of concepts and processes in both human and physical geography. They are well focused on task, applying newly acquired knowledge and skills to practical problems, working in small groups addressing issues presented by the teacher. Their practical work shows sound cartographical skills, displaying good abilities in the analysis of photographs and maps, as well as a capacity for independent study. ICT skills were not apparent in the teaching and learning processes observed, although A2 students handled global statistics with confidence.

135. Overall, teaching is very good. Teachers' subject knowledge is comprehensive, complemented by using a range of teaching strategies and a broad spectrum of learning resources. A very positive element in all lessons is the sharing of learning objectives and intended outcomes with the students. Extended writing and course exercises are well marked, with students provided with clear supportive judgements on the quality of their work. Work is well monitored by individual teachers via grade records and use of the monthly report system, allowing an on-going evaluation of student progress. The reflective use of previously acquired knowledge could be more effective, particularly with A2-level students.
136. Students are very attentive and focused, working effectively in response to good teaching techniques. Learning processes are clearly followed and thinking skills are well developed, with fieldwork experiences drawn upon to illustrate class and essay work. All students are able to describe articulately stage and process in a mature manner, with work on individual projects showing a wide range of interests and application. Work examined displayed a maturity of understanding, as well as the usage of a wide range of resources, including statistical data.
137. The department is led well by a relatively new head of department who is addressing issues identified in the departmental development plan. The new strategies outlined will take time to mature, but target setting for students should have a positive impact on the quality of learning. The relative performances of male and female students are monitored, as well as the performance of minority ethnic groups; no evidence of any difference is apparent. The relatively low uptake of boys from the main school studying geography in the sixth form needs to be addressed, as does the need to capitalise on available ICT resources. There are satisfactory stocks of resources and reference material available, but the teaching rooms for sixth form groups are rather drab, lacking departmental ownership and thus an appropriate ambience.

History

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

Strengths

- Good, confident and skilful teaching inspires and enthuses students.
- Results have shown a marked improvement since the previous inspection, being outstanding in 2001.
- Students are well supported in their development as historians.
- Teachers give effective explanation and handle controversial and philosophical issues sensitively to develop students' maturity and insight.
- Marking is rigorous and gives students constructive feedback.

Areas for improvement

- A wider variety of teaching and learning approaches to challenge the gifted and talented.
- Provide more opportunities for enrichment and learning beyond the classroom.

138. The GCE A Level examination results in 2001 showed a significant improvement since the previous inspection and show a steady upward trend over the last three years. Results were well above the national average. All students who took the examination gained a pass grade and the proportion gaining the highest grades, A and B, was well above the national average. In relation to their GCSE results students did better than expected.
139. The standards of work of current students are also well above average. In Year 13 students are achieving very well in relation to predictions based on their GCSE results. In the lessons seen they were doing very well as a result of effective, well directed teaching which challenged and extended students' knowledge and understanding to a high level. The lesson structure and activities clearly focused their learning and gave direction to historical sources and their use, particularly an awareness of history writing. In a particularly good example students drew well on their knowledge of 18th century European history to identify essential turning points in religious and

foreign policy, constructing a thematic approach to cause and effect. All students have very good recall, and can apply their knowledge and analytical skills to written work and discussion.

140. Students in Year 12 are achieving very well and much as expected in relation to their attainment at GCSE. They recall, select and display historical knowledge accurately and communicate their knowledge and understanding of history in a clear and effective manner. Their explanations and evaluation of historical events and topics is of the highest order and their understanding of historical terms and concepts is sophisticated.
141. Teaching is good overall, and students learn very well as a result. The principal features of teaching are excellent command of subject knowledge and professional expertise and effective explanations of different interpretations of historical events and periods. Further features are sharp planning and a range of methods and approaches which are successfully linked to examination questions and essays and the skills of examination technique. Teachers challenge and have very high expectations of their students, particularly when they are encouraged to explore the significance of events, individuals, issues and societies in history using a range of source materials. Students respond confidently and are encouraged to work to the highest standards, although the most able are not always given sufficiently challenging work. There are limited opportunities for enrichment to challenge these highest attaining students.
142. Much of the written work demanded of students takes the form of structured questions and essay preparation which are part of and often follow up lessons. Marking of these assignments is detailed and accurate and comments are informative and evaluative. Students know and understand their attainment levels and targets.
143. The subject is very well led and managed and has clear direction and purpose, namely, enthusiasm for the subject and a commitment to raising standards. Students learn well. They are attentive, disciplined and committed to their studies. The rapport between teachers and students is positive and underlies the very caring attitude they have for each other and the school community. Students work productively and respond well to the supportive teaching and learning materials they experience and receive. They rise to the challenge with enthusiasm and their note-taking and extraction of information is impressive.

Sociology

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

Strengths

- Results are well above national averages.
- Students achieve very well; they have excellent subject knowledge and apply this well.
- Students work well together; they share ideas freely and are effective independent learners.
- Teaching is very good.
- Students are provided with a high quality handbook.

Areas for improvement

- Further opportunities for students' self-evaluation.
- Consistent teaching to encourage all students to participate actively.

144. Sociology is a new subject to the sixth form and was introduced in 2000. The department has achieved some outstanding examination results since then and take up rates have increased dramatically. Students have opportunities for study at both AS and A2 levels. AS results were well above the national average in 2001, giving students an excellent basis from which to start their A2 studies. All students who took the examination gained a pass grade and the proportion gaining the highest grades A and B was well above the national average. Male and female students did equally well. In relation to their GCSE results, the majority exceeded expectations.

145. The standards of work of current students are also well above average. In Year 13 students are achieving very well in relation to predictions based on GCSE results. Students' excellent performance is a result of creative and effective teaching which demands much of them. The lesson structure and activities are clearly focused on high standards of learning, with appropriate focus on examination technique and study skills. The emphasis on research and preparation for assignments enables students to develop their key skills sufficiently to demonstrate their sociological knowledge and understanding. In a good lesson, which focused on ownership and control of the mass media, students were given stimulating resource material which was linked to structured questions and essay topics.
146. Students in Year 12 are achieving beyond expectations. They show excellent knowledge and understanding of sociological concepts, theory and methodology. They expend intellectual effort in trying to explain concepts and theories in their oral and written work and can use a wide range of books, including research studies and other sources to learn for themselves. All students, but particularly higher attaining individuals, clearly and succinctly explain terminology and theoretical principles.
147. Teaching is very good overall and students' acquisition of knowledge relating to the subject is excellent as a result. The principal features of teaching are an excellent command of subject knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject. Lessons are planned with a clear focus on learning objectives and conducted at a brisk pace, using a range of methods and approaches for effective learning. Teachers use their good subject knowledge in their questioning and explanations and in the tasks they set. Teachers skilfully draw out links and cross-references between the different topics studied. They challenge, have high expectations of their students, encourage the accurate use of sociological terminology and link theories to explain social phenomena. Students are required to apply their sociological knowledge and understanding and read sociology for themselves beyond basic textbooks. Of the three lessons seen one was not as dynamic as the others and, although sound overall, did not result in such secure learning. Students were not actively involved. Resources are always well planned, stimulating and relevant to secure learning of the highest order.
148. Students learn very well. They are attentive, hard working, mature and generally very able. Students are confident in using a variety of reading material and ICT. They approach all work with enthusiasm and self-discipline. All are able to extract information and make their own notes.
149. The subject is very well led and managed. A new scheme of work efficiently reflects subject requirements and lays a firm foundation for good teaching. An impressive student handbook and course guide supports student learning to a high degree. However, the targets for students, that stem from the monitoring of their performance, are not sharply enough focused on learning goals. There are few opportunities for student subject review and self-evaluation.

ENGLISH AND COMMUNICATION

English literature was the focus of this inspection. The school does not offer any other courses.

English literature

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

Strengths

- Attainment is very high and has risen steadily.
- Teaching is very good.
- Students have a good understanding of the criteria by which their work is marked.

Areas for improvement

- Raising the attainment of male students to the level of female students.

- Better use of information on students' prior and current attainment to ensure that all students make the progress of which they are capable.
- Giving consideration to widening the range of A level courses offered to students.

150. Attainment in A level English Literature in 2001 was very high in comparison to the national average. The percentage of students attaining grades A and B was more than double the national average and all students attained at least a grade D, which is also higher than the national average. There has been a steady rise in the percentage of students attaining grades A and B over the previous four years. Over this time the percentage of female students attaining grades A and B has been higher than that of male students; in 2001 this disparity was particularly large and was much greater than the national difference, which is very slight.
151. A full range of evidence, observation of lessons, discussions with teachers and students and scrutiny of students' work during the inspection indicates that attainment at A level is well above that seen nationally.
152. The achievement of students during their courses is generally good. They start with good prior attainment in their GCSE examinations and in 2001 a significant majority attained grades A or B in A-level. During the A-level course students make good progress in researching, planning and structuring their written answers and in understanding how to maximise the marks they are awarded. They also make good progress in researching and organising their notes so that they provide solid support for both their written assignments and for revision purposes.
153. Students have good, detailed knowledge and understanding of the texts they study. They make well-chosen and apposite textual references and quotations to justify and illustrate their ideas. Students have a very clear grasp of the assessment criteria that are specified for their Alevel course. They effectively structure their written assignments in order to maximise the marks they are awarded, presenting a balanced and well-documented argument. Students make very detailed and thorough notes, making exceptionally good use of the additional written materials that are supplied to them by teachers to supplement and broaden their own research. Both notes and finished assignments show clear evidence of considerable 'reading round' the subject. All students have a written style which is at least correct and coherent. The style of most is fluent, authoritative and sometimes elegant. Students have a wide vocabulary, which they use concisely and persuasively. Nearly all students are confident and articulate, making very good use of the many opportunities for discussion to refine their own ideas by comparing them with the ideas of others.
154. Students' attitude and response to the subject are very good. They are thoughtful in lessons, work hard and make well considered contributions. They make particularly good use of the many opportunities to work collaboratively. Students retain high levels of commitment and concentration throughout lessons and frequently those who do not appear to be particularly involved in what is going on are actually working very hard, making notes and listening intently to the ideas of others. Students' detailed notes, essay planning and independent research reveal a hard-working and well-organised attitude to their work.
155. The quality of teaching is very good. Lessons are very well planned with clear objectives that are shared with the students so that they know what to expect and what is expected of them. Teachers plan a good range of activities to stimulate students' interest and challenge their thinking. For example, a 'jigsaw' activity concerning the relationships in 'The Tempest' was very effective in increasing students' understanding of the theme of broken communications. Lessons are well resourced, with a good range of additional reading material, which avoids "spoon-feeding" by requiring students to contribute their own ideas. Particularly good use is made of discussion to encourage students to have confidence in their own ideas. Teachers make very frequent and effective references to the assessment criteria to be used in awarding A level grades and students make very good progress in structuring and focusing their written answers in order to make the best possible use of their knowledge and understanding. Marking is very good; it is rigorous,

supportive and informative, making clear the high expectations which teachers have of their students.

156. The leadership and management of the subject is good overall. The department has been very successful in increasing the percentage of students who attain the two highest grades so that attainment at this level which is much higher than the national average. The policy of ensuring that all students are made very aware of the criteria by which A-level grades are awarded has been successful in raising attainment. There are good resources for the subject, both in terms of texts and also of additional resources, which enhance students' response. Insufficient use is made of the range of information which is available on attainment and progress to ensure that all students are making the progress of which they are able. For example, the disparity in attainment of males and females has not been identified or quantified and there are therefore no measures in place to raise the attainment of males to meet that of females. Insufficient consideration has been given to the possibility of widening the range of English courses or to considering whether an enhanced range would better meet the needs of the large number of students now studying English at A level.
157. Progress since the previous inspection has been good in that the percentage of students attaining the higher grades has risen fairly steadily and there has been an overall decrease in students attaining a C grade or below.

LANGUAGES

French was the focus of this inspection. The school also offers German and Spanish and work was sampled. In German results were average in 2001 and the subject is no longer offered. In Spanish, the very small numbers make national comparisons unreliable.

French

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

Strengths

- Students are prepared well at GCSE level to embark on an A-level course.
- Students have very positive attitudes to learning and achieve well.
- Teachers are competent linguists and teaching is good.

Areas for improvement

- Extending opportunities for those students who are reticent in lessons to participate more fully in oral work.
- The quality of targets for learning which are set as part of students' formative assessment.
- The creation of a more stimulating learning environment for the department.

158. AS level results in 2001 were above the national average. The performance at A-level matched the national average in 1999 and was above the national average in 1998. The small numbers taking the examination in 200 make comparisons unreliable. The number of students embarking on an A-level course has risen from two in 1998 to twelve in 2000.

159. In the work seen during the inspection standards were above average in Year 13 and in line with national expectations in Year 12. In Year 12 students are interested and keen to learn. The highest attainers participate readily and are willing to take part, though they experience the frustration of not being able to put their thoughts into words on occasions and resort to using English. Students are organised and their note-taking skills are well developed. They are able to write accurately and their work shows progress in acquisition of grammar. Year 13 students are mature and attentive. They express themselves with a degree of accuracy and pronunciation is good. They are able to cope with complex grammatical tasks and some can write at length in a sophisticated style.

160. Teaching is good overall. Teachers are very competent linguists and provide excellent models of the spoken language for students. They know their students well and establish good relationships. Lessons are planned in advance to an established format, though in the Year 12 lesson observed the learning objectives are a list of teaching activities and do not sufficiently support the students' learning so that more reticent students do not always make enough contribution in aural work. Work is marked regularly and students are given written advice on how they might improve. The quality of target setting is however variable. Outcomes of assessments and examinations are used to inform planning but are not yet used fully in the tracking of individual student progress against prior learning.

161. The quality of learning is good in Year 12 and very good in Year 13 where students contribute their ideas effectively, concentrate extremely well, are well prepared and organised and help each other considerably. Interest and concentration levels of students are high. They support each other and collaborate on the tasks set. This is a strong feature of lessons.

162. The subject is well led and managed. There have been difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff recently and the team is relatively new. Two teachers are involved in teaching each group and are now adopting a skills approach to teaching the subject. They meet regularly to ensure progression and continuity for students. Schemes of work have been adapted to ensure that there is a focus on improving grammar. The department is planning well for the development of its approach; for example, through the introduction of an intensive grammar module into the scheme next year.

163. The head of department monitors the quality of teaching and learning in French across the school, but the focus on post 16 lessons has been less rigorous. The school has sought to develop further links with other schools abroad but has, as yet, been unsuccessful in finding suitable contacts to meet its needs. Many lessons are taught in non-specialist rooms and, as a consequence, the department has not been able to develop a stimulating learning environment for sixth form students.