

INSPECTION REPORT

SHERBURN HIGH SCHOOL

Sherburn-in-Elmet, Leeds

LEA area: North Yorkshire

Unique reference number: 121695

Headteacher: Mrs C Peace

Reporting inspector: Mrs V Lynch
1475

Dates of inspection: 24th – 28th September 2001

Inspection number: 193053

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 - 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Garden Lane Sherburn-in-Elmet Leeds
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr John Cox
Date of previous inspection:	November 1996

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8943	Margaret Manning	Lay inspector		Attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils and students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
2893	John Manning	Team inspector	English	How well are pupils and students taught?
30576	Peter Bannon	Team inspector	Mathematics	
27050	Val Blackburn	Team inspector	Science	
12721	David Riddle	Team inspector	Design and Technology	
18854	Malcolm McGregor	Team inspector	Art	How good are curricular and other opportunities?
17857	David Walters	Team inspector	Geography	
12110	Roger Bailless	Team inspector	Modern Foreign Languages	
22501	Sue Jones	Team inspector	Music	
18888	Jan Boulton	Team inspector	Physical Education	
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4689	Monica Christian	Team inspector	Information and Communication Technology	
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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
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	
 PART B: COMMENTARY	
 HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	13
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
 HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?	17
 HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?	19
 HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	22
 HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS	24
 HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	24
 WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	28
 PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	29
 PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4	34
 PART E: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM	58

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Sherburn High School is an 11-18 comprehensive school serving the village of Sherburn-in-Elmet and the rural area and other smaller villages nearby. There are 850 pupils on the roll of the main school and 103 in the sixth form, an increase since the previous inspection.

Employment in the area is similar to the national picture. The percentage of pupils claiming free school meals is 6.5, which is below the national average. However, a number of families are on low income but not low enough to claim free school meals.

Results in Key Stage 2 tests taken in primary schools show that the attainment of pupils when they join the school is broadly in line with the national average. However, standardised tests taken in Year 7 show that overall pupils' literacy skills are below the national average and below the average for North Yorkshire. The school is one of 16 schools in the LEA receiving additional support on the basis of literacy needs in Years 7 to 9.

Nineteen point four per cent of pupils are on the special educational needs register, which is slightly above the national average. Two point seven per cent of pupils have statements of special educational need, which is broadly in line with the national average. There is only one minority ethnic pupil, who also has English as an additional language.

The school governors manage the provision for community education in the area and older pupils benefit from the opportunities this provides.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school is a good school with many strengths. Results in tests and examinations taken at ages 14 and 16 vary from year to year, but are always at least as good as and often better than results in other schools. Teaching is good overall. The leadership and management of the school are good, characterised by care and concern for others which is reflected in the way pupils relate to each other and to other adults. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils make good progress in Years 7 to 9 and make good progress in most subjects in Years 10 and 11.
- Behaviour and relationships are very good.
- Teaching is good.
- With the active support of governors and staff the headteacher has created a very special atmosphere in the school where all are valued and respected.
- Procedures for monitoring attendance and behaviour are very good.
- The school provides a wide range of opportunities for all pupils to develop academically and personally.

What could be improved

- The checking of pupils' progress to make sure they fulfil their potential in all subjects.
- The tasks pupils are asked to do in lessons so that they are more involved in their learning.
- The monitoring and evaluation of major whole-school priorities and decisions.
- The information given to pupils on what they have achieved in using information and communication technology.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Results have improved in tests taken at the end of Year 9, but GCSE results have declined. These GCSE results reflect the results gained by these pupils when they were in Year 9. The school has made good progress on all the key issues from the last inspection.

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				Key well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
	all schools			similar schools	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
GCSE examinations	B	B	C	D	
A-levels/AS-levels	D	C	D		

By the end of Year 9 pupils have achieved well to reach standards that are above the national average and better than similar schools. Test results at the age of 14 have improved steadily and in 2000 were the highest ever. Results were very good in science and good in English and mathematics. In 2001, results in mathematics and science were better than in 2000; English results were not quite as good. Although girls have done better than boys in recent years, boys do better than boys nationally and their results have improved since the previous inspection.

Pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 10 and 11. GCSE results have consistently been above the national average until 2000 when they fell slightly below. Results in 2001 are down on those in 2000, but are close to the target set on the basis of the information about pupils' attainment when they joined the school. The school always sets appropriately challenging targets.

Pupils reach very high standards in examinations and in lessons in history and modern foreign languages. High standards were also seen in geography and physical education throughout the school and in English, science and art in Years 7 to 9. In lessons, pupils with special educational needs achieve well, but improvements in their reading and spelling are slower.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good: pupils enjoy coming to school and are keen to take part in all the activities offered.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good: pupils are very well behaved and unsatisfactory behaviour is very rare. Pupils move about the school in a mature and responsible manner.
Personal development and relationships	Good: pupils and students of all ages get on well together. Relationships between pupils and their teachers are characterised by mutual respect.
Attendance	Good: because pupils attend school regularly they are able to keep up with their lessons and do well in tests and examinations.

Pupils are friendly, helpful and courteous. They arrive punctually to lessons and quickly settle to work. Although pupils have such positive attitudes, they do lack confidence in taking initiative and responsibility in lessons. This is because teachers do not provide enough opportunities for them to do this.

Because behaviour is very good, occasions where large numbers of pupils are together require minimal staff supervision. Very few pupils are excluded from school and none have been excluded permanently in the last year.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of the teaching is good. The overall quality has improved since the previous inspection and the amount of very good teaching has been increased. The subjects where very good teaching is seen most often are art, English, geography, history, mathematics and modern foreign languages. In science, teaching is good. There is no subject where it is unsatisfactory.

The major strengths in teaching are the very good relationships that have been established, which results in most pupils being prepared to work diligently, and the confidence that most teachers have in their own subject skills. Pupils with special educational needs get very good support in class and are fully involved in all activities. More able or talented pupils have not been identified formally. In some subjects they are expected to produce work of a higher standard, but this is not so in all of them.

Although teaching is good, there is not enough involvement of pupils in discussion work particularly in Years 10 and 11. There is some excellent practice in teaching literacy skills in history and geography and pupils would benefit if this practice was shared with other departments. The teaching of numeracy is less well-developed.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good: the school provides a wide range of courses and opportunities to meet the needs of all pupils and students.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory: the support provided in lessons by support staff and teachers is good. There is not enough time given to tackling some pupils' difficulties on a one-to-one basis.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good: the richness of the provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is a testimony to the commitment and vision of education held by the staff of the school.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good: the school provides a secure and welcoming environment in which all can learn. More work needs to be done to check on pupils' academic progress across all subjects.

The school has good links with parents and is always willing to meet with them to discuss their children's work and progress. Parents support the school well.

A key strength of the curriculum is the school's commitment to provide worthwhile courses to meet a range of needs. However, in Years 10 and 11 not all the courses provided lead on to further qualifications and vocational courses are underdeveloped as an option for all pupils.

Teachers know their pupils well and subject teachers monitor progress in their subjects. There are few opportunities for tutors to look at overall progress to ensure that pupils are doing their best in all their lessons.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good: the headteacher and other managers have a very clear vision for the school as one where all pupils are valued equally and their achievements recognised. This vision is strongly evident in practice.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good: governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They meet regularly and support the school in achieving its objectives.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good: analysis and evaluation at a department level are very good. More work needs to be done to judge the success of financial decisions and to determine major future priorities.
The strategic use of resources	Good: specific grants, such as those made available for special educational needs and the sixth form, are used appropriately.

Staffing is good. Teachers are well qualified and there is a good match of teachers to the classes they teach. Accommodation is good and the school is clean and the grounds are well maintained. There is a satisfactory range of learning resources. The library is good and is well used. The leaders and managers of the school have successfully created a very harmonious learning community. There are procedures in place to monitor and evaluate the work of departments, but there has not been enough work done to get all departments to the standards of the best. Governors are very committed and able, but have been reluctant to challenge the school's management to account for various outcomes such as declining results in the sixth form. The principles of best value are applied to good effect overall and to a satisfactory level in the sixth form.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school. • Pupils make good progress. • Teaching is good. • The school is comfortable with parents' questions and responds to problems. • The high expectations in the school. • The way the school is led and managed. • The way the school helps pupils and students to be mature and responsible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The information they have on the progress their children are making. • Closer relationships between the school and parents.

Twenty-five parents attended the parents' meeting with the Registered Inspector and 22 per cent of parents responded to the questionnaire. Parents' views of the school are positive in many respects. The inspection team supports parents' views on the strengths of the school. Pupils do make good progress, particularly in Years 7 to 9.

An analysis of the parents' questionnaires shows that a significant number of parents, more usually parents of those children who had only been in school a year or so, feel less well informed about their children's progress. The inspection team agrees that reports could provide more detailed information on how well pupils are doing academically, not only in Year 7 but also across the school. Parents of pupils in Year 7 may feel they lack information because the Year 7 parents' evening in November 2000 had to be cancelled because of floods. The same groups of parents and three parents of pupils with special educational needs feel that the school does not work closely with them. The inspection team found that the school does try to develop a close relationship with parents, but in the case of some pupils with special educational needs more work could be done on helping parents to help their children.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

There are 103 students in the sixth form. Numbers have fluctuated from year to year, but overall the sixth form has grown steadily in recent years. All courses are taught on the school site, and work experience and work shadowing opportunities are provided in the local area. The overall level of ability of students on entry to the sixth form is below average because the school aims to provide opportunities for all to benefit from remaining at the school. The school offers a good range of post-16 courses, including one- and two-year flexible programmes incorporating A- and AS-level GCE subjects together with foundation, intermediate and advanced level vocational courses.

The sixth form is made up almost entirely from students who stay on from Year 11, approximately 40 per cent of the year group. There are no minority ethnic students in the sixth form, reflecting the situation in the main school. There is an equal numbers of boys and girls and the sixth form includes three students with statements of special educational need.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The provision in the sixth form is satisfactory with some strengths and some areas that need improvement. Students learn effectively and their achievement is good. They benefit from very good teaching and build on their achievement at GCSE level despite A- and AS-level results being below the national average over the last three years. Most students attend school regularly. Nearly all students who began advanced courses in 1999 gained accreditation in 2001. Seventy-three out of 83 students who began courses in 2000 gained their GNVQ or AS accreditation in 2001. Sixty-seven per cent of students continued into higher education. The school provides a harmonious, secure learning environment for its sixth form, based on very good relationships. The sixth form is effective and gives good value for money.

Strengths

- Examination results in 2001 show that these students made good progress.
- Open access and equality of opportunity fully reflect the school's aims.
- Teaching is very good overall.
- Students are very positive about their experiences in the school.
- The involvement of the sixth form in the life and work of the school.

What could be improved

- Attainment in general studies, economics and some intermediate vocational courses.
- The consistency of teaching across subjects to ensure equally effective involvement and motivation of students.
- The use of data to monitor the overall progress of students and to inform appropriate action.
- The provision of religious education as required by law.

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 in depth.

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
English Language and Literature	Good. Teaching is very good overall and students are well motivated and show a keen interest. Results in GCE examinations vary but overall are in line with the national average, which represents sound achievement. There is not enough evaluation of examination performance to show how well students have improved over time.
Mathematics	Good. In recent years, students with modest entry levels have achieved well but results remain below the national average. Teaching is always good and often very good. The monitoring of students' attainment is thorough and students have a good knowledge of their performance.
Design and Technology	Satisfactory. A-level results have shown a rising trend over the last 4 years, but remain below the national average. AS-level results in 2001 were low and three of the seven students did not attain pass level. Current work shows students' attainment to be in line with what would be expected at this early stage of the course. Teaching is good overall and students learn well.
History	Very good. Examination results are improving and AS-level results in 2001 were very good. Learning opportunities are very good and are enhanced by the very good quality of teaching that is provided. Staff are knowledgeable and enthusiastic and they plan their lessons very well.
Biology	Satisfactory. The majority of students are achieving as well as expected given their attainment at GCSE but results in 2000 and 2001 are well below the national average. Teaching is good overall and better in Year 13. The targets set for students are not sufficiently specific to improve the learning of each member of the group.

All other sixth form courses were sampled. Teaching was very good overall. One lesson in physics and one in health and social care were excellent. Very good lessons in geography, German, physical education, art and information and communication technology provided challenging opportunities for students to learn independently. Some of the teaching in economics, French (during the absence of the head of department) and physical education was only satisfactory because it did not engage and motivate the students sufficiently.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	The educational and personal support and guidance for students are good. The school provides very effective induction procedures that ensure students select appropriately from the whole range of courses offered. Students have time with their tutors, but this is limited to one hour every two weeks. However, during their years in the sixth form, students receive much informal support, giving them guidance as their needs arise. Students have confidence in their subject teachers who are readily available to give help and information.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	The head of sixth form and the sixth form co-ordinator work well together to support the individual needs of their students. The school has successfully focused on increasing the numbers of students in the sixth form. In some subjects, there are very effective systems for the monitoring of students' achievement. This is not yet happening in all subjects and the school does not analyse information about students' performance carefully enough to be able to set students specific targets. The sixth form is cost effective and some classes are small, but the sixth form contributes well to the school's ethos and has an important role in the local community.

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"> • Teachers know them well, are very approachable and willingly give up their time to listen and to help. • The extensive advice on choosing their subjects and flexibility when settling into their courses. • The quality of teaching. • The wide choice of courses. • The range of opportunities provided by the Personal Interest and Education programme. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A few students felt they could still be treated more like adults and their views acted upon (the main issue being the quality and range of school dinners). • The lack of computer resources in their study area. • The Year 13 students expressed concern about the introduction of AS-level GCE examinations and the lack of information available to their teachers at the start of the courses. Some AS-level results were late in arriving.

Half of sixth form students submitted questionnaire returns and over half of the students in the sixth form were interviewed either formally or in their subject areas during the inspection.

Students are overwhelmingly positive about the sixth form and the range of opportunities offered. Their comments show loyalty and support for the school and the strengths identified by the students are well founded. A room with computers is now available for sixth form students and the school has appointed new catering services. Students' observations about the late arrival of AS-level information reflect an issue for all schools. The school does recognise students' increasing maturity. There is a sixth form council and students do not have supervised study but are allowed to work at home when not attending lessons.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

- 1 When pupils join the school in Year 7 the results from the national tests taken in their last year at primary school indicate that their attainment overall is what is expected for 11-year-olds. However, other tests taken when they join the school indicate that their literacy levels are below the national average. By the end of Year 9 pupils have done well to reach standards that are above the national average and better than similar schools. At the end of Year 11 GCSE results are in line with the national average, but below those in similar schools.
- 2 Test results at the age of 14 are very good in science and good in English and mathematics. In 2000 they were the highest yet. In science, the results put the school in the top 25 per cent of schools nationally for the subject. In 2001, results in mathematics and science were better than in 2000; English results were not quite as good. Although girls have done better than boys in recent years, boys do better than boys nationally and their results have improved since the previous inspection. Teacher assessments in other subjects indicate that standards achieved in the graphics part of design and technology are well above average. In history, art, French, German, music and physical education standards are above the national average. In all other subjects, standards are in line with what is expected for pupils aged 14 years.
- 3 GCSE results have consistently been above the national average until 2000 when they fell slightly below. Results in history, French and German were particularly good and significantly above the national average. Results in drama too were better than the national average. Results in mathematics, music and religious education were below the national average and in art were well below. Interestingly, it was girls' results in mathematics that pulled the results down. In all other subjects, results were close to the national average.
- 4 Results in 2000 and 2001 reflect the dip in test results at the end of Year 9 in 1998 and 1999. However, in 2000 results were above what was expected on the basis of the test taken when the pupils were 14 years old. The percentage of higher and average attaining pupils gaining 5 or more A* - C grades was well above what was expected on the basis of these tests. The percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A* - G grades was below what was expected. This is mainly because a number of pupils who might have been successful in achieving grades between D and G took courses leading to alternative accreditation. A number of these pupils were pupils with special educational needs. Results in 2001 are down on those in 2000, but are close to the target set on the basis of the information about pupils' attainment when they joined the school. The school always sets appropriately challenging targets.
- 5 Attainment in lessons in Years 7 to 11 is at least in line with the levels expected nationally. In Years 7 to 9, attainment is high in English, science, art, geography and physical education; it is very high in history and modern foreign languages. Boys and girls do equally well in all subjects. In Years 10 and 11, attainment is high in geography, modern foreign languages and physical education; in history it is very high. In English, science, modern foreign languages and religious education attainment in lessons is better in Years 7 to 9 than it is in Years 10 and 11. This is mainly because it is in lessons with the older pupils that teachers tend to teach a lot from the front of the class and do not organise pupils to work in groups and make

choices about their work. In these lessons teachers work harder than pupils. The impact of this is that pupils make better progress overall in Years 7 to 9 than they do in Years 10 and 11 and this is reflected in their test and examination results.

- 6 In lessons, pupils with special educational needs achieve well in lessons in Years 7 to 9 because teachers and classroom assistants help them with their work. The school has invested money in providing more classroom assistants who work alongside pupils in their lessons rather than taking them to work separately. Teachers and assistants designated to work with pupils with statements of special educational needs also work in this way. There is a down side to this. Although pupils with statements do receive specialised one-to-one help for short bursts of time where work is focused on meeting their specific needs, pupils on the special educational needs register, but without statements, do not get this type of help. Improvements in their reading and spelling, if these are their areas of difficulty, are happening at a slower rate than if they had targeted help. They are, therefore, not well placed to take full advantage of the GCSE courses offered by the school.
- 7 Standards in literacy are good overall. Pupils come to school with weaknesses in their reading and writing but teachers in several subjects help them to improve, particularly in Years 7 to 9. Many pupils, including some lower attainers and pupils with special educational needs, read with confidence and expression and enjoy their reading. In art, pupils are able to write about artists and to make notes. Pupils write creatively in science showing mastery of the use of adjectives. Pupils write good imaginative accounts of events in history. In geography, standards of literacy are very good because teachers give a high profile to this aspect of their work. Pupils use the technical language associated with geography with ease and are encouraged to use the library as part of their learning. Listening skills are very good in modern foreign languages, where because pupils listen well they are developing good accents in their spoken language. Many pupils are confident to speak out in class, although some pupils with special educational needs lack this oral confidence.
- 8 Standards of numeracy throughout the school are at least satisfactory and sometimes good. This is because pupils join the school with well-developed numeracy skills and many departments build on these skills in the way they work. Pupils in Year 7 mathematics lessons can perform mental calculations on numbers over 100 and estimate the accuracy of their answers with confidence. In science, the good number skills of most Year 7 pupils help them to draw accurate lines of best fit and then use them effectively to extrapolate information. Weaker pupils in Years 10 and 11, following an alternative accredited course, can use tables and graphs sufficiently well to be able to progress satisfactorily in the course. Better pupils of all ages in geography and science show numeracy skills at a high level. In all years groups they can use the most appropriate type of graph to represent data.
- 9 The school has recently invested money in increasing the number of computers available in the school. Pupils are now able to use them more often and teachers can now teach the full range of computer skills. In Years 7 to 9 word-processing skills are good. Most pupils can use a range of facilities to enhance their texts. They are also developing good skills in using animation. Their skills in using spreadsheets and databases are less well developed. Similarly, they are not well skilled in using additional equipment such as digital cameras and scanners. Most pupils spoken to did not know how to send an e-mail message. Because older pupils did not have their full experience lower down the school the overall standards of computer work in Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory.

Sixth form

- 10 Examination results in the sixth form have been declining since 1998 and are below the national average. In 2000, GNVQ results at both intermediate and advanced levels were below average. To some extent these results are an outcome of two factors: the school's willingness to allow all who want to study for advanced qualifications to do so, and some higher attaining students going elsewhere to study. However, in 2000, too many students did not do as well as they should have done on the basis of their GCSE results. The subjects where pupils significantly underachieved were economics, design and technology, biology and general studies. Results were also low in chemistry, history and mathematics. Results in art were excellent and in geography and physics were very good. They were satisfactory in English. Results in 2001 are below those in 2000, but most students who completed their courses without interruption did at least as well as and in some cases better than expected. Most students who join two-year advanced courses gain accreditation. A few students on one-year courses do not complete the course, often because they have successfully gained employment.
- 11 In lessons in the sixth form, students are making satisfactory progress and in all subjects are working at a standard that is at least in line with what would be expected for the course. In science and geography, they are making good progress and doing work that is of a high standard. In history, the work is of a very high standard showing very good progress.
- 12 Standards in the communication element of the key skills programme in Year 12 are satisfactory and in subjects like geography and history students are given plenty of opportunities to use these skills in debate and discussion. Standards of numeracy in key skills application of number courses are also satisfactory. However, opportunities to use and further develop these skills in other subjects are missed. For example, students in advanced vocational business education are given no opportunity to analyse graphical data, nor are students in advanced GCE economics asked to comment at more than a superficial level when presented with graphs of gross national product. Information and communication technology skills are not as high as they could be because of students' limited experiences lower down the school. Students do have opportunities to use computers to support their work in other subjects. The improved arrangements for the teaching of key skills this year should result in most students reaching Level 3. This will be an improvement on last year when students expressed concern that they had only reached Level 2 and that this was not recognised by some universities.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

Pupils' attitudes

- 13 Pupils' attitudes to school are good. They enjoy coming and taking part in all that it offers and are proud of their school. In a Year 7 science lesson, pupils were enthusiastic about making microscope slides but were sensible, going about their work quickly and quietly. Pupils are very good at maintaining their interest throughout lessons, as was seen in a Year 9 geography lesson on the Masai lifestyle. Pupils are less positive about initiating activities and are often passive in their attitudes unless directed.
- 14 Pupils respond very well to the opportunities in school to take responsibility and to help others. Year 11 pupils act as reading buddies each week to Year 7 pupils and, as well as listening to them read, help them to choose books and generally build up

good relationships. There are very good relationships with other pupils and also with their teachers. They participate in a wide range of activities with enthusiasm, from the regular sporting activities available to them every day to the year council meetings, seen when a large proportion of pupils turned up to offer their services.

Behaviour

- 15 Behaviour in and around school is very good. Pupils are very well behaved in lessons in the main school, slightly better in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11. Even when the lesson is not very stimulating, they listen quietly and do not disrupt the learning of others. Unsatisfactory behaviour is very rare. Behaviour around school is very good where large numbers of pupils are together, such as in social areas or in assemblies. Pupils move about the school in a mature and responsible manner. The environment is respected. There is no evidence of graffiti and no significant litter. In the demanding environment of the school dining hall on a wet day, pupils behaved in a mature, tolerant manner, with little need of staff supervision. The numbers of pupils excluded from school is not high and the school has not recently had cause to exclude any pupils permanently.

Attendance

- 16 Attendance is good and is higher than the national average. Unauthorised absence is low. Attendance at this stage of term is slightly lower than it could be because parents tend to take their children away on holiday at this time of year particularly. Pupils arrive punctually and lateness is not a problem and no time is wasted when pupils move to the next lesson.

Relationships

- 17 Relations between pupils, and pupils and staff, are very good. During the inspection week, pupils were helpful and courteous to visitors and greetings were cheerful and spontaneous.

Sixth form

- 18 Students are overwhelmingly positive about why they joined the sixth form. Their comments show loyalty and support for the school. They appreciate the quality of support and friendliness of their teachers and mostly have very good relationships with one another. They make a very good contribution to school life. Many of them help in subject areas for the benefit of many younger pupils and Year 13 run the drama club.
- 19 They support each other well in lessons as in a physical education session, for example, and can become fully involved, showing excellent concentration, as was seen in a Year 13 physics lesson. At other times, students are passive in lessons and do not make such positive contributions. They attend lessons conscientiously.
- 20 The school's approach to key skills and general studies has been to make these courses available for students if they want to follow them. Too many students did not wholeheartedly commit themselves to the courses and particularly in general studies took the examination without having participated in enough of the course. Consequently very few got the higher grades A and B and overall results were below the national average. This year students' progress in key skills is being carefully monitored and their commitment to their work is good.

- 21 A small number of pupils do not complete their sixth form courses. These students are mainly studying for GNVQ qualifications and find employment in the vocational area, sometimes as a result of their work placement. There are also a small number of students who experience personal difficulties and who do not regularly attend.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

- 22 The quality of the teaching is good. In over a quarter of lessons it is very good and occasionally excellent. Teaching is rarely unsatisfactory. This good quality has been sustained since the last inspection and the amount of very good teaching has been increased. There is more very good teaching in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11 and this is largely because younger pupils are encouraged to take an active part in their own learning. Sometimes in Years 10 and 11 teachers miss opportunities to involve pupils in discussions which will help them to express themselves more fluently both in speaking and in writing. The subjects where very good teaching is seen most often are art, English, geography, history, and modern foreign languages.
- 23 The major strengths in teaching are the very good relationships that have been established, which results in most pupils being prepared to work diligently, and the confidence that most teachers have in their own subject skills. Examples of this were seen in modern foreign languages where even lower attaining pupils concentrated hard in a lesson conducted entirely in German. They worked hard and made good progress. Pupils responded very well in an excellent Year 9 physical education lesson and in their rugby lessons because the pace and challenge of the lessons, both physically and mentally, energised them and made them want to give of their best.
- 24 In geography and history, the teachers have produced a curriculum that emphasises basic skills, particularly in literacy. They support pupils by revising key technical terms regularly, by using word banks and by giving them a range of different types of writing to attempt. This good practice occurs from Year 7 up to Year 11 and is rewarded with good GCSE examination results. Art teachers also generate a lot of discussion work and they give pupils the chance to make notes and to write at greater length about famous artists. The school is involved in implementing the new literacy strategy in Years 7 to 9. The teaching of the progress units to pupils with literacy problems is in its very early stages. Teachers are currently discussing the best way to pace the units so that the pupils get the maximum benefit from the time. Developments in the teaching of numeracy are less evident and because pupils have good numeracy skills they can apply their knowledge and skills in other subjects.
- 25 Many teachers use resources imaginatively. This was seen in Year 10 in food technology and in a lesson in music where the use of appropriate information and communication technology added to pupils enjoyment as well as to their understanding of the lessons. In English, teachers frequently provide good visual stimulus for pupils. For example in Year 10, lower attaining pupils were really enthused to write descriptively after discussing mementoes of the teacher's family. There are lively pieces of writing in science, which have been inspired by the teachers' readiness to allow pupils to express themselves creatively. Refreshingly, they write poems and other expressive pieces to explain scientific topics.

- 26 There is good use of day-to-day assessment in both key stages in the subjects where the teaching is very good. Marking is precise and detailed and makes pupils think for themselves and, when necessary, suggests a range of possible ways of developing their ideas. However, not enough is yet being done across all subjects to tell pupils about the levels they are working at or to set them specific targets which will help them to improve. Homework is regularly set and marked and helps pupils to learn to work independently. Many use the library at lunch times and they are good at finding out the information they require.
- 27 Pupils with special educational needs get very good support in class and teachers' questions involve them in many lessons. They are well integrated into group activities and are prepared to contribute to discussions. Sometimes the support in spelling and reading for those identified as struggling is not specific enough. In most lessons, teachers ensure that boys and girls are equally involved in lessons and they generally work well together in class except in a few sets where the boys heavily outnumber them. In these, the girls have a tendency to become withdrawn and are rather quiet.
- 28 Any lessons that were less than satisfactory were the result of poor management and a failure to plan in order to take account of the presence of difficult pupils. Some lessons judged to be satisfactory could have been improved by making the opening explanations more pithy, by telling pupils what they were going to learn and by starting the pupils on their work more promptly.
- 29 Teachers do not always plan for pupils to be actively involved in their learning and do not make enough use of such techniques as discussion work, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Pupils behave well, but too many expect the teacher to do most of the work and pupils' responses are often brief and undeveloped. Teachers' planning does not always identify the specific ways in which they can encourage pupils to use a wider range of language forms, such as formal debate or presentations.

Sixth form

- 30 In the sixth form teaching is very good overall. In almost half the lessons it is very good and in over eight in ten it is at least good. It is never less than satisfactory. Very good teaching is seen in most subjects. Teachers know their subjects very well and they involve the students in their learning more frequently than is seen in the main school. This results in lively lessons with students prepared to lead discussions and make presentations to others. This occurs in English with students leading discussions on the structure of language and on the linguistic devices used by playwrights.
- 31 Many students enter the sixth form with average levels of attainment, but most achieve well because of the structured and well-informed teaching that they receive. In a mathematics lesson on statistics, the teacher promoted a pleasant but very industrious atmosphere for work which resulted in highly productive students who, at the same time, enjoyed the lesson. This was also seen in a physics lesson on radio-activity where keen students took a major part in the lesson. Relationships are very good and result in students trying their best and most make good progress.
- 32 In a practical physical education lesson, students were fully involved by the teacher in looking at the short term effects of exercise on the body. They used role-play and were given the key words and other resources needed so that they could explore the issues for themselves. The same lively involvement occurs in health and social

care. In history, there is excellent use of homework to help students to practise a range of research skills.

- 33 The teaching of key skills is generally good though not consistently so across the subjects. Students' word-processing skills are well developed, but there are some inaccuracies in writing that should be eradicated. In a minority of lessons, there is too much reliance on text books and didactic teaching rather than allowing students to think for themselves. In these lessons there is insufficient challenge and some students say they are bored.
- 34 The very small number of students with special educational needs are well catered for and they make good progress because teachers give them very good support materials and extra time when required.
- 35 There is some good practice in the marking of students' work, particularly in English, but this is not universal yet. The major weakness is that, in most subjects, teachers have not yet established a system to assess their students' progress from GCSE so that they can judge the value that the teaching and learning adds to their work.

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

- 36 The curriculum reflects the school's equal opportunity policy, providing a wide range of opportunities to meet the needs of all pupils and meeting statutory requirements. A full range of GCSE courses is provided in Years 10 and 11, and in addition there are work related alternatives for those not wishing or able to study the full range of National Curriculum subjects.
- 37 Since the previous inspection the school has revised the curriculum structure to provide a better match to pupils' needs and moved to a 25-hour week to increase the teaching time. It has reduced the length of individual lessons to 60 minutes most of which take place in the morning to improve the pace of lessons and increase flexibility in the curriculum.
- 38 There are effective setting arrangements and the timetable enables appropriate grouping of pupils in mathematics and science in Year 7 with further setting in Years 8 and 9. Most pupils start a second foreign language in Year 8 and those who do not are able to work on their literacy skills through extra English lessons. A modular course of general studies in Year 7 provides further support for literacy and careers education. Careers education is also taught in Year 9. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good liaison with feeder primary schools ensures a smooth transition for these pupils and an appropriate programme of support in lessons. The school ensures that all pupils with special educational needs participate in lessons as much as possible. However, only pupils with statements are withdrawn from some lessons so that specialist teachers can address their specific needs. There are pupils on the special educational needs register that would also benefit from spending a small amount of time over a short period working on a one-to-one basis so that their specific needs could be addressed more quickly.
- 39 In Years 10 and 11 the range of subjects on offer covers the compulsory curriculum and includes rural science and child development. Pupils with special educational needs are able to follow a vocational course that is well matched to their needs, but there are no vocational courses on offer to other pupils. A small number of pupils

follow an alternative curriculum through a work-related project organised with Selby College. The provision of religious education and information and communication technology for those not following a full GCSE course is fragmented as these two subjects are taught on a rotation of modules.

- 40 The school has a policy for the teaching of literacy and strategies are satisfactory overall with some particularly good practice in geography, science, history, modern foreign languages and art. For most pupils their numeracy skills are not a barrier to their learning, but the strategies and development of numeracy skills across the curriculum are no more than satisfactory.
- 41 There is good provision overall for activities beyond the taught curriculum. These are excellent in physical education with an extensive range of sporting activities during lunchtimes, after school and Saturday team fixtures. Other subjects particularly music, art, design and technology and English also provide learning opportunities beyond the taught curriculum through clubs, theatre visits, instrumental groups and choirs. The school also runs the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme.
- 42 The school provides a satisfactory programme of personal, social and health education that includes sex education and drugs education. It also includes elements of citizenship. The time allocation for the elements taught by tutors, however, is limited to tutor time in Years 7 to 9 and it is impossible to do the planned course justice in that time. In Years 7 and 9 pupils receive careers education. Similarly, in Years 10 and 11 the modular course that includes religious education, citizenship, careers and ethics lacks continuity of experience with pupils studying aspects for just four weeks at a time on a rotational basis. Again, the course content is admirable but there is not enough time to cover the work.
- 43 The school has constructive links with the local community both through the programme of work placements, and also through its links in the management of the local community education programme. The programme of work placements is accredited by the local Business and Education partnership. The school has good links with its partner institutions, particularly its primary schools. These good links with primary schools ensure a smooth transition for pupils, particularly those with special educational needs. The school's sports facilities are used extensively by the local community and local primary schools.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

- 44 The school makes a good provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural education of the pupils. The richness of the provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is a testimony to the commitment and broad vision of education held by the staff of the school.

Spiritual development

- 45 The school's provision for the spiritual development of pupils is satisfactory. Many opportunities are provided for this development through the curriculum, assemblies and tutorial periods. In the curriculum, the main contribution to the pupils' spiritual development is through religious education. All pupils gain insight into the values and beliefs of the main world religions, notably Christianity but also others, such as Judaism, Hinduism and the Muslim faith. Since the last inspection, the school has sought to extend curriculum opportunities for spiritual development by each department developing a policy for it.

- 46 In assemblies and the tutorial periods, themes concerned with a pupil's spiritual, moral, social and cultural education are explored. Pupils often lead assemblies, producing assemblies that are valued by their fellow pupils. A Year 8 assembly on bullying was well scripted and well presented, at times movingly, by pupils. Some assemblies have moments of prayer, but collective worship does not take place in all assemblies or tutorial periods. The school cannot be said to comply with the statutory requirement to provide a daily collective act of worship for all pupils.

Moral development

- 47 The school's provision for the moral development of pupils is good and is made in a number of areas of the curriculum. Religious education again makes a major contribution, with moral issues being recurring themes throughout the course. Other subjects also make a significant contribution to pupils' moral development. In history, for example, pupils discuss the morality of the slave trade; in geography they explore moral issues concerning the environment. Business ethics are examined in business studies and in English literature, pupils consider the concepts of good and evil in Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*. Moral issues are central to the tutorial programme and the personal development course in Year 10. In these courses, the issue of racism is directly addressed. In the broader life of the school, there are clear expectations made of pupils, based on respect and caring for the individual and the environment. There is a clear code of conduct, a clear understanding of what is right and wrong and pupils respond well to these expectations.

Social development

- 48 The school's provision for social development is very good. The school has a caring environment based on mutual respect between members of the school community. Across the whole curriculum, pupils are offered opportunities to work together. There are some opportunities for pupils to show initiative and independence in their learning in subjects such as history and geography, but more could be made of this in other subjects. Physical education, music and drama make particular contribution to pupils' social development as co-operative working is essential for effective learning in these disciplines. Participation in the school's Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme also does much to develop teamwork and individual initiative.
- 49 Outside the curriculum, pupils are offered a number of opportunities to take responsibility and show initiative. Year 11 pupils take on responsibilities as prefects. Pupils in the same year take part in a paired reading scheme where they support younger pupils with reading difficulties. There are also year councils where senior pupils organise a whole range of social activities, with the support of staff. Care for others is also shown in fund-raising schemes. Allocation of space for social areas for pupils in Year 11 and the sixth form is an expression of trust by the school. The facilities are used well, with a sense of social responsibility justifying the trust placed in them. Membership of the district junior youth club, based on site, affords younger pupils the opportunity to be involved in activities with fellow pupils and develop their social skills.

Cultural development

- 50 The cultural development of pupils in the school is good. A wide range of subjects in the curriculum make an important contribution to pupils' cultural development by providing insights into other cultures. In religious education, for example, pupils learn about the customs and practices of other cultures through the study of the major world religions. In geography, the study of the Masai in Kenya shows pupils

differences in family life and values in different cultures. In English, Year 11 learn about cultural stereotypes. Visits to the school by Indian musicians and a Gamelon orchestra providing music workshops, visits by theatre groups for English and drama and visits by artists all provide rich cultural experiences.

- 51 The cultural and social development of pupils is further advanced by a number of extra-curricular activities, including visits and residential experiences, that contribute an additional social dimension.

Sixth form

- 52 The school's provision for post-16 education is satisfactory overall, but with many identifiable strengths. For example, the commitment to equality of opportunity is excellent and sixth form students enjoy attending school and are appreciative of the opportunities made available.
- 53 In the sixth form, courses are well matched to the needs of students. There is an open and flexible entry policy that welcomes all students wishing to pursue further study whether vocational or academic. The school takes great care to analyse pupils' requests in Year 11 as part of the process of matching courses to student needs and demands and ensuring continuity from Year 11. There are opportunities for students to study academic and vocational courses at advanced, intermediate and foundation levels as well as the opportunity to take up new courses of study.
- 54 All students have the opportunity to develop their key skills. Opportunities are provided through after-school classes in mathematics for students to improve upon their GCSE results. The personal interest and education programme provides enrichment through work experience, work shadowing, community service and physical recreation as well as visiting speakers.
- 55 The school works hard as one of the principal post-16 schools in the area to ensure that courses can continue to meet student needs and circumstances, often balancing small group costs with the need for continuity of opportunity. There is a comprehensive programme of tutorial support and guidance on career and higher education opportunities. The statutory requirement to provide religious education for all sixth form students is not met and there is no provision at all for collective worship in the sixth form.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

- 56 The school gives high priority to the care of its pupils and provides a secure and welcoming environment in which all can learn. Parents feel that their children are happy at school.
- 57 Pupils are well cared for through the pastoral system. There are good systems to ensure all aspects of pupils' health and safety. Proper attention is paid to child protection. A particularly strong feature is the way that information on pupils relating to their pastoral care is shared with all staff. This takes place at daily staff meetings and also through the staff, so that all pupils are disadvantaged as little as possible by any problems they may have. The school nurse operates a weekly drop-in clinic for those who want to talk to her and the office staff keep a close watch on any pupils who are not well.
- 58 There are very thorough procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance. The school is not complacent about its good attendance figures and heads of year

check registers every day, making prompt contact with parents directly if there are any concerns. Year groups have weekly awards for the class with the best attendance. The educational social worker visits the school each week and meets each head of year to discuss any problems.

- 59 There are clear and effective procedures for monitoring pupils' behaviour and discouraging anything unacceptable. Good behaviour and effort are encouraged with commendations that can be used to get simple, practical rewards, such as pens and rulers, that appeal to the younger pupils particularly. Good records are kept of any behaviour that may lead to exclusion both on and off the site although the school does not have to exclude many pupils. Pupils feel that there is always someone they can go to if they have a problem over bullying, for example, and such problems are well dealt with by staff.
- 60 The school's arrangements for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are satisfactory and are much as was seen at the last inspection. Pupils' results from external tests and examination are now being recorded centrally, starting with the tests taken at the end of Year 6 in primary school through to GCSE. This process is at an early stage of development. Apart from this, individual pupils' attainment is not recorded in a way that gives heads of year an accessible view of their progress so that they can identify weak areas and take any action required. There is a clear whole-school policy for assessment, recording and reporting, but in practice there is some variation between departments in how assessment is carried out. Some very good practice of this is seen, particularly in geography, history and science. In these subjects, teachers use National Curriculum levels and share the information with pupils. In science, for example, pupils are involved in recording what they know they can do at every stage. In information and communication technology, however, it is not clear how pupils know what progress they are making. The use of assessment by teachers to inform the planning of the curriculum is also satisfactory, but with some particularly effective practice seen in history and geography.
- 61 All pupils have good support at stages of transition through school from Year 6 in primary school until they leave or move on to post-16 education. Pupils do have good one-to-one advice in Years 10 and 11 related to work experience and career choices that support them in their personal development. Their contributions to the support of other pupils through voluntary schemes, such as Year 11 pupils being reading buddies with Year 7 pupils, are recognised by giving them privileges such as the use of their own social area. The limited time that tutors have in the morning tutorial periods is well used to give pupils personal support.

Sixth form

Assessment

- 62 The quality of assessment is good in English, mathematics, geography, physics, history and within GNVQ courses. It is not so strong in other subjects. In most subjects, teachers monitor students' work carefully and regularly inform them about their progress. Target setting based on what they can do and what they need to do next in their work is satisfactory with some good practice seen in geography, history, physics, mathematics and art. In history, there is good use of data to set targets, but not enough work has been done in conjunction with other departments to evaluate the results of students in all the subjects that they study. At present data analysis is not embedded as a management tool across the entire sixth form. Although tutors give freely of their time to help students, there is not enough tracking of students'

progress overall by tutors so that any difficulties are picked up and personal support provided.

Advice, support and guidance

- 63 Students in the sixth form are given good advice on which courses to choose from the wide range of courses on offer and which relate to the careers they would like to follow. This follows on from the good support they received in the main school and is part of the very effective induction they have into the sixth form. Sixth form staff particularly are generous with the time they give to support and advise students informally. Students have less effective access to formal advice once they start their courses as they only meet their tutors once a fortnight and do not have individual mentors.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

- 64 Parents' views of the school are positive in many respects. They feel particularly that the school is well led and managed, that teaching is good and teachers have high expectations of their children. A significant number of parents, more usually parents of those children who had only been in school a year or so, feel less well informed about their children's progress than they should be and feel that the school does not work closely with them.
- 65 The quality of information that parents receive from the school is satisfactory. Parents do receive good quality information, both formal and informal, such as the prospectus, the governors' annual report and the regular and informative newsletters. The school involves members of the Friends of the School Association on educational matters as well as their fund-raising and social activities. Direct communication with parents is good in some respects, such as that by heads of year about attendance. Some parents, particularly those of younger pupils, were concerned that because of floods last year they did not have the opportunity to find out in detail how their children are doing until very late in the year. Reports to parents are not clear enough about what their children are achieving in relation to the National Curriculum or how they could improve in specific areas.
- 66 Parents support the school well and are keenly involved in their children's learning. Some are active and interested parent governors and others take part enthusiastically in the Friends' Association for the benefit of the school. Several take up the offer every year of volunteering to help in school in a variety of ways, such as working in the library, listening to readers or accompanying pupils on trips. The school's planners are appreciated as parents know what homework their children should be doing each day and they can also be used for making comments to tutors. Parents would like to be able to speak to staff directly at the end of the school day rather than having to leave a recorded telephone message. Care is taken by the school to pass on and follow up messages as soon as possible, but sometimes teachers cannot always respond first thing the next day if they are teaching.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

- 67 The quality of leadership and management of the school is good. The previous report commented favourably on the quality of leadership offered by the headteacher and the chair of the governing body, but emphasised that the school's management structure needed revising and that planning at both whole-school level and in departments needed strengthening. Management structures have been significantly

revised and improved. The senior management team is now smaller and this has led to financial economies and improved consultation procedures.

- 68 Opportunities for consultation have also been improved through the further development of the senior management team and departmental links. These changes have benefited planning at both whole-school level and in departments. Planning procedures are very good and are very well supported by the governing body. The school development plan is detailed and it has helped departments to focus on key issues in their own planning. These developments since the last inspection have enabled the school to become an even more harmonious community in which pupils feel secure and well supported. The school has a long established programme for monitoring the work of departments, but it relies on this programme too much and has not broadened its approach to ensure that outcomes of its policies are properly and thoroughly evaluated. Departments are required to collect and analyse data, but senior management does not analyse this information enough. At the moment, therefore, senior management does not identify areas for development or allocate resources to specific strategies designed to improve the quality of outcomes and especially academic results.
- 69 The way in which governors fulfil their responsibilities is good. Except for the provision of an act of daily worship and the arrangements for the teaching of religious education in the sixth form, all statutory requirements are met. The governing body has considerable support from the local community and parents and the school has a list of people who would like to serve as either parent or co-opted governors. Governors meet regularly and the support they offer the school in achieving its objectives is very good. The information they receive about the school's work, or obtain for themselves, is good and they have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. However, they do not sufficiently evaluate the information they receive in order to judge the success of financial decisions and to determine future priorities.
- 70 The headteacher gives good educational leadership. The action plan to deal with issues raised at the last inspection was detailed and the regular and systematic monitoring of progress has meant that almost all points raised in the last inspection have been tackled successfully. The senior management team functions well as a democratic body with a clear vision of the school's priorities and how they might be achieved. Their work has been instrumental in enhancing the school's reputation as a harmonious community in which pupils and students feel secure in their work and which they like attending. The senior management team has improved its monitoring of pupils' results across all subjects, but more work remains to be done. At present senior managers are not providing a sufficiently clear lead on how subjects can use performance data to evaluate their work; improve strategies for teaching and learning; or to set pupils targets that are realistic yet challenging. Prior to the inspection, the school's senior managers had little quantifiable evidence to show the extent that pupils and students had progressed in their studies in relation to their starting points. The use of value-added data, especially in the sixth form, is still at an embryonic stage, although the history department already has some good practice. Such strategies will enable more accurate analysis of outcomes, will help the school to identify good practice within individual departments and will further strengthen the school's commitment to celebrating the successes of all who work and study in the school.
- 71 The management of subjects is, for the most part good; none is unsatisfactory overall. The management of the geography and history departments is very good. What marks these two subjects out is their careful monitoring of provision, especially

teaching, and their evaluation of the outcomes that individual pupils and students achieve. Consequently, they focus on how effective learning opportunities can be provided for all pupils. In all areas of the curriculum, better use could be made of national performance data to measure the progress of pupils and students of different abilities against national patterns. In many areas of the school's work, the use of new technology is not used enough as a teaching aid, especially to stimulate research skills, and as an aid to helping staff with management responsibilities to analyse and interpret trends in examination data.

Staffing

- 72 Staffing is good. Teachers are well qualified and there is a good match of teachers to the classes they teach in almost all departments. There are well-established procedures in place for the induction of newly qualified teachers and in providing placements during initial teacher training. Few supply staff are needed and most have experience in the school. The school's policy for performance management has been implemented and individual targets set for all teachers. There is a good pupil-teacher ratio that helps contribute to the very good relationships between teachers and pupils throughout the school. The problem of insufficient technical support mentioned in the previous report has been addressed.

Accommodation

- 73 Accommodation is good. The school now has its own contracts for cleaning and grounds maintenance. As a result the school is clean and the grounds are not only well maintained, but done so to prioritise curriculum requirements, particularly for physical education. Whilst accommodation is good in most curriculum areas, food technology and resistant materials rooms need refurbishing. There is not enough storage place in information and communication technology. Whilst the prefabricated rooms in mathematics are spacious, there is no central area for either resources or staff to meet. The library is spacious, with modern furniture and provides a pleasant working environment. A new permanent classroom block is scheduled to be built.

Resources

- 74 There is a satisfactory range of learning resources to support the teaching of the curriculum. Resources in geography, history, religious education, art and physical education are good. There are not enough resources to support pupils with special educational needs when they are working individually with support staff.
- 75 The library presents a good learning environment, which is well used. The library stock, including the careers library, is good. It provides good supporting materials for physical education and history, but the book stocks to support information and communication technology (ICT) and the graphics element of the A level design and technology are inadequate. The adjacent areas, equipped with computer facilities, including some with Internet access, are good facilities, which are well used, both in and out of lessons. The overall level of ICT resources is good. The establishment of three fully equipped rooms has improved accessibility, a point raised in the previous report.

Efficiency

- 76 The strategic use made of resources allocated to the school is good and the budgetary systems and routine financial management are very good. The school's bursar, who also serves on the governing body, has a very good understanding of all necessary procedures and is adept at keeping all relevant parties informed. The school's overall financial management systems also benefit from the considerable professional experience that some governors are able to offer. The effectiveness of day-to-day financial management is also witnessed by the very good reports offered by the school's auditors. Specific grants, such as those made available for special educational needs and enhanced post-16 funding, are used appropriately. Careful financial planning by the governors has also ensured that a recent period of financial uncertainty has been managed well with no undue pressures being placed on the daily work of the school. Though reserves have fallen, the governors can now show that the financial future is more optimistic and this is reflected in their own planning.
- 77 Though the governing body displays many strengths, they have been reluctant to challenge the school's management to justify various outcomes and they need to develop their role as a 'critical friend'. For example, although the governors were aware that the sixth form has been receiving a small subsidy from other parts of the school and that there are small numbers of students in some classes, they did not question the efficiency of the sixth form in the light of declining results. The governors should be fulfilling this critical function to ensure that spending decisions can be defended even when some of the outcomes, such as declining results, might not seem to be advantageous to students and the school.
- 78 The principles of best value are applied to good effect overall and to a satisfactory level in the sixth form. It is the sixth form in particular that governors need to be more questioning, for example, about results and class sizes. The school's strength is in consulting with its stakeholders and it is keen to seek changes where possible on the views expressed. One area where the principles of best value could be improved is in the school's use of new technology. The use of information and communication technology is not having an equally strong impact yet on all subjects.
- 79 Overall, though the school receives more money than the national average per pupil, it is effective in that many pupils and students leave school with better results than would be expected from their attainments on entry. Teaching is good overall, with many very good features. The curriculum is also suitable and in the sixth form is very good. The school is successful in building on the harmonious and supportive ethos identified in the last inspection. Although further improvements are possible, especially with regarding to using data as a means of securing better examination results, the school provides good value for money.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

- 80 Many students leave the sixth form with results that are better than those that might have been expected on entry and this outcome offers many of them suitable pathways for progression to further and higher education and to the world of work. Though strong features can be identified, there exists much potential for improvement. The sixth form is cost effective, but it does receive a small subsidy from the rest of the school. The sixth form is growing, the quality of teaching is very good, but improvements in standards are occurring at a slow pace. While staffing

and accommodation are good, insufficient attention is presently given to policies designed to improve standards of academic performance. There is not enough emphasis on the analysis of examination data to ensure that the quality of teaching and learning is good enough to maximise the potential of all students in the school's sixth form.

Resources

- 81 Resources for the sixth form are good and will be further improved by the development of the sixth form study area with computer facilities.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- 82 As the school is a good school there are only four key issues that are to do with making improvements in areas where work has already begun. By addressing these issues the standards that the school achieves by the end of Year 11 and in the sixth form should be as good as those achieved at the end of Year 9.

- (1) Introduce procedures to check pupils' progress regularly across all their subjects. (Paragraphs 26, 60 and 70)
- (2) Plan lessons to provide more opportunities for pupils to be actively involved in their learning. (Paragraphs 22, 29, 88, 108, 112, 124, 125 and 127)
- (3) Introduce systematic monitoring and evaluation of strategic decisions and priorities to identify good practice and what needs to be improved. (Paragraphs 68, 69 and 77)
- (4) Ensure that pupils have a record of what they have achieved in using information and communication technology. (Paragraphs 145 and 147)

Sixth form

- (1) Improve attainment in general studies, economics and in intermediate vocational courses. (Paragraphs 10, 206, 207, 210 and 218)
- (2) Ensure that all teaching in the sixth form is equally effective in involving and motivating students. (Paragraphs 33, 80, 189, 196, 201 and 206)
- (3) Make greater use of assessment information on students to check their progress and plan appropriate action to support them. (Paragraphs 35 and 62)
- (4) Provide for religious education as is required by law. (Paragraphs 55 and 69)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7– 11	132
	Sixth form	46
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		65

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 – 11							
Number	3	33	49	45	1	1	0
Percentage	2	25	37	34	1	1	0
Sixth form							
Number	2	19	18	7	0	0	0
Percentage	4	41	40	15	0	0	0

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	850	103
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	55	n/a

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	23	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	182	3

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	20
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	28

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.7
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	2000	79	69	148

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	58	59	67
	Girls	54	48	49
	Total	112	107	116
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	76 (46)	72 (69)	78 (67)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	24 (14)	48 (38)	49 (31)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	50	59	70
	Girls	47	51	57
	Total	97	110	127
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	66 (60)	74 (72)	86 (76)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	32 (21)	37 (39)	36 (36)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	80	64	144

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	36	72	76
	Girls	32	56	61
	Total	68	128	137
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	47 (54)	89 (91)	95 (98)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6 (95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	37 (39.9)
	National	38.4 (38)

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

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	36	32	68

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	14.6	14.6	14.6 (15.4)	2	4	3 (4)
National	17.8	18.6	18.2 (17.9)	2.6	2.9	2.7 (2.8)

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	19
	National	76.5

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	1
White	952
Any other minority ethnic group	0

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	49	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	58
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.7

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	13
Total aggregate hours worked per week	223

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	77
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13

Key Stage 3	25.5
Key Stage 4	20.9
Sixth form	10.5

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001
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	£
Total income	2,386,956
Total expenditure	2,417,517
Expenditure per pupil	2,678
Balance brought forward from previous year	99,829
Balance carried forward to next year	69,268

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	1.5
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	10.3

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

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

22%

Number of questionnaires sent out

953

Number of questionnaires returned

211

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	39	54	5	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	40	50	2	1	7
Behaviour in the school is good.	22	59	3	1	15
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	20	61	13	2	4
The teaching is good.	22	69	1	0	8
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	15	55	20	4	6
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	37	51	8	3	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	50	45	2	0	3
The school works closely with parents.	18	50	23	3	6
The school is well led and managed.	31	58	6	2	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	30	59	5	0	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	33	47	9	3	8

Other issues raised by parents

There were 25 parents at the parents' meeting. The vast majority of responses were very positive about the school, particularly about the standards pupils reach and the high expectations of work and behaviour. Concern was expressed about the lack of computers in the school until recently. For a few parents communication was an issue because they did not get a quick response to messages they had left.

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

ENGLISH

The quality of provision in English is good. The provision for drama in Key Stage 4 is also good.

Strengths

- Pupils achieve well in examinations, especially at the age of 14.
- There is consistently good teaching in all year groups in school.
- The largely new team of teachers share a clear vision for the future and work closely together.
- Teachers make good use of the analysis of examination performance to sharpen the focus of their lesson planning.

Areas for improvement

- Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are not involved in discussions at any length or given the opportunities to use a wider range of language styles.

- 83 There was very good improvement from 1999 to 2000 in tests taken at the end of Year 9. In 2001 progress was maintained overall with a large proportion of pupils gaining above the expected standard. Pupils come into school at age 11 with poorly developed writing skills, but many have made good progress by the end of Year 9. The performance of boys and girls reflects what boys and girls achieve nationally.
- 84 In GCSE English and English literature, pupils achieve well though the progress here is not as marked as it is in Years 7 to 9. Results in 2001 were not as high as the previous year, but this had been anticipated from the performance of pupils in their tests at the age of 14. In 2000, boys had done exceptionally well in English literature with almost as many gaining A* to C as the girls, well above the national average. This was not sustained into 2001. Standards in drama at GCSE are good. Results were well above the national average in 2001 with almost all the girls who entered gaining at least a grade C.
- 85 Standards seen in lessons in Years 7 to 9 are above average. This is a good achievement considering their low attainment in writing on entry. Pupils listen very well, especially to stories told to them by their teachers and to others in the class when they relate their experiences. They work well in groups and have a good rapport with their teachers. Pupils in lower attaining sets are expected to work hard and teachers support their discussion on a challenging short story with good use of guidance notes and writing frameworks. Reading is good and teachers provide regular opportunities for pupils to practise in class. There is a wide and interesting supply of fiction and non-fiction in the library and pupils receive sympathetic and well-informed support from the librarian. The library is often full at lunch-times with pupils using reference material for their research. Girls and boys show keen interest when talking about their choice of books.
- 86 In Year 7 many pupils lack confidence in their writing, but good teaching helps them to become more fluent by the age of 14. Pupils have good ideas and express themselves well. Sometimes their expression suffers from a lack of clarity of thought, but generally they have a good sense of what their audience wants. Some Year 9

pupils produced lively and original fairy stories with imaginative vocabulary. In the excitement of writing, some lost control of paragraphs but teachers picked this up in their marking and gave suggestions for them to consider. Special educational needs pupils are given good support in lessons in all aspects of their work both by their teachers and support staff. They make good progress.

- 87 Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have a good understanding of literature and can describe how language conveys mood and character. Reading continues to be at least sound and sometimes good. Drama makes a good contribution to pupils' confidence in speaking and listening and in reading. In Year 10 drama, pupils apply their knowledge of conventions learned in an earlier lesson to devise ideas for presenting improvisations based on a ballad. The teacher helped them by involving herself in the role-play. In Year 11, they talk with a good understanding of their interpretations of Shakespearean scenes. Listening skills overall are good and pupils behave well. Some of the less motivated pupils lose interest if the introduction to lessons is too long. Girls in classes with a large majority of boys are often inhibited and achieve less well in lessons. Higher attaining pupils write very well and many are good at evoking the right atmosphere in their stories. For example, descriptive writing of a journey to Disneyland evokes very clear images: "The base of the sky blue towers, draped like circus tents, are surrounded by pristine lawns and fabulous cubed bushes. Period creatures greet the onlooker..." Pupils of all abilities try hard in their literature work. They show good knowledge of the main themes of their set books. Teachers provide useful writing frames to guide them. There is good analysis by pupils of the mood created by Steinbeck in *Of Mice and Men* with relevant quotations in support.
- 88 The main weakness in speaking and listening is that pupils rarely develop spoken answers beyond a sentence or two. They are better in Years 7 and 8, but many lose the will to do so beyond Year 9. Teachers miss some opportunities in lessons to stray from the text and allow pupils the freedom to talk about things they know well. When this does happen, for example relating anecdotes about themselves, it works well. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 do not have enough opportunity for more planned formal structured debates.
- 89 The quality of teaching is never less than satisfactory. It is at least good in the large majority of lessons and very good in just over a quarter of lessons. All lessons have well-structured openings and good summaries to make clear to the pupils where they are going and what has been achieved. Teachers provide good models for writing, which stimulate even those who find writing difficult. For instance, in a lesson with lower attaining pupils in Year 10, the teacher showed and talked about a collection of pictures and stories of her relatives, which gave pupils a helpful start in drafting their own descriptions. Support staff are flexibly and efficiently deployed in most lessons where they appear and they offer help to many in the class. Teachers are good at linking pupils' ideas in discussions, but do not always leave them enough time to think for themselves, although in drama pupils are given plenty of scope to fashion their own ideas more.
- 90 The new strategy to teach progress units in literacy in Year 7 is at a very early stage and teachers are currently discussing how to make the material fit the needs of their pupils with the maximum effect. The management of the department with a large number of new teachers is good with some very good features. For instance, the work done to produce teaching units for a range of activities, such as information and communication technology and drama, is leading to the effective sharing of ideas across the department. The analysis of test results at the end of Year 9 has resulted in more focused teaching of how to infer from texts in Year 9. Marking is uniformly

good. There have been good improvements since the last inspection in teaching, in the examination results and in the implementation of a whole-school literacy policy. Although not yet embraced fully by all departments, there is evidence of good work, for example, in history, geography, science and art.

MATHEMATICS

Overall, the quality of provision is satisfactory.

Strengths

- Results in statutory National Curriculum tests in Year 9 have been consistently in line with or above the national average in recent years.
- The proportion of Year 9 pupils attaining very high grades is good.
- Standards of work in lessons in Years 10 and 11 are at least in line with national expectation. They are often better than expected for average and lower attaining pupils.
- Teaching is always at least satisfactory. It is very good in Year 7.
- The behaviour of pupils and their attitudes to work are very good.
- The department is managed well.

Areas for improvement

- Too few pupils attain grades A*-C.
- Higher attaining pupils in Year 9 need to be taught to generalise and predict when solving problems.
- Apart from in Year 7 teaching styles are too limited, with too much reliance on the use of textbooks.
- Teachers do not share the learning objectives or pupils' targets sufficiently with pupils.
- Approaches to teaching do not generate enthusiasm in pupils for the subject.
- Opportunities for extra-curricular activities in the form of mathematics clubs or challenges do not exist at the moment.

- 91 In 2000, the proportion of pupils aged 14 achieving and exceeding the nationally expected standard was above average. These results reflect achievement at least in line with schools that have pupils with similar attainment on entry and similar home circumstances. In 2001, results were maintained at the same levels. Overall, in these tests, boys attain consistently higher than girls. Results are above those in English and below those in science. Attainment in lessons in current Year 9, however, whilst broadly in line with national expectation, does not quite match the above-average standard seen in recent examinations, particularly for higher attaining pupils. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls in lessons.
- 92 In 2000, the proportion of pupils aged 16 gaining GCSE grades A*-C was below the national average. However, boys attained above their national average whilst girls attained well below. In 2001, results declined and there was almost no difference between the attainment of boys and girls. The proportions of boys and girls attaining grades A*-G have been consistently in line with national averages over recent years. Results are now below those in English and science and most other subjects in the school. They are also below those in similar schools. Standards in lessons in both Year 10 and Year 11, however, are at least in line with national expectation, particularly for average and below average attaining pupils.
- 93 By the age of 14, above-average pupils are working on polygons. In one lesson, pupils in a top group in Year 9 showed accuracy in calculating the size of each angle

in regular polygons with different numbers of sides. The eventual aim of the teacher, to be achieved in the follow up lesson, was to teach the pupils a formula to calculate angle size as the number of sides increases. However, too much direction was given. These potentially very high attaining pupils were not given the opportunity to plan their own strategy that would improve their capacity to reach a high standard in investigative work. They spent too much time drawing and measuring following low-level structured tasks instigated by the teacher.

- 94 Pupils of the same age in a bottom group estimate the height of a pole using an estimate of how many times it looks taller than a man. Whilst the majority of pupils arrived at a sensible answer, few of these made a judgement on whether the estimate was realistic. The practice of working too often from textbooks also inhibited them from applying the same technique to estimating the length of their desk by comparing its length to that of a ruler. Pupils with special educational needs achieve in line with other pupils in the same class because of extra help from a support assistant and the teacher, both of whom showed awareness of the needs of particular pupils. The well-planned structure and gentle pace at the start of the lesson was suitable to build skills and confidence initially for these pupils in the lower group. However, opportunities were missed later in the lesson to allow them to reinforce their understanding by extending the activities to their immediate environment. Whilst teachers manage pupils well in Year 9, lessons often lack challenge. Teachers tend not to share learning objectives with their pupils, who understandably show little enthusiasm for mathematics.
- 95 Overall, standards in Year 9 are not as good as results in National Curriculum tests in the last two years. The best current Year 9 pupils will need to make significantly faster progress than at present to reach the levels of understanding seen in work from the previous cohort in trigonometry, compound probability and correlation. Standards of numeracy are satisfactory.
- 96 Teaching seen in Year 7 was very good, drawing upon the best elements of the new framework for teaching mathematics. Teachers make good use of the very good relationships they have with pupils and the very good behaviour to stimulate pupils in these mixed ability classes. In a very good lesson on place value, a competition required pupils to place digits drawn at random within five boxes in a subtraction calculation to obtain either the largest or smallest answer. An element of probability and fun was now brought into the activity to reinforce earlier learning. As a consequence, the pupils, without exception, mastered the now secondary concept of place value and most significant figure. This would normally be a commendable standard for a mixed ability class at the start of Year 8.
- 97 Starter activities are used very effectively to capture the imagination of pupils in Year 7. In a lesson on line symmetry, the teacher, like a magician, had the class spellbound by first folding a sheet of paper vertically then horizontally and making a small diagonal cut in the corner. The pupils made a good attempt at drawing the resulting effect on the unfolded paper. By working through a carefully graduated worksheet, pupils achieved the highest individual standards within the time available. All pupils showed understanding of reflectional symmetry in two diagonal straight lines and the very best found methods of arranging square boxes to conform to given conditions of symmetry. The pupils in the class demonstrated confidence and standards of approximately one year above their ages.
- 98 By the age of 16 pupils attain at least in line with the national average. In particular, pupils in a lower set in Year 11 demonstrated a sound understanding of congruence. In an enjoyable activity using a cut out three-by-three T-shape on tracing paper, they

worked with great perseverance to determine how many ways they could fit the shape into squares of different sizes. The teacher showed expertise by firstly requiring them to attempt the smaller square only. Once the class had succeeded, she shared the entire objective with them, which was to arrive eventually at a formula relating to the size of the square. Pupils then determined their own strategy of tracing a cut-out, plotting a table of their results and then looking for a pattern. Achieving a higher standard than could have reasonably been expected in using and applying mathematics, some pupils almost discovered a pattern. The fundamental objective, that of reinforcing the concept of congruence, itself a level of understanding normally associated with at least average attaining pupils, was clearly achieved. The teacher's high expectations and patience in guiding rather than telling, had won the day.

- 99 Average attaining pupils understand Pythagoras' theorem sufficiently to calculate the hypotenuse in straightforward questions from the textbook. They lack the higher level of thought required to apply the inverse of the formula, particularly in real life problems. They draw cumulative frequency distributions accurately, but only the higher attaining pupils interpret information from them and demonstrate total understanding when questions are asked in a variety of ways. Pupils in the top group almost always display competence with higher-level work, such as solving quadratic equations and drawing graphs. Occasionally, some of these fail to think at the highest levels, such as understanding the relationships between algebra and graphs. Standards of numeracy are satisfactory.
- 100 Teaching is always satisfactory in Year 10 and Year 11. Whilst teachers expect high standards of behaviour and help pupils to learn by building concepts in a structured manner, they often neglect to encourage pupils to estimate, devise strategies for themselves or check answers using alternative methods. This is particularly true for the most able pupils. This is partly the reason why good attitudes to learning rarely lead to an enthusiasm for mathematics in lessons or a sufficiently high take up rate to advanced courses in the sixth form. However, teaching has improved since the previous inspection.
- 101 Teachers set suitable homework and mark books regularly. They often give clear advice for improvement in written comments. They rarely encourage pupils, however, by referring to levels of work or targets on a class or individual basis during lessons.
- 102 Management of the department is good and leadership is satisfactory. The head of department leads by example in teaching and supports colleagues well in maintaining pupils' discipline. More direction needs to be shown, however, with schemes of work, numeracy starter activities, targeting a wider variety of teaching styles including the use of information and communication technology. There are no opportunities for extra-curricular activities such as clubs or entry to national challenges in mathematics. Accommodation overall is satisfactory. However, whilst individual rooms are large and present a pleasant working environment, the use of prefabricated classrooms and lack of a central office and resources area is not conducive to developing team spirit or informal opportunities to share good practice. New accommodation is planned.

SCIENCE

Overall, the quality of provision for science is good.

Strengths

- A well-led team of hardworking committed staff with considerable subject expertise.
- Pupils' positive attitudes to work and their good behaviour.
- Systems for tracking pupils' progress in all years and setting targets for the future.
- Many opportunities for developing the skills of writing and numeracy.
- Information and communication technology is used to support teaching.

Areas for improvement

- More opportunities in lessons for all pupils to think for themselves.
- The proportion of higher grades attained by pupils both at GCSE and in some A-level subjects.

- 103 Standards attained by pupils in the national tests at age 14 have risen each year for the last four years. During this period they have been well above the national average. Boys have attained slightly more of the higher levels than girls over the last two years. The results were well above similar schools in 2000, an improvement on the previous year when they were in line.
- 104 At GCSE, pupils take different courses. A single group, usually consisting of many more boys than girls, takes three separate sciences. Over the last three years the number of pupils attaining the higher grades A*-C has fallen, with variations within the subjects. The few girls who take these subjects have attained the higher grades A*-C in each subject up to and including 2000.
- 105 The majority of pupils take double award science. Results have been close to those attained nationally for all years except 2000 when there was a drop in the number of pupils attaining the higher grades A*-C. In 2001, grades improved again. A very small group of pupils take single award science. Girls attain more of the higher grades than boys in all science subjects. However, in 2000 the results obtained by boys in biology, physics and double award were significantly better than those they achieved in other subjects in the school.
- 106 The school and department have done much analysis of the results of each pupil and now use the levels and grades obtained in national tests to predict pupils' expected attainment at the end of the next stage. This has shown that many pupils are attaining levels in science subjects above that expected, particularly in national tests at aged 14 and in A-level subjects. This, together with systems for assessing attainment within each year, ensures that both staff and pupils know what has been achieved and where they are aiming for.
- 107 Standards seen in lessons in the main reflect the overall attainment at the end of each key stage. Up to the age of 14, pupils are attaining above the level expected in over half the lessons. In a mixed ability group in Year 7 looking at the processes of pollination and fertilisation in plants, almost all pupils were able to use the correct biological terms to describe the sequence of events leading to seed formation. This demonstrates attainment at a level above that expected by age 14. Attainment in the lessons for GCSE courses is more in line with that expected nationally, with only those pupils in the higher ability sets attaining above expectation. Within the different

A-level lessons seen, all students were attaining in line with course expectations except in physics where they were above.

- 108 There is a direct relationship between the progress pupils make and the demands made of them by teachers. When realistic and attainable demands are made and teachers use stimulating materials, all pupils achieve beyond expectations. For example, a computer simulation of an industrial process allowed Year 10 pupils to understand how changing pressure and temperature can alter the yield of ammonia. This is achievement above that expected at the start of a GCSE course. However, when pupils are not challenged sufficiently to think for themselves then progress is only satisfactory. For example, Year 9 pupils learning about mixing colours of light spent time drawing and colouring in diagrams and were not given the opportunity to predict what colours would be obtained after mixing. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress when teachers match the work with their needs by, for instance, using additional resources. Since the last inspection more resources have been produced or purchased and these have helped provide work at correct levels. Conversely, when all pupils in a mixed ability group are given the same resources, those with special educational needs do not achieve as well as they might.
- 109 The overall standard of teaching is good with all lessons satisfactory or better. Very good teaching was seen up to the end of Year 9 and in the sixth form. In the sixth form, all lessons were good or better, with one excellent lesson in Year 13 physics.
- 110 Very good teaching was seen with both mixed ability Year 7 classes and top set Year 8 classes. All teachers have very secure subject knowledge and use it to present different types of questions. When these questions challenge pupils to think, they learn well. Usually each lesson is set in the context of previous work so pupils are clear where the new work fits in. In addition, each year pupils are given a course booklet listing the content of units of work, together with word banks and formulae. Pupils can use these to assess their progress, but teachers and pupils do not use them enough for reference in lessons. Many practical activities are used to illustrate scientific theory and the team of science technicians supports teachers very well.
- 111 Homework is set regularly and relates to the work covered in the lesson. Sometimes the tasks allow pupils to develop and extend their understanding of a particular topic, for example, by research into the effect humans have on the environment or writing at length. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly with corrections and give grades with reward stamps for younger pupils. However, many staff do not give pupils enough pointers for improvement.
- 112 Teachers expect and receive high standards of behaviour from pupils. This results in calm, well-ordered lessons. Many lessons consist of a long teacher input and this gives pupils insufficient opportunities to work in groups and discuss their ideas with one another. The skills of speaking and reporting are underdeveloped at present. However, there are plenty of opportunities given for pupils to work creatively on literacy within aspects of science, such as poems about the path of a sound wave or a newspaper report about the history of chemical elements. Similarly, when analysing and evaluating scientific investigations pupils are given opportunity to demonstrate mathematical and graphical skills and to write at length.
- 113 The strong leadership from the head of department supported by staff has moved the department forward since the last inspection. A range of courses leading to external certification at age 16 provides for the full ability range with additional subjects such as rural studies. The lack of opportunities for using computers in lessons mentioned in the previous inspection has greatly improved with the purchase of new hardware,

software and training for all staff. Teachers are more aware of the needs of different pupils, both high attainers and those needing extra support, and most tailor their lessons accordingly.

ART AND DESIGN

Overall, the quality of provision is good. The head of department, in post for two years, in close co-operation with the second specialist teacher, has begun to raise standards in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form to well above the national average.

Strengths

- The leadership and management of the subject.
- Teaching, particularly teachers' specialist knowledge.
- Pupils' knowledge of art from a range of times and cultures.
- The range of opportunities provided in the curriculum and through visits and lunchtime art club.
- Standards in the sixth form.

Areas for improvement

- Standards at GCSE.
- Pupils understanding of their standards and how they can improve their work.
- Opportunities to use computers.

- 114 Attainment at the end of Year 9 is above expectations and reflects teacher assessments that indicate steady improvement over the past two years. Pupils enter the school in Year 7 with a mixed range of experiences, skills and knowledge. With the help of effective specialist teaching they make good progress over the key stage and develop their practical skills across a broad range of subject matter. Boys and girls achieve similar standards, though the quality of presentation by boys is sometimes untidy. Pupils' knowledge of artists and of art from different times and places is often good. They can produce work in a variety of scales and handle a variety of media including clay with growing confidence. They can use a sketchbook to record and develop their ideas. The observation and recording skills of some pupils remain weaker aspects of their work. Some pupils, particularly those with computers at home, make use of computers to support their work but for most there are limited opportunities in lessons and standards here are below expectations.
- 115 Standards in the GCSE examinations in 2000 were well below the national average for the higher A* to C grades. This is similar to the situation at time of the previous inspection. However the overall A to G pass rate in 2000 for boys and girls was above the national average. More boys than girls studied art, but the performance of the girls was much better than that of the boys. Results in 2001 show a big improvement for boys and an overall improvement in the number of pupils gaining the higher grades. Once again girls did better than boys. All pupils who took the examination achieved a pass grade.
- 116 The standard of work of pupils seen in lessons in Years 7 to 9 is above average and achievement is good. Pupils have very positive attitudes to their work, which helps their learning. Many make use of the art club at lunch times to do extra work. Boys and girls are making similar progress. Pupils develop a broad range of practical skills and knowledge because they have opportunities to work with a variety of media in two and three dimensions and practical skills are taught well by the specialist teachers. An impressive display of coil pots showed competent handling of clay by

Year 9 pupils and good development of skills. Pupils with special educational needs are given very good verbal and practical support that enables them to make similar progress to other pupils.

- 117 Teachers are often very good at linking the development of specialist language, literacy and knowledge to practical work in lessons. Year 8 pupils at an early stage in their practical work on portraits had good knowledge of aspects of the history and function of portraiture. They could recall the names of portrait painters, give examples and talk confidently about the context of the artist's work. The teacher used questioning very well to check and challenge pupils' understanding and improve their confidence in speaking about art. The observation and recording skills of some pupils lack development over the key stage and limit their ability to explore images through drawing. The department makes good use of visiting artists and this provides a valuable opportunity for pupils to broaden their knowledge and appreciation of art.
- 118 Standards seen in lessons for the current Year 11 are in line with expectations. Pupils were developing images linked to studies of the work of Rousseau using photographs and drawings they produced on a visit to local tropical gardens. They were able to apply their art skills to develop, refine and present their ideas using a range of drawing and illustration techniques. Pupils are encouraged to make use of notes and annotation to explain and develop their work. For some, drawing and observation skills continue to be the weaker aspect of their work. Current Year 10 pupils visited the local railway museum and were making very good use of their observational drawings, photographs and research to develop their coursework. The teacher got the pupils to present their collections of related drawings and photographs on research sheets to the rest of the class. Through class discussion these were used very effectively to raise expectations and challenge pupils to strive for high standards. The quality of research, drawing and imaginative development of images was above average in some cases, with pupils already working at similar levels to those in Year 11. Indications are that standards are continuing to improve in Year 10.
- 119 Teachers plan effectively and in the majority of lessons this ensures that pupils are challenged and make good progress. The systems for assessment are more effective in Years 10 and 11 because they make criteria clear. There is scope, particularly in Years 7 to 9, to involve pupils more in judging their own work so that they have a better understanding of how they can improve. In the sixth form there is excellent use of individual tutorials and group discussions to set targets for improvement. This, together with an expectation for independent research and personal and imaginative work, has a very significant impact upon raising standards. Currently only one student is following the A2 examination but is making very good progress, having achieved well at AS-level. Year 12 students are at the early stages of their AS coursework and are making good progress developing their work through the use of photography.
- 120 The department is very well lead and managed with a clear understanding of its strengths and weaknesses that has led to identified priorities for improvement. There are signs from the recent examination results that this is having a positive effect. This, together with the imaginative use of display to celebrate achievement in classrooms and around the school, is ensuring the subject makes an increasingly effective contribution to the work of the school.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

The overall quality of provision is satisfactory, but standards in the different disciplines do vary.

Strengths

- The GCSE results for food technology.
- The teaching of food technology.
- Teachers' good subject knowledge.
- The range of GCSE courses on offer.

Areas for improvement

- Examination results in textiles technology and graphic products.
- There is not enough emphasis on the teaching of design skills, particularly in Year 10.
- Assessment does not let pupils know the levels at which they are working and how to improve on them in Years 7-9.
- The attainment of boys.

121 By the age of 14 pupils' attainment is in line with national expectations. This is similar to the findings of the previous inspection. Teachers' assessments of 14-year-old pupils show a slight improvement from 2000 to 2001, but girls do significantly better than boys in 2001.

122 GCSE results show an improving trend overall, but results in 2001 are still slightly below those in 2000. There has been a significant improvement in resistant materials and food technology results, but a decline in those for textiles technology and graphic products. Girls do significantly better than boys in graphic products.

123 By the end of Year 9 pupils have a satisfactory understanding of some stages in the design process. For instance, in food technology they know how to carry out simple tests from the users' point of view. However, there is not a consistent enough approach in all areas to the teaching of elements of design. Not all pupils are clear about the distinction between the analysis of a problem and the research which follows this. A well-structured unit of work in textiles gives pupils good experience of industrial practices, including the use of computer-aided design and manufacture. Pupils are able to use satisfactory sketching skills to express their design ideas, but colour rendering of drawings is not as good as it could be. Girls often take more care than boys, for example, in a lesson on mechanisms in Year 8, but their understanding is not necessarily better. The approach to teaching is not sufficiently practical and this is inhibiting pupils' understanding. Pupils produce satisfactory quality work in resistant materials.

124 In Years 10 and 11, pupils are working in line with national expectations in textiles technology and above these expectations in food technology. In both areas, good course organisation and lesson planning play a significant part. Pupils in Year 11 have a good understanding of basic nutrient groups and a satisfactory knowledge of how to analyse a commercial product. In textiles technology, where there is good quality practical work, pupils make good use of the Internet for research to form the basis of well-drawn sketches of initial ideas. In systems and control, resistant materials and graphic products standards are below national expectations, although they produce good quality models for graphic products. There is too little emphasis on the development of designing skills alongside practical skills, particularly in Year 10. In the systems and control option there is too much stress on theoretical work

and the copying of diagrams, at the expense of pupils having the opportunity to learn in a practical way. In resistant materials, most pupils are able to use simple hand and machine tools safely and with satisfactory levels of skill. They understand some basic industrial techniques for producing small numbers of items. Their knowledge of materials is below what would be expected.

- 125 Teaching is satisfactory overall and leads to pupils making satisfactory gains in learning. All of the teaching of food technology was good or very good, reflecting very good planning, with good levels of teaching resources. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress where they have specific support and as a result of class teachers' support. There is still not enough specific planning for their needs in lessons. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use question and answer sessions to build on pupils' prior knowledge and understanding. They organise and manage pupils well and set homework that is directly related to the work being done. However, in some lessons teachers do not have the attention of all pupils before speaking to class. In some food and textiles lessons, there are not enough effective strategies for managing on the few occasions when pupils do not behave well.
- 126 Pupils have good attitudes to learning and generally behave very well, but teachers do not capitalise on this by providing more opportunities for pupils to be independent learners. They apply themselves well to individual tasks. Where they carry out group tasks, for example, in food technology in Year 11, good levels of co-operation lead to much shared learning.
- 127 The curriculum is satisfactory in both key stages. In Years 7 to 9, all pupils work in a range of specialist areas, although their choice of materials, particularly in the resistant materials lessons, is often too restricted. They do not have the opportunity to work with pneumatic systems. In Years 10 and 11, there is a good range of GCSE courses and a certificate of achievement course available. Not all pupils have experience of computer aided design and manufacture. Planning of the curriculum in systems and control, resistant materials and graphic products options does not give sufficient emphasis to the development of design skills early in the courses. Planning does not take sufficient account of pupils' prior attainment. The curriculum is well supported by opportunities for pupils to work outside lesson time.
- 128 Assessment of pupils' work in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory, but more complex than it needs to be. Pupils do not know the levels at which they are working or how to improve their work to reach higher levels. In Years 10 and 11, there are satisfactory methods for indicating how pupils can achieve higher grades. A satisfactory start has been made with the monitoring of pupils' work in both key stages, but greater account of results should be taken when planning. For example, having identified a difference between boys' and girls' attainment in Years 7 to 9 and in some courses in Years 10 and 11, strategies are needed to attain a better balance. More use could be made of an analysis of GCSE examination results to identify specific elements of courses for improvement.
- 129 Leadership in the department continues to be good. There is a good sense of shared purpose and mutual support. Good planning and teamwork has led to successful partial refurbishment and changes in courses. Good teaching practices exist in the department, but this is not shared. The gender mix in resistant materials and textiles options in Years 10 and 11 has not been tackled.

- 130 The level of technical support has improved since the previous inspection. The two recently refurbished teaching rooms now present good learning environments. The resistant materials rooms do not project the correct image for this subject and are in need of refurbishment. One food technology room has worn and damaged work surfaces, which are unhygienic. There are not enough resources to support all elements of the systems and control course. The department has a good range of information and communication technology resources. This has a positive impact on pupils' learning and attainment; for example, in Year 9 textiles technology where all pupils have the opportunity to experience computer aided design and manufacture.

GEOGRAPHY

The geography provision is good, making it a strong and popular subject in which pupils do well.

Strengths

- The quality and effectiveness of teaching, which has improved attainment.
- Excellent assessment procedures and target setting, and very good subject leadership.
- The using of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills to research information and improve standards of presentation of pupils' work.

Areas for improvement

- Contact with primary schools, so that teachers have a better idea of what pupils know and can do when they join Year 7.

- 131 At the end of Year 9, pupils' attainment is at or near the national average. There is a small number of pupils whose attainment is above the national average. Pupils are making good progress. The number of Year 9 pupils choosing to study for GCSE is well above the national average.
- 132 GCSE A*-C results remain broadly in line with the national average, with A*-G grades consistently above the national average as a result of the good progress made earlier in the school. In 2000, the examination results of post-16 students were above the national average. Inspection evidence and preliminary information show that this trend is likely to continue. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls. Pupils with special educational needs are making good progress in their targets, especially those who have previously had problems remaining on task. This is because teachers set out their expectations clearly and praise success.
- 133 The standard of work seen in Years 7 to 9 is good and pupils are making very good progress. This is because teachers have very good knowledge of their subject and are consistent in their planning and use of assessment procedures. Teachers manage their classes effectively and state clearly the objectives of their lessons. Consequently, pupils' behaviour is good. Pupils are making very good progress in using specific terms in their answers, such as those associated with erosion, as well as interpreting aerial photographs.
- 134 Having chosen geography as an examination subject, Years 10 and 11 pupils respond positively to their teachers' expectations of greater personal responsibility for their learning. Pupils' coursework shows good progress in understanding the factual detail and level of language needed to achieve a high grade. They have above average competence in the skills of data collection and survey techniques, as well as

being proficient at the mathematical techniques for applying and interpreting information. This is achieved through very good teaching, which makes effective use of data analysis to show pupils what they have to do to improve their work. Work is challenging because teachers are prepared to go beyond the requirements of the syllabus if it extends pupils' experience and skills.

HISTORY

Overall, the quality of provision is very good and pupils reach standards that are well above average.

Strengths

- Very good teaching at both key stages fosters very good learning.
- The emphasis placed on developing numeracy, information technology skills and especially literacy is helping pupils to become confident learners.
- The management of the history department is very good.
- Very good assessment and monitoring procedures are used to support the learning of all students.
- Pupils are well managed in lessons, ensuring that a stable environment for learning is established.

Areas for improvement

- There is not enough celebration of the successes of pupils and sharing of the department's good practice with others.

135 The attainment of pupils at the end of Year 9 in 2001 based on National Curriculum teacher assessments was well above average. GCSE results in 2000 were significantly above national average in comparison to all other schools. Moreover, results in 2001 showed a further improvement. In both years, all pupils gained at least a pass grade. In 2000, just over 75 per cent of pupils gained grades A* -C, but the results for girls were better than those achieved by boys. In 2001, A*-C grades rose to 78.3 per cent of the entry with girls and boys achieving similar results. The success in achieving parity in the results of boys and girls reflects the emphasis that history teachers have placed on raising the attainment of boys. The achievement of such very good results by pupils at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 indicates that they make very good progress in their learning during their courses.

136 The attainment of pupils in Years 7,8 and 9 overall is in line with national expectations, but the ability range is wide and a number of pupils are well above average. All pupils in these three years are making at least good progress, including pupils who have special educational needs. Some of these pupils are lower attainers, but the supportive and thoughtful teaching they receive helps their progress. The attainment of GCSE pupils in Years 10 and 11 is similarly in line with national expectations but, again, there are many pupils whose work is above, or even well above, this level. A significant factor that enables pupils in all years to make progress is the strong emphasis that the department places on developing literacy skills. Sensible and sensitive measures are used to improve pupils' vocabularies and the consistent emphasis placed on extended writing enables all pupils to make progress in their understanding and in their skills of analysis and evaluation.

137 The standard of teaching, which was identified as a strength at the last inspection, continues to be very good. Such high quality teaching is making a significant contribution to the very good learning of all pupils. Many strengths of teaching can be identified. Teachers have very good knowledge and understanding of the topics

they teach and this enables them to enthuse pupils. Their planning is also very good and often excellent. In a Year 9 lesson with a lower attaining group in which many pupils had special educational needs, excellent planning led to very good learning by all. The pupils were given various items of information about fuel sources and their importance in the manufacturing industry. Maps were also provided which contained some additional items of information. The pupils then had to identify key locations, working in small groups. This activity enhanced their skills of evaluation, but the work was extended as the pupils were then asked to explain their choices in writing, ensuring that they quoted supporting evidence. Such thoughtful teaching enabled all pupils to make very good progress in the lesson. This approach also illustrated the commitment of the department to be inclusive and to ensure that all pupils make progress.

- 138 The management of the history department is very good. A team of enthusiastic and knowledgeable teachers work well together. Very good assessment and monitoring procedures exist. They are understood by the staff, they help planning and they also help to identify pupils who might be in need of some extra help. The marking strategies used by the staff are sensitive and are understood by the pupils. The careful marking of work also ensures that pupils are given clear guidance on how improvements in their work can be made. The quality of the assessment and monitoring procedures is central to ensuring the very good results are achieved. The one area that the department needs to consider for development is to ensure that the successes achieved by its pupils are properly celebrated. In all other respects, history is a very good department, with very good management and in which pupils benefit from very good teaching. These factors combine to ensure that the quality of learning is also very good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in information and communication technology is satisfactory. Standards are average at the end of Year 9, but are below average at the end of Year 11 and in the sixth form.

Strengths

- Teachers' knowledge and understanding.
- Good management of pupils securing very good attitudes and standards of behaviour.
- The number, condition and maintenance of the computers.
- Teachers who teach information and communication technology make good use of the new technology.

Areas for improvement

- The way work is marked and assessed.
- Pupils' knowledge of their own learning.
- The quality of subject reports to parents.

- 139 When pupils enter the school their skills in information and communication technology are below average. Pupils have had a range of different experiences in their primary schools and not all pupils have computers at home. By the end of Year 9, pupils' levels of attainment are average, which shows good improvement over the three years in school.

- 140 Results in the recent teachers' assessments in Year 9 show that the percentage of pupils attaining the nationally expected level or above is 20 per cent higher than the

national average. The percentage of pupils attaining the higher levels is 5 per cent lower. Work seen during the inspection does not fully match these assessments. Evidence points to satisfactory standards in some, but not all, aspects of the subject, although pupils do make good progress over the three years in school. There is no discernible difference in attainment between girls and boys.

- 141 In Years 7 to 9, pupils know how to log on to the network, access the programs they need and recall their previous work. Word-processing skills are good. Pupils understand about presenting text and altering it to suit an audience. They know about size, colour and emphasis of text and all but the lowest attaining pupils understand how to mark text for centering and alterations. Most pupils call up clip-art files to insert graphics into their texts to improve presentation, and the highest attaining pupils manipulate the images quickly, resizing and replacing them. Database work is weak and pupils do not gain sufficient understanding of how to frame simple questions to gain the information they need, although a few use the data sort facilities. Spreadsheet work is sound, but many pupils, especially those whose mathematics skills are poor, do not understand how to use a formula for calculating and tend to add up the columns themselves, which defeats the object of using a spreadsheet. Pupils' animation work is good, as they understand the program and how to use it for interesting effects. Control work is satisfactory, as pupils know how to use the control boxes linked to the computers to make objects move, but screen control is weak. They also use computer-controlled equipment in design and technology lessons. Data logging work, done in science lessons, is good. Pupils understand how to interpret the findings from experiments about temperature changes over time. The higher attaining pupils explain fully how this equipment works. Pupils are unskilled in using additional equipment such as digital cameras and scanners. Internet searching is satisfactory, but most pupils do not know how to send an e-mail message.
- 142 In 2000, GCSE short course results were good and well above the national average, especially for the girls, as all 10 pupils gained at least a G grade and 70 per cent gained A* to C grades. The two candidates in 2001 gained D grades, which is below average. The first cohort of pupils will take a full GCSE in the subject in 2002. Work seen during the inspection shows that standards overall in Years 10 and 11 are below average. Pupils' work on word processing, leading to elements of desktop publishing, is good. They build on to the skills learned earlier in school and develop faster keyboard speed, greater control of the mouse and better understanding of the menus and facilities within programs. As they have had little access to computers and only for half the school year in Year 9, pupils have to re-learn much of their previous work on databases and spreadsheets, which means that the set work is at a lower level than it should be for the age range. From this low skill base, their achievement is good. Theory work is weak, as pupils do not have the necessary amount of work in their files. They are not encouraged to print out their work and have it corrected, so they have difficulty with remembering operations and revising.
- 143 Pupils and students have very good attitudes to the subject. They enter the rooms cheerfully and appear keen to learn. Most of them listen attentively, but prefer doing their own work to listening to the teacher. They appreciate demonstrations as they gain insight into what is possible from some programs. After instruction, pupils settle well, respond positively to the practical tasks set for them and show high levels of concentration. Behaviour is very good. Pupils are polite and respect the teacher and the equipment. They are given responsibility for saving their own work on the school network. A few pupils show maturity by helping others and many of them have a genuine interest in others' work. Most pupils are keen to join in with demonstrations

and answer questions, but few volunteer comments or ask questions that would indicate higher levels of learning.

- 144 The quality of teaching in information and communication technology is satisfactory. Teachers are very enthusiastic about the subject and have very good skills and knowledge. Planning follows the set scheme of work and gives pupils experiences in a wide range of information and communication technology applications. Lessons usually start with formal instruction and information, which settles the pupils and focuses them on the work to be attempted. The teachers give good help to individual pupils during practical sessions, which gives confidence to the lower attaining pupils and speeds up their efforts. By questioning, teachers persuade the higher attaining pupils to do more and better work. Because behaviour is very good, teachers have no difficulties in class management. Discipline is firm but fair and all pupils are treated equally.
- 145 There are serious weaknesses in marking and assessment. Pupils do not have books or files in which to keep their work so there is no written assessment for them to refer to as all comments are stored on pupils' individual files on the computer. Pupils cannot remember what has been said, so they forget simple operations and much relearning wastes time in lessons. Pupils do not know how well they are doing and there is no target setting, which depresses standards. Assessment is largely based on the levels of attainment achieved in information and communication technology lessons and does not take full account of levels gained from work in other subjects. Because marking is weak, pupils are not helped with basic skills of literacy and numeracy. For example, calculations, spellings and grammar are not corrected. The quality of information on reports is poor. Teachers write too many generalisations about pupils' attitudes and too little about what the pupil should do to improve.
- 146 The use of information technology by other departments is variable. Departments such as business education, design and technology, English, geography and science use the computers for word processing, computer control, searching the Internet, simulation and data-logging exercises. Other departments, such as art, history and modern foreign languages use the equipment occasionally and are keen to extend the range of activities. The remaining departments tend not to use computers as they lack equipment and software and have identified staff training needs.
- 147 Leadership is sound and the department has made good progress since the last inspection. Two new teachers have been appointed, which has enabled all pupils to have formally taught lessons and the school to extend the range of courses offered. The ratio of computers to pupils is now above the national average and two new rooms have been created to accommodate them. The curriculum follows the requirements of the National Curriculum, but the time allocated to the subject is below recommendations, especially for Year 9. The monitoring of cross-curricular coverage of the subject is weak. Work from other departments is not properly assessed to combine with that from the information and communication technology department and results in insecure awarding of levels of attainment.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

The provision for French and German is very good at Key Stages 3 and 4 and good in the sixth form. The standards achieved by pupils are usually well above average. In many lessons, especially French, boys' attainment is as good as or better than that of girls.

Strengths

- The use and quality of spoken language by pupils and teachers.
- The efficient planning and pace of lessons.
- Accurate and well-presented written work.
- The good attitudes and very good behaviour in lessons.

Areas for improvement

- The use of a wider range of language learning activities.
- The use of National Curriculum levels and assessment data to provide detailed pupil targets.

- 148 Teacher assessments and evidence from the inspection show that most pupils' standards are well above average by the time they are 14. This is true for both French and German. Pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, make very good progress. Pupils develop very good listening skills. They write accurately and speak with good accents.
- 149 In Years 10 and 11, pupils' attainment in French is very good. The GCSE results for 2000 in French, for example, were twice as good as the national average. Particular strengths were in the number of boys achieving A*-C passes and the overall number of A* and A grades. Results in German were also good because, unlike many other schools which select some of their higher attaining pupils for this language, pupils who want to study the language can do so. In 2001, French grades remain very good, although in German the grades are below those achieved in 2000. Evidence from the inspection shows that the current Year 11 students nevertheless attain good standards in German.
- 150 In a small number of lessons across the age range pupils' attainment is less good. This is because a mixture of English and French is used in lessons. Pupils therefore make less effort to speak accurate French. They lose concentration when too much time is allocated for oral tasks.
- 151 By the age of 14 pupils understand quite rapid conversations confidently. This is a result of the regular use of taped dialogues and other recordings by teachers. Pupils match pictures of places in a town to the correct spoken statement and pick out accurately where these places are. They know that their teachers expect them to reply in French and German as often as possible. Many use French and German spontaneously and without prompting. They do this quite naturally, asking if they can take their coats off or get their books out quickly and fluently. Teachers' emphasis on correct pronunciation results in pupils making a great effort to speak with good accents. In a Year 7 class, pupils learning French for only a few weeks pronounce the French alphabet accurately with some higher attainers sounding as if they are French rather than English. This is one result of the enjoyment they have in chanting out raps, guessing missing letters on the overhead projector and having fun in the process. In German in Year 9, a class of lower attaining pupils are able to give directions around a town with good accents and growing confidence. This is a result of skilful teaching that carefully helps pupils acquire the language they need through

flash cards, pictures on the overhead projector and plenty of support and encouragement.

- 152 The written work of most 14-year-old pupils is also of a high standard. The quality of presentation reflects their concerns to do well. Teachers are skilled at helping pupils form rules about how the language works. This knowledge allows them to make very good progress in using different verb tenses to say what they did yesterday or will do at the weekend. By the end of Year 9 most pupils have made good progress in developing the length of their writing from single sentences to short letters, descriptions of their families and daily routines. Higher attainers write about a trip to Paris at good length and with few inaccuracies.
- 153 The standards of most pupils in Years 10 and 11 are well above average. In German in Year 11, higher attainers speak confidently about their work experience using at least 10 expressions with accurate pronunciation. The entire lesson takes place in German. The careful and supportive correction of pupils' errors helps them learn from their mistakes. This in turn creates an atmosphere in which pupils volunteer answers and maintain high levels of concentration.
- 154 In a Year 10 French class, pupils of low attainment or with special educational needs make very good progress. Carefully prepared resources and the practice of small amounts of language using the overhead projector guide pupils' responses. By adding different pictures, teachers help pupils learn to speak at greater length. Worksheets help them match written descriptions of people to the correct picture. In this class, even pupils with behavioural difficulties maintain a high level of concentration for the full one-hour period. This successful inclusion of pupils of all levels of attainment is a result of teachers knowing their pupils well and carefully preparing appropriate work for them.
- 155 The overall quality of teaching is very good. Key features are lessons that start very promptly and continue at a good pace. Lesson aims are communicated clearly to pupils, who are constantly challenged by the expectation that they will usually have to reply in French or German. This focuses pupils' attention and good behaviour results from positive relationships with teachers. In the very few lessons where pupils are passive rather than enthusiastic, this is due to the narrower range of activities used and over reliance on course books. Including more enjoyable activities such as songs, games, quizzes and videos would improve these lessons.
- 156 The languages department benefits from good leadership. Help and guidance are given in developing common approaches to teaching methods. The issues raised at the last inspection in relation to teaching resources and the attitudes of boys and girls have been dealt with energetically. Some additional work is required on setting individual pupils detailed targets for improving their work. This would make them more aware of how they are progressing and help raise standards still higher.

MUSIC

Overall, the quality of provision in music is good and improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory.

Strengths

- Teaching is good.
- Pupils show good attitudes to learning and are well behaved in lessons.
- Provision for instrumental lessons and extra-curricular activities is good.
- The department contributes well to pupils' personal development.

Areas for improvement

- Teachers' monitoring of pupils' learning is not rigorous enough.
- There are no assessment criteria for marking individual tasks within units of work in Years 7 to 9.
- The range of instrumental resources is inadequate.
- ICT is not used enough to enhance teaching and learning.

157 At the time of the inspection the head of department had been in post for three weeks. The previous head of department had left at the end of the spring term and in the summer term prior to the inspection an acting head of department managed the department. A specialist supply teacher taught pupils for one term.

158 In 2000, the proportion of pupils achieving the higher grades A*-C at GCSE was close to the national average. Results for 2001 are similar. Since the last inspection results have fluctuated, but have not fallen below national averages. However, because of the small entry numbers, comparison with national figures is not statistically reliable. At A-level each of the candidates entered in 2000 and 2001 attained pass grades.

159 By the age of 14 pupils' attainment is in line with national expectations. Pupils in Year 9 can combine musical devices such as repeated melodic patterns, rhythm and harmony successfully to compose music for a film clip. In a lesson, Year 9 pupils could apply their knowledge and understanding of music notation to write interesting combinations of five-beat rhythm patterns that formed the basis for their melody. However, higher attaining pupils are not achieving as high as they should because tasks are not sufficiently adapted to meet their needs. No significant difference was observed between the attainment of boys and girls. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in lessons.

160 By the age of 16 pupils' attainment is in line with expectations. In Year 11, all pupils studying for GCSE receive or have received instrumental tuition and this has a positive impact on their performing skills, which are good. However, their composing skills are less well developed. Pupils show a satisfactory understanding of the relationship between melody and harmony in their compositions, but they do not develop their ideas into extended pieces. Pupils have had limited access to music sequencing on keyboards and computer to enhance their composing skills.

161 The quality of teaching is good overall. None was unsatisfactory. In lessons where teaching is good pupils achieve well. Teachers have good subject knowledge and understanding of examination requirements that are used effectively to help pupils' learning and prepare them for examinations. They give effective support to pupils as they are working. In a Year 8 lesson this resulted in pupils concentrating and

behaving well. They also improved their keyboard skills and played 'Let's Dance' with greater accuracy. Teachers make good use of resources and teaching materials to enhance teaching and learning. As a result pupils work well together when sharing keyboards. In a Year 8 lesson, the teacher used a very effective warm-up exercise before the class sang a song. This was both a physical and vocal exercise, which pupils found fun and sang enthusiastically. Well-focused questioning is often used, so that pupils learn technical vocabulary. Questions could be more challenging to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding. Teachers' planning does not always cater sufficiently well for the needs of the higher attaining pupils in Years 7 to 9 who have well-developed instrumental skills. Consequently, these pupils do not make enough progress by the end of the lesson. In lessons where pupils are engaged in varied musical activity through teaching that integrates performing, composing and appraising activities, pupils respond well and make good progress.

162 The new head of department has a clear vision for developing music in the school and in particular for developing the use of computers in lessons by teachers and pupils. Resources for this have already improved significantly since the last inspection. However, the range of classroom instruments is inadequate to teach the music curriculum effectively. Arrangements for assessing pupils' progress are in place and are clearly linked to National Curriculum levels. However, the marks awarded to pupils for achievement within a unit of work are not linked to assessment criteria. This means that teachers' assessments are inconsistent. The monitoring of pupils' progress could be more rigorous, particularly of those in GCSE classes who are not well informed of how well they are achieving in relation to GCSE grades.

163 Provision for instrumental lessons and extra-curricular activities is good. Instrumental tuition provides opportunities for pupils to learn to play a wide range of instruments. At lunchtimes pupils and students can take part in the concert band, choirs or music technology club that has started recently. They also have opportunities to take part in concerts during the year, which also include contributions from primary school pupils. This has a very positive effect on developing pupils' performing skills and on their personal development.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- The extra-curricular activities in sport.
- Teachers' commitment and specialist expertise.
- Teaching is good overall.
- There are very good sports facilities.

Areas for improvement

- The use of assessment.
- The opportunities for pupils to use information and communication technology.
- The balance of activities taught in Years 7 to 9.

164 The teacher assessments for 2001 at the end of Year 9 show boys and girls reach standards that are just above average. The inspection evidence confirmed this and found that pupils attained well above the national average in swimming, rugby and gymnastics.

- 165 Results in the 2000 GCSE examinations were below the national average. However, results in 2001 were much better. Girls' and boys' results were very similar. These results were mostly better than the grades pupils achieved in their other subjects.
- 166 Pupils entered for A-level examinations for the first time in 2001 and the two students attained a C and a D grade. In the 2001 AS-level examinations, the four girls on the course passed the examination and 3 achieved B grades. However, three of the 11 boys did not achieve a pass grade and no boys achieved the higher A and B grades.
- 167 When pupils join the school in Year 7, the attainment of most is in line with the national expectation. However, the boys have very little experience of playing rugby and very few girls have developed skills in hockey. There are still a few pupils who cannot swim. During Years 7, 8 and 9, pupils build on and extend their performance skills and increase their knowledge of health and fitness. Their achievement is good and by the end of Year 9 they attain levels that are above the national expectation. The majority of girls in Year 9 show quality and fluidity in their gymnastics and attain well above the national average. Boys in Year 9 have enough skill and stamina in swimming to develop good rescue skills. In one lesson observed during the inspection, a girl in Year 7 swam for the first time, demonstrating very good progress.
- 168 Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are attaining above the national average in their GCSE studies. They perform well in the practical aspects of the course and have a good knowledge of fitness testing. Most boys have consistent shots and an understanding of the rules and scoring in badminton. Two from a group of 16 pupils are hindered in the theoretical aspects of the course by low-level literacy skills. The files of girls and boys in Year 11 are neatly presented and well organised, but a few files are a poor learning resource because some work is incomplete. Pupils in Year 10 have not yet developed their subject specific vocabulary, but most work with energy and enthusiasm in their practical lessons. Pupils' analytical and evaluative skills are not so well developed. They are not confident when giving feedback to one another and there is a lack of guidance in promoting this strand of the National Curriculum in the units of work.
- 169 Standards in core physical education lessons in Years 10 and 11 are above the nationally expected level. Boys play rugby with skill, speed and stamina. They are able to plan and effectively execute their own tactics for support play. Girls in basketball have good footwork and ball handling skills, but the skills often break down in the game because the girls lack prior experience in basketball.
- 170 Pupils who attend extra-curricular activities display very good levels of attainment and many netball, hockey, rugby, football, cricket, basketball and athletics teams perform very well in district and county competitions.
- 171 The quality of teaching observed during the inspection was all satisfactory or better and most was good or better. The good achievement and learning of pupils observed during the inspection are the results of this good teaching and the enthusiastic and responsive attitudes of the pupils. Pupils look smart and are well equipped for the various activities. Almost all pupils participate regularly in their lessons. Their keen interest in the subject is demonstrated by the large numbers of pupils participating in the wide range of extra-curricular activities and in the annual gymnastics and dance performance. Boys and girls of all abilities make this good progress because in lessons pupils are frequently taught in ability groups.
- 172 Teachers use a variety of equipment and group strategies to extend the more able and to help those who are finding an activity difficult. Teachers have very good

specialist expertise. They give appropriate demonstrations and handle pupils' responses effectively. This gives the pupils a clear idea of performance technique and enables pupils to improve their skills. Relationships with pupils are very good. All lessons encourage pupils to extend their knowledge of health and fitness. Teaching was very good or better when pupils had opportunities to acquire new skills, to select and apply them and to evaluate their own work and that of others. The department does not focus sufficiently on developing literacy, numeracy or information and communication technology skills. The use of additional sources of reference in the form of prompt sheets, work cards and wipe boards would promote these aspects of the National Curriculum more fully. However, one very good lesson in the sixth form did fully promote subject specific vocabulary in a stimulating and inter-active manner.

- 173 The curriculum meets statutory requirements and provides a broad programme of activities for Years 7, 8 and 9. However, there is too much emphasis on games activities, which results in an imbalance overall. Assessment procedures in Years 7 to 9 reflect the new National Curriculum levels. Further development is necessary to link assessment to the units of work and to inform pupils, especially those taking examinations, of their levels and subject targets.
- 174 Accommodation includes a gymnasium, swimming pool, sports hall and extensive, very well maintained playing fields. The changing rooms are spacious and these very good facilities have a positive impact on pupils' learning. The department makes a very good contribution to the social and moral development of pupils. They have excellent opportunities, in lessons and in the many extra-curricular activities, to learn about co-operation, fair play and sportsmanship. The head of department provides good leadership for a very hard working team. There is very good liaison with outside clubs, local schools and development groups. Since the previous inspection, GCSE results have improved significantly, examinations in the sixth form have been successfully established and high standards have been maintained. The quality of the outdoor facilities has improved with the appointment of the school's own groundsman.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in religious education is satisfactory.

Strengths

- Teachers' commitment to and knowledge of the subject.
- Pupils' response and interest in the subject.

Areas for improvement

- Attainment by the age of 16.
- Long-term planning for the development of the department.
- Lesson planning to make better use of time and resources.
- Marking so that pupils know what they have to do to improve.

- 175 By the age of 14, pupils make satisfactory progress and their attainment is in line with standards set in the North Yorkshire Agreed Syllabus. They have satisfactory knowledge of the major religions of the world, their distinctive beliefs and practices, and the differences between them. Pupils' understanding of the beliefs and symbols of Christianity is enriched by visits to a local church where they look at vestments and discuss their symbolic meaning. Their understanding of Hinduism is enriched by visits to the school of a member of the Hindu faith who explains her beliefs.

However, teachers do not take opportunities to examine the meaning that religious belief and practices may have in the lives of pupils. For example, a Year 9 class had carried out their own research to find out about some features of the Muslim faith. 'Women's dress' and 'pilgrimage' were identified and discussed. The significance of dress in Muslim values and the practice of 'fasting' and 'prayer' on pilgrimages were not fully explored with an interested group, to examine what significance these values may have in the pupils' own lives.

- 176 The standard of pupils' attainment by the age of 16 is unsatisfactory. It has fallen since the last inspection. At that time, all pupils followed a full GCSE course in religious education and their results were in line with the national average. Since that time, the full course has been replaced by a short course that all pupils follow. However, a progressively smaller percentage of the year group has been entered for the examination and the percentage of pupils gaining an A*-C grade has fallen since 1999 from 66 per cent to 41 per cent.
- 177 Pupils make satisfactory progress in lessons. They show good biblical knowledge, particularly of St. Luke's Gospel, and an understanding of the personal significance that Christian beliefs may have. For example, in a Year 11 lesson about the Temptation of Christ, the ideas of 'power' and 'value of material things' were discussed and gave rise to the pupils' reflection on their own values in life. More abstract ideas like 'Salvation' that came up in a Year 10 lesson and the significance of the birth of Christ proved too challenging. Little progress was made beyond identifying some of the distinctive features of the Nativity and examining some of the symbolism of the stable and the visit of the shepherds.
- 178 Pupils behave well in class. They arrive promptly, settle quickly and respond well to tasks set by the teacher, whether it is responding to questions from teachers, working with their fellow pupils, or individual written tasks. Movement in class to work in pairs or groups is carried out with the minimum of fuss and does not disturb the working atmosphere. Relations between pupils are particularly good. They are attentive to what their classmates have to say and show patience with a pupil taking time to make an answer to the teacher. They work together very well. In a Year 7 class, group work produced a level of noise that the teacher felt he had to quell, but it was the noise of pupils interested in what they were doing. Except in one class, no significant group was distracted from their work for any length of time. The response of boys and girls was equally good.
- 179 Teaching in the department is satisfactory or better overall, although there was one lesson where teaching was unsatisfactory because the lesson was not well planned. There is some very good teaching in Years 10 and 11. All teachers showed commitment to the teaching of religious education, notably those whose major commitment to teaching was in other subjects. All showed good subject knowledge, at times to particularly good effect. In a Year 11 class, with very good teaching, a teacher's description of the danger of the road to Jericho in biblical times created an interest in a lesson about the parable of the Good Samaritan that was sustained throughout the lesson. Teaching is particularly effective when it is successfully linked to pupils' previous work. A Year 7 lesson, examining communities in Peru, was based on pupils' individual research on Peru. Most of the pupils brought a wealth of information and enthusiasm to the class, which was successfully harnessed and sustained in a good lesson.
- 180 Lessons are well planned with clear aims and a number of teaching methods used. Few lessons seen were dominated by the teacher and pupils learned effectively in pairs or groups, as well as a whole class. The main teaching weakness seen was

the poor management of time. Too often, teachers ran out of time. Tasks were hurried, opportunities for learning not fully explored and progress was less than it might have been. Resources in the department could be better used. There is too much reliance on work sheets prepared by teachers. Stimulating books on topics taught remain on the shelves. Support teaching was effectively used in a Year 7 class, but when support was absent, there was little individual support given in class to pupils with learning difficulties.

- 181 Homework is set regularly and books are marked regularly. However, the marking of books is unsatisfactory. Departmental policy gives scores for work at the expense of comments telling pupils what they do well and what they need to do to improve.
- 182 No use of computers in teaching was seen, although it is clear that pupils use computers in their own time. Teachers have used computers to produce images of religious symbols and as a resource, to stimulate teaching and learning.
- 183 There have been improvements in the management of the department since the last inspection, although there is still room for improvement. Schemes of work for Years 7 to 9 have been re-organised. They now cover all the major world faiths and are in accordance with the Agreed Syllabus. Lesson observations of teaching are thorough, with strengths identified and suggestions made for improvement. However, there is no long-term planning and the department has no long-term objectives. Target setting for pupils is also unsatisfactory as targets are more concerned with the presentation of learning rather than the quality of learning.

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

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

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

GCE AS-level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	3	33	63	0	17	0.3	1.6

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	6	67	89	17	45	4.0	6.0
Chemistry	11	64	89	18	42	2.9	5.9
Biology	18	83	88	17	24	3.6	5.3
Physics	14	100	88	36	41	6.4	5.7
Design and technology	10	80	92	30	29	4.2	5.4
Economics	12	67	88	8	36	3.3	5.4
Business	2	na	na	na	na	9.0	10.8
Health and social care	1	na	na	na	na	12.0	10.7
Art and design	2	100	96	100	45	8.0	6.4
Music	1	100	93	0	35	4.0	5.7
Geography	12	100	92	25	37	6.2	5.7
History	10	80	89	0	34	3.8	5.4
English language	6	100	90	17	29	5.0	5.2
English literature	9	100	96	33	36	5.8	5.9
French	3	100	91	33	39	4.7	5.7
General studies	33	91	85	12	28	3.8	4.9

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

Mathematics

The focus was on advanced courses. One lesson of application of number key skills was observed. Attainment of pupils in key skills is in line with national expectations. Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is good.

Strengths

- Some students in recent years attained higher grades.
- Most students reach standards that are in line with or better than their GCSE results predict.
- Teaching is always good and is often very good.
- Students have a good attitude to the subject.
- Teachers' assessments are accurate and shared with students.

Areas for improvement

- The number of students choosing to follow advanced courses in mathematics is low.
- Whilst students' attitudes to the subject are good they show little real enthusiasm.
- There is little use of computer software to support learning.
- There are no opportunities for students to participate in mathematical activities outside of lessons.

185 The number of students involved in advanced courses is small and, therefore, national comparisons are not wholly valid. However, in 1999 the proportion of students gaining the highest grades and the proportion of students obtaining grades A-E were both above national averages, with all four boys passing the examination. The GCE A-level results in 2000 were below the national average for both the proportions of students attaining the highest grades, A and B, and those attaining a pass grade, A-E. In 2001, results in GCE A-level followed the pattern of 2000, being below national averages. In the four years up to and including 2001, only one girl has been entered for the A-level examination. In 2001, six students were entered for AS-level. Of the four girls entered, three gained higher grades and one of the two boys attained grade E. Whilst able girls have eventually been recruited in the last year, there has been a decrease in the number of able boys. Students with modest entry levels in GCSE have sometimes achieved well. Retention rates are good. Some students re-sit their GCSE examination on the sixth form and, usually, at least half of the students gain a C grade. Results in key skills application of number are in line with prior attainment.

186 The standards of work seen during the inspection are in line with the national average. In Year 13, students are achieving at least in line with predictions based on GCSE results. In a lesson on the binomial theorem, students quickly grasped the conditions under which the expansion converges and used alternative methods to check calculations. During a lesson on mechanics, students consolidated their knowledge of statics in preparation for a forthcoming test. Two high attaining girls demonstrated considerable confidence and understanding when resolving forces to form equations, then calculated unknown forces accurately. The other boy and girl who make up the cohort of four achieved well. They improved the accuracy of equilibrium diagrams and their formation of equations. With the help of probing questions from the teacher they also made progress in solving these.

- 187 Students in Year 12 are only a little way into their course, but are achieving at least as well as expected. They appreciated the nature of arithmetic progressions and the highest attaining boy and girl showed a clear understanding of the rigorous proof of a formula to calculate the sum for any number of terms. All students applied the formula accurately. They were also aware of how to prove the simpler, alternative formula and knew when its use is appropriate. Standards of numeracy are satisfactory in key skills courses and GCSE courses and good in advanced courses.
- 188 Teaching is good or very good. The teaching is characterised by the high expectations teachers have that all students will achieve their potential, regardless of what they achieved previously. This is evident in advanced, key skills, application of number, as well as the extra-curricular GCSE improvement course. Lessons have clear objectives, which are at least implicitly shared with the students. Teachers know their students' levels of attainments well and use past examination questions to identify attainment. Homework is used very effectively. It is given regularly and marked promptly and rigorously with clear guidance for improvement. Teachers make it known to students that they are readily available to help.
- 189 Although teachers have good subject knowledge and enjoy their subject, they are not sufficiently enthusiastic about mathematics in lessons. Consequently, students do what is required, but are not inspired to read more widely on the subject. Teachers make suitable demands on students to use calculators, but computer software, selectively used, such as in graph plotting, would enhance a number of aspects of the course.
- 190 Students learn well. They have very good attitudes to learning in general and respond well to the challenge. They are very conscientious, particularly regarding homework and make good use of written and oral feedback. They are aware of their attainment levels and target priorities. However, they lack confidence at times, particularly when starting topics, and show little overt enthusiasm for mathematics as a subject. They respect and trust their teachers. Relationships are very good.
- 191 Management of the department is good. Teachers are well matched to classes and communication between teachers is good. Whilst leadership is at least satisfactory, the department has made no arrangements for students to participate in extra-curricular activities such as clubs or national competitions. There are not enough high attaining students studying mathematics. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory. Overall, there has been an improvement in teaching since the previous report.

Sciences

- 192 The focus was on biology, but chemistry and physics were also sampled. At GCE A-level, small numbers of students enter for one or more of the three sciences. These students have different backgrounds in science, having taken either co-ordinated science or single sciences at GCSE. Physics results are consistently good with all students attaining a pass grade over the last five years and more students attaining the higher grades A and B than in the other two subjects. In 2000, the results in physics were above those attained nationally, while those in chemistry and biology were well below. Usually more boys take physics than girls; conversely, in chemistry and biology there are more girls. Four lessons were sampled, one each in physics and chemistry, and two in biology. All were at least good, with one excellent lesson in physics and one very good lesson in biology. Both these higher grade lessons were in Year 13.

Biology

Overall, the quality of provision in biology is satisfactory.

Strengths

- Teaching is good – well-structured lessons help students to make progress.
- Teachers' secure subject knowledge allows them to present the subject in a variety of ways.
- Teachers are committed to helping students achieve, giving freely of their time.
- Students work well together and willingly share their ideas.

Areas for improvement

- Students who attained lower GCSE grades tend to be passive and not to ask for help.
- Students' targets are not precise enough to help them do even better.
- Teachers do not always use methods that enable lower attaining students to learn.

- 193 The number of students choosing to take biology has remained fairly constant and has resulted in one group each year of between 10 and 20 students. However, in 2001, this number dropped to five. Students start the A-level biology course with a range of different GCSE grades: some having attained high grades in biology whilst others have attained average grades in a broader science course. Over the last five years not all students taking A-level examination in biology have attained a pass grade. The proportion of students attaining the higher grades A and B has been below the national average and below other subjects in the school and has not followed a pattern. Usually, more girls take the examination than boys and in 1999 more girls attained the higher levels than boys. In 2000, the proportion attaining the higher levels was well below the national average and well below other subjects in the school. However, in 2000, two-thirds of students achieved or bettered their predicted grade based on their attainment at GCSE. The first examinations of the new AS-level in the subject in 2001 produced results similar to previous years with not all students attaining pass grades. However, three students attained grade A and six attained grades higher than expected, two of these six bettering their prediction by two grades.
- 194 The standards of work seen during lessons were at least satisfactory. In Year 13, students showed increased confidence when setting up the apparatus to look at the effect of carbon dioxide concentration on photosynthesis in pond weed. They evaluated the way they did this and made alterations to improve it. The teacher used the session to reinforce work covered previously and challenged students' understanding of the theory and the experimental method by probing questions.
- 195 Students in Year 12, only a little way into the course, are achieving as well as expected given their different attainment at GCSE. In the lesson on the structure of protein molecules, an above-average student was able to understand easily the relationship between the arrangement of protein fibres in cartilage and the cornea and the functions of each tissue. Other students had difficulty using knowledge from GCSE to explain each function.
- 196 Teaching is good overall and better in Year 13. The teachers' very good subject knowledge allows them to use a variety of ways to present a topic. Lessons are planned well to provide many different activities in the double sessions and often include practical work to extend and reinforce understanding. However, in the more mixed ability group in Year 12, there were not enough opportunities for all students to

think about what they have learnt. Homework is used to build on and extend lesson content. Students' individual pieces of work are marked thoroughly, giving some feedback but not always specifying how improvements could be made. Teachers expect and receive very good application and behaviour in class. During practical sessions safety precautions are well emphasised and followed by students

- 197 The subject is well led and managed. The staff are committed to building on what has already been achieved in the subject and to improving standards. The scheme of work effectively reflects the new course requirements for AS and A2 units. It identifies areas such as the resources needed, where individual coursework can be done and where the skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology can be developed. The setting of target grades, based on analysis of individual students' performance in tests and examinations, is well established, though at the moment these targets are not sufficiently related to specific goals for individual students.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

- 198 Two courses in this curriculum area were inspected: GCE AS/A2 Levels in design and technology product design – 3-dimensional design and AS-level design and technology product design - textiles. The courses are reported under one heading: design and technology. Four lessons were observed in Year 12 and one in Year 13. Teaching in one was satisfactory and in the others good or very good.

Design and technology

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

Strengths

- A-level results have improved.
- Teaching is very good and teachers have very good subject knowledge.
- The team approach to teaching leads to shared expertise.
- Students have very good attitudes to their learning.

Areas for improvement

- The examination results at AS-level.
- The organisation of lessons so that students can immediately practice new skills learnt.
- The organisation of resources for students to research materials.
- Resources to support the graphics elements of the course.

- 199 A-level examination results have shown a rising trend over four years to 2001. They were below the national average in 2000. In 2001, results were considerably better, although only a small number of students were entered. AS results for 2001 were low. Only one student obtained a pass in the A to B range and three of the seven entered did not achieve a pass grade. Although these results were broadly in line with the results for the students' other subjects, they were below what might have been expected based on their GCSE results.

- 200 In lessons, both male and female students make satisfactory gains in knowledge and understanding. Although they are only a little way into the courses, their current work shows students' attainment to be in line with what would be expected at this stage. In Year 12 they build well on their existing information and communication technology skills to develop a good understanding of how a new computer design program can

be utilised. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge effectively here in the preparation of good quality materials to help with this new program.

- 201 Students have very good attitudes to learning and they use materials to continue with their development of skills independently. Students in Year 12 all have a good background in design and technology. They build on this to analyse existing objects satisfactorily to give a breakdown of the materials from which they are made and processes used in their manufacture. However, this work would be more effectively covered and levels of understanding higher if students had the opportunity to disassemble items and if lessons were structured so that they could focus more closely on research into the properties of materials and industrial processes. Previous work shows that students develop appropriate practical skills to make products of a good standard. Graphic skills are good, but there are too few reference books to support the range of techniques that could be employed at this level. In Year 13, the single student has a satisfactory understanding of how computer aided design and manufacture can be used in a design and technology context.
- 202 Teaching is good overall and leads to students learning well. Teachers use questions effectively to direct students into new areas of learning. Demonstrations are effective and student involvement leads to good levels of learning. For example, in a textiles lesson the one student developed a good level of understanding of how a particular fabric is produced, as a result of a very effective demonstration by the teacher and the student's very good level of application to the following practical task. Students show good levels of independence. They make good use of the Internet in their own time, for example, to carry out research about a designer as the basis of establishing their own designs.
- 203 The curriculum is satisfactory. The courses are available to all students, with one student with a statement of special educational need successfully completing the AS-level course last year. However, the low number of students means that the courses are currently not cost effective. Assessment of students' attainment is satisfactory. Teachers have a good understanding of students' strengths and give good levels of verbal feedback, but students could benefit from having written comments that would indicate how they might improve their work.
- 204 Co-ordination of these courses is satisfactory. At this stage courses are still being developed and refined, with good emphasis on recording how detailed elements of the courses will be covered. The team of three teachers work well together, sharing their own expertise, which impacts positively on the progress that students make. There is insufficient analysis of the reasons for the below average examination results in the AS-level examination.

BUSINESS

- 205 The inspection did not focus specifically on subjects in this area, but lessons were sampled in economics and business education. Examination results for economics and GNVQ Part 1 business in 2000 were below average, but were in line with expectations for students on the AVCE business course. The attainment of all students currently on business and economics courses is below average. Teaching is satisfactory. In economics and business A level lessons learning is satisfactory but is not good because teachers do not set challenging tasks for students to undertake. Learning in vocational business courses is better as the students are given suitable opportunities for independent research.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

- 206 The inspection did not focus specifically on subjects in this area, but three lessons of ICT were observed. Standards are below average. Students had limited access to computers before starting the AVCE or GNVQ Intermediate courses and hardly any of them took the short GCSE course. They all had to relearn most of the basics about word processing and use of programs before starting the programme of study for the particular course, which delayed progress and depressed overall standards. The quality of teaching ranges from satisfactory to very good and is good overall. Basic skills are sound and students gain knowledge over the two years, but their levels of understanding are below expectations.
- 207 Of the eight students who took the Part 1 GNVQ in 2001, one gained a unit credit and seven results are pending as the school requested a re-mark of the papers. Students have opportunities to use computers to support their work in other subjects, although their skills are not as high as they could be because of their limited experiences lower down the school. The quality of provision for information and communication technology is satisfactory.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

- 208 The inspection did not focus specifically on subjects in this area, but three advanced level physical education lessons and one lesson of GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism were observed.
- 209 The attainment of students in physical education varies, but is mostly in line with national averages. They have a good understanding of performance skills and provide well-reasoned answers with a perceptive insight into competitiveness. There are a few students who have much knowledge of anatomy and physiology and their use of subject specific vocabulary is very good. It is too early to make judgements about the standards of work of Year 12 students on the AS-level course. Students are enthusiastic and hardworking and enjoy the independent learning opportunities offered in their anatomy and physiology lessons. Teaching is good overall.
- 210 The overall attainment of students in GNVQ leisure and tourism is below that expected to achieve a pass grade at intermediate level. Low-level literacy skills hinder students' learning and a few are reluctant to respond. Teaching is effective and promotes satisfactory learning, but is not designed to overcome the literacy difficulties. However, this is an appropriate course for the interests and abilities of the students who gain in confidence and benefit from the practical nature of the course.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

- 211 The inspection did not focus specifically on this area, but one AVCE and two GNVQ intermediate lessons were observed. There are small numbers of students in each group, but overall their attainment is in line with course requirements and a pass grade. The quality of teaching was all at least good and in one lesson, which promoted many independent learning opportunities, the teaching was excellent. Courses are thoroughly planned and have positive links with the vocational and occupational element of the subject. Most students choose the subject because of its close association with their chosen career.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

- 212 The inspection did not focus specifically on this area but art, music and theatre studies lessons were sampled.
- 213 Two lessons of art were observed and students' work was viewed. Standards at A-level are good. Students achieve well as a result of very good teaching by staff with strong subject knowledge.
- 214 Two lessons of A-level music were observed. One student was entered for the examination in 2000 and another in 2001 and each achieved as expected according to their ability. Teaching is good overall and the quality of provision in music is satisfactory.
- 215 The new theatre studies course has very few students, but those that study it are very enthusiastic. At AS- and A-level the provision is good. The carefully planned teaching allows students to develop a good insight into a range of theatrical techniques. They are able to discuss these quite articulately and also to improve on their practical performances. Standards are in line with course requirements.

HUMANITIES

- 216 The focus was on history, but geography and general studies were also sampled.
- 217 The provision for geography is very good. Results in 2000 were above the national average. Preliminary information and inspection evidence shows that the trend of improvement is likely to continue. The quality of teaching is very good, supported by an excellent system of personal development and monitoring of students' performance. Fieldwork is popular and successfully emphasises the practical nature and relevance of the subject. Use of information and communication technology to present and research coursework is very well developed. There is a clear emphasis on achieving success for all pupils, including the introduction of new courses, such as leisure and tourism at Intermediate GNVQ level in 2000.
- 218 Two lessons of general studies were sampled. Teaching was good in both lessons. Examination results are well below the national average because students' commitment to the course is inconsistent and results in poor attendance. The status of the course is low and students do not attach sufficient importance to their studies.

History

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

Strengths

- Very good management of the department has focused on teaching and learning.
- Teaching is very good.
- Assessment procedures are very good.

Areas for improvement

- The use and analysis of assessment data to improve examination results further.

- 219 A-level examination results in both 2000 and 2001 were disappointing. Though group sizes were small and comparisons with national averages are, therefore,

difficult, results in 2000 for all students for grades A and B and A-E were below average. All students who sat A-level history in 2001 gained at least a pass grade. From the department's own analysis, though results have sometimes been modest, many students achieve grades that are better than those forecast based on prior attainment. Such an outcome indicates that many history students make good progress during their course. AS-level results in 2001 were especially encouraging. Every student passed and all gained at least a C grade. Indeed, five of the six candidates entered gained either grades A or B. Though no national comparative figures are available, these results are clearly very encouraging.

- 220 A significant strength of history is the very good quality of teaching from which students benefit. All lessons seen were very good. Teachers are keen, enthusiastic and knowledgeable and these factors all serve to inspire and motivate the students. Consequently, learning is similarly very good. Teachers successfully use a variety of teaching strategies and appropriate emphasis is placed on developing the students' writing skills. Very good emphasis is also placed on developing the students' understanding of key words and this is reflected in the care teachers take when using primary and secondary source materials with their classes. In a Year 13 lesson on the Poor Law, learning was very good because the teacher used source material with care and this enabled the students to unravel some of the complexities of interpretation. Learning was enhanced because the students could identify how different interpretations of the 1834 Act of Parliament were grounded in differing contemporary beliefs about how the poor should be helped. Source material was also used effectively in a Year 12 lesson on German political history, where students improved their understanding of the importance of compromise through a study of the coalition that Ebert and Brüning established in order to counteract any advancement by the Germany Communist Party. In both lessons, learning was very good because students were given opportunities to discuss their interpretations and they were then set suitably challenging written tasks that involved extended writing and offered considerable opportunities to consolidate their knowledge and understanding.
- 221 The management of the history department is very good. Recent changes in syllabus have been managed well, the department is good at using data to analyse the performance of its students and clear policies have been established to ensure that staff teaching history work well as a team and that common objectives are followed. This is evidenced by the emphasis that is placed on ensuring that opportunities to develop literacy and numeracy skills are seized. Teachers are also aware of the need to incorporate information and communication technology in their lessons and appropriate planning exists to cover this facet of learning. The department is one of the few departments making good use of data to set targets for students.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

- 222 The focus was on English language and English literature, but French and German lessons were also sampled.
- 223 Provision in modern languages is good. The numbers of students studying A/S and A-level languages are small. This has been the case for several years. It is not possible, therefore, to make reliable comparisons with national results. However, students make good progress in both languages as a result of effective teaching. Careful planning of work and resources helps them develop their range of vocabulary and command of grammar. They progress well from the language of their GCSE course books to the more abstract language and unfamiliar topics of A-level. In a

Year 13 German class, students achieve a better understanding of a difficult text on nuclear power. A range of different activities is provided by the teacher to ensure the different needs of all students are met; matching English and German sentences, putting parts of an article into the correct order – all of which helps students read German with increased confidence.

English Language

Overall, the quality of provision in English is good.

Strengths

- Teaching is very good and students are stimulated by authoritative teaching.
- There is good use of information and communication technology by students in their presentations.
- Practical investigations, such as the analysis of transcripts, are often good.

Areas for improvement

- There are still weaknesses in students' written assignments caused by inaccuracies in language use.
- There is not enough evaluation of examination performance to show how well students have achieved over time.

- 224 GCE examination results have varied over the last four years, but overall are in line with the national averages. This represents sound achievement based on students' GCSE results. Standards compare well with other subjects in the sixth form.
- 225 In Year 13, students respond well to interesting lessons on children's language development. They are able to contribute to discussions because the teacher gives them a clear framework relating to their own experiences, in which ideas can be explored. As a result many students are able to discuss concepts such as 'nature and nurture' showing good understanding of the issues. In one lesson, a discussion of the similarities between the way that children omit words and the modern trend of sending text messages provided a lively exchange of ideas. The summing up of the lesson by the teacher drew together all the key strands of the debate and gave the students a good platform on which to develop their own thoughts.
- 226 Year 12 students show a lively interest in the subject and work well in groups to produce presentations highlighting the various features used by orators. The teacher sets demanding tasks, such as choosing speeches with difficult language forms, but she gives the students plenty of support through her questions to them and her supportive suggestions. They use overhead projectors well to annotate the text in order to illustrate the points they are making to others in the class.
- 227 Students' written assignments are at the level expected and some of the creative writing is of good quality. The students, however, claim that this is the most difficult part of the course and teachers plan to adapt future lessons to provide more support for the students' own writing. Students produce imaginative booklets showing the key features of technical language, making good use of word processors to enhance their presentation. They produce good analysis of the way that newspapers structure their lay out and language to appeal to different audiences. A small number of assignments are rather pedestrian in their expression as some students struggle to shape their ideas in a logical and coherent manner. Teachers' marking is sharp and informative and many students respond well, as is shown in the progress they make

over time. Students also learn from each other in lessons. They listen well and are prepared to modify their ideas in the light of what they hear from others.

- 228 Teaching is very good. The subject knowledge of teachers is strong and this gives the students confidence. There is much more structured debate in classes than takes place lower down the school and students readily adapt to the greater demands made on them. They enjoy the work and the atmosphere in lessons is good. The subject is well managed and staff liaise well to ensure that the course is covered thoroughly. Good reinforcement of key skills occurs as teachers often link the homework set to aspects of the key skills elements. The analysis of students' progress is not as precise as in the main school.

English Literature

The provision for this subject is also good.

Strengths

- Most students show a strong personal response to literature stimulated by teaching that involves them fully in lessons.
- They are clear about the criteria for assessment of their work because teachers' marking is thorough.
- Students show good knowledge of the texts through their detailed annotations.

Areas for improvement

- There are still weaknesses in expression in students' written assignments because they do not always check their work carefully.

- 229 The numbers of students opting for English literature are usually lower than for the language course. In examinations over the last four years, results have risen from well below average to be in line with the average. Considering the wide range of attainment on entry to the course, including a small number of students with special educational needs, achievement is sound.
- 230 Students new to the course in Year 12 quickly show a love of literature and are keen to read parts and enter into lively discussions about characters, settings and the ways in which authors represent them. The all-girls group make subtle and perceptive comments about incidents in a Tennessee Williams' play, showing an awareness of how stage directions add to the effect. The teacher amplifies their ideas and provides a good link to the dialogue to ensure that teaching points are not missed. Students read with enthusiasm and show attainment above that expected at this stage of the course.
- 231 In Year 13, a good presentation of a key scene in *Edward II* helped the rest of the group to see how the playwright conveys his intentions. They were keen to be involved in discussions and the teacher subtly probed and prompted to keep the ideas flowing. He then gave the students time to draw up their commentary on the scene before considering the points made in critical journals. This resulted in a lively and interesting debate on how important it is to back up opinion with precise quotation.
- 232 The same comments on teaching apply as are seen in English language. Teaching is always at least good and often very good. The positive rapport between staff and students adds to the effectiveness of lessons. Students enjoy the subject and are

prepared to think for themselves because they are given a clear structure in which to discuss their ideas.

- 233 Marking is helpful and gives students the criteria for assessment very precisely. It encourages students to think about developing their essays more critically. Some students show the ability to produce perceptive analysis, such as in examining the social and cultural issues in *Educating Rita*. Their annotation of the poems of John Donne displays a good understanding of the complexity of his wit and conceit. Students respond well to the demands of essay writing, but occasionally display some carelessness in expression. They do not get enough practice at reading parts of their essays aloud so that they can examine the sequence and logic of their writing.