

INSPECTION REPORT

SPALDING HIGH SCHOOL

Spalding

LEA area: Lincolnshire

Unique reference number: 120642

Headteacher: Mr T. Clark

Reporting inspector: Ms J. M. Jones

12460

Dates of inspection: 4th – 8th February 2002

Inspection number: 193060

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Grammar
School category: Community
Age range of pupils: 11 to 18
Gender of pupils: Female with a mixed sixth form

School address: Stonegate
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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs P. Keeling

Date of previous inspection: 9th December 1996

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Spalding High School is an 11-19 girls' grammar school with a mixed sixth form serving the market town of Spalding and the surrounding area of rural Lincolnshire. The school is about the same size as other secondary schools. There are 1001 pupils of whom 238 are in the sixth form. There are 17 boys in Year 12 and 10 boys in Year 13. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is well below average at 2.2 per cent. The proportion with statements of special need is also very low at 0.2 per cent. The proportion eligible for free school meals is well below average at 0.4 per cent. There are very few pupils from ethnic minorities and only 0.4 per cent speak English as an additional language. Pupils' standards when they enter in Year 7 are well above average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an effective school. By Year 11, pupils' standards in examinations are very high, and pupils' achievement, in relation to what they know and can do when they start in Year 7, is good. Achievement in the sixth form is satisfactory, in relation to students' standards when starting in the sixth form. Teaching and learning are good in all years, and leadership is good. The school gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- There is an ethos of hard work and perseverance that leads to pupils working hard and learning well in all years.
- Good teaching and learning enable pupils to achieve high standards.
- There has been good improvement since the previous inspection, and very good improvement in teaching in the sixth form
- Leadership is good and there is effective planning to maintain existing high standards and develop new initiatives.

What could be improved

- Information from assessment is not used effectively to identify pupils and students likely to underachieve, or to set targets or evaluate results, particularly in the sixth form.
- Students and pupils do not have sufficient access to computers in a number of subjects.
- Pupils in Years 10 and 11 study fewer GCSE courses than in most schools, and there are few courses other than A and AS levels in the sixth form.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. Standards have risen and teaching has improved, especially in the sixth form. Pupils and students are now more confident and careers guidance is now good. Information from assessment is still not used well enough and there are still few courses other than those leading to academic qualifications in the sixth form.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16 and 18 year olds based on average point scores in GCSE and A-level/AS-level examinations.

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

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

National test results and achievements of Year 9 pupils

Over the five-year period 1996-2001, the results of national tests for pupils aged 14 were very high and rose at a faster rate than the national trend. In 2001, the results were well above national averages in each of the three main subjects English, mathematics and science. When compared with those of grammar schools, the overall results were below average. The standards of work of the present Year 9 pupils are very high and pupils achieve well in relation to their starting points at the beginning of Year 7. Compared with national standards, pupils' attainment on entry in English is very high, but merely above average in mathematics and science. Standards of work seen in Year 9 are very high in English, mathematics and science and in other subjects sampled.

GCSE results and achievements of Year 11 pupils

GCSE results were very high over the four-year period 1997-2001. In 2001, the results were average compared with grammar schools. The governors' target for the average point score per pupil was exceeded though target percentages of pupils achieving five or more grades A* to C and five or more A* to G grades at GCSE were missed by a small margin. The highest GCSE results were in history, religious education and modern languages. The standards of work of the present Year 11 pupils are very high. Overall, pupils achieve well. The highest standards were seen in food technology.

A-level results and achievements of the sixth form students

A level and AS results were well above average in 2001 and have been so for the past four years. In 2001, most students achieved grades in line with or better than expected in view of their high standards on entry. A few did not do as well as they should, mainly in mathematics and sciences. Work seen is well above average and matches examination results. Achievement, in relation to students' high starting points in Year 12 is satisfactory.

Standards in literacy and numeracy are very high, and pupils and students use information and communication technology (ICT) proficiently in all years.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Excellent in all years. Pupils and students like school and speak with enthusiasm of all it has to offer.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Excellent. Pupils are orderly, even in overcrowded public areas, and in lessons they listen to teachers and each other with respect. They concentrate very well and persevere, even when tasks are difficult. Exclusions, either for short periods or permanently, are rare.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils and students grow into mature young people, and relationships amongst pupils and students, and with teachers are friendly and based on mutual respect.
Attendance	Very good in the main school and sixth form. Authorised absence is well below average, and there is no recorded unauthorised absence for the previous year.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching is good in the main school and sixth form, and across subjects. Teachers know their subjects very well and convey their enthusiasm for scholarship to pupils and students, so that they not only learn well, but also enjoy learning. There is very little difference in the quality of teaching between the age groups and most lessons are characterised by careful planning so that lessons contain a suitable range of activities that encourage pupils and students to work independently and make discoveries for themselves. In mathematics and science in Years 7 to 11 the quality of teaching is more varied, and while most teaching is good, and sometimes very good, some lessons have minor weaknesses. Here teachers sometimes talk for too long and although pupils listen well and concentrate, they do not have enough opportunity to express their ideas in discussion. This is also a fault in modern languages in all years and therefore pupils do not learn to speak with as much confidence as they write. Teaching in the sixth form is well suited to the more mature needs of students, but in a few lessons students do not learn as actively as they should because teachers tend to lecture, without involving students enough. Literacy and numeracy are taught well. Very good additional help with literacy is given to pupils, particularly in Years 7 to 9. By the time they reach Year 10 few pupils have difficulty writing, spelling or using language correctly. Numeracy is well taught in mathematics and used competently where needed in other subjects.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. The full range of National Curriculum subjects and religious education are taught in Years 7 to 11 together with Latin, but individual pupils take fewer subjects than in most schools. There is a good range of academic subjects in the sixth form, but religious education is not taught, as required. Vocational studies are limited, and there is too little use of ICT in a number of subjects.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good provision for pupils and students with physical difficulties and for those needing extra help with their work.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good recognition of the needs of pupils and students for whom English is an additional language, and effective, well-coordinated action.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Pupils and students are given opportunities to explore other cultures, examine moral issues and develop social skills. Religious education provides a good basis for spiritual development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. The school is a safe environment. Arrangements for child protection and care of pupils during illness are good.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The school has been well managed in the past and the new headteacher has a good understanding of the school's strengths. Priorities for development are appropriate. Senior and middle managers are effective. The school seeks best value for its resources and services, but does not use all available data to evaluate its performance.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors know the school well and have effective systems for maintaining their knowledge of the school's working. They meet most of their responsibilities well, but have not ensured that all sixth form students are taught religious education.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. There are effective systems for monitoring teaching and learning. Systems for using information about pupils' and students' standards are not refined enough for teachers to measure progress accurately enough over a period of time and identify those who may be falling behind. This is most evident in the sixth form.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The school uses its limited accommodation and resources well. Funding has been used well to improve the provision for ICT and provide adequate resources for subjects across the curriculum. The school is efficiently managed and uses funds effectively.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The school has high expectations and children like school and make good progress in all years, including the sixth form• Teachers work very hard• Attitudes and values are very good.• Help for children with physical difficulties is very good.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children sometimes get too much homework, to the detriment of other interests and activities.• Reports that are given out on the last day of the summer term do not give parents the opportunity to talk to teachers about their content.

The inspection team agreed with all that the parents like. They found homework to be generally useful and well chosen, though some consists of repetitive exercises and could be more interesting. They agreed that the timing of some reports could be improved.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form has grown since the previous inspection in 1996 and there are now 237 students on roll of whom 27 are boys. This is considerably larger than the average sixth form of 166 students. 20 students entered the sixth from other schools in September 2001. Entry to the sixth form is on the basis of GCSE successes and most students have achieved at least 5 GCSE passes at the higher grades A*-C by the age of 16. Entry requirements for individual subjects is a C grade at GCSE. Approximately 86 per cent of Year 11 students stays on into the sixth form. Very few students fail to complete their courses. In the region of 76 per cent continued on to higher education in 2001, with a further 15 per cent taking a gap year before entering university. This pattern has been fairly consistent over recent years.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form is effective. Standards are well above average and have been consistently so for the last four years. Students' achievement overall is satisfactory. A very high proportion of students obtain a place at their first choice university. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory. Good use is made of resources and the sixth form is cost-effective. The sixth form meets the requirements of students well. It is a purposeful place where service, personal development and academic study are well integrated.

Strengths

- Teachers' subject knowledge and understanding are excellent.
- Students' commitment to their studies and to the life of the school are excellent
- The provision for students' personal development and welfare is very good.
- There is very effective provision for careers education and guidance for future courses.

What could be improved

- Students have insufficient knowledge of their progress. Opportunities for one to one reviews of progress lack appropriate frequency and rigour.
- Provision is limited for those students for whom AS and A level courses may not be the best route to higher education and employment.
- The school does not make good use of information from assessment to set targets for students.
- There is not enough access to computers.
- Students are not taught religious education as required in 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.

Subject area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment.
Mathematics	Satisfactory: Students are attaining average standards. Progress made by students is not rigorously monitored. Too many students fail to secure a pass grade at AS and A2 levels.
Chemistry	Satisfactory: Standards are average. Teaching is satisfactory but individual learning needs are not adequately met and students' progress is not tracked sufficiently systematically.
Biology	Good: Very good teaching characterised by strong enthusiasm for the subject supports learning and leads to above average attainment.
Home Economics Food	Very good: Students attain very high standards because the quality of teaching is very good. Students are highly motivated and work very hard.
Business	Good: Teaching is good. Students display very good attitudes to learning. ICT and numeracy skills require fuller support.
Art and design	Very good: Students achieve well as a result of very good teaching. There are insufficient opportunities for students to use computers to generate creative artwork
Geography	Good: Progress in learning observed in lessons and from samples of students' work is often very good. This reflects the very good teaching. Analysis of results and students' prior attainment for the 2001 A- level results indicate satisfactory progress in relation to prior attainment.
History	Good: Students make good gains in learning as a result of good and sometimes very good teaching. Students' individual studies are very good and some are excellent.
Sociology	Good: Teaching and learning are good overall and sometimes very good. Standards in Year 12 are above average.
Religious education	Good: Achievement is satisfactory in relation to the high level of attainment on entry to the sixth form. Teaching is good, but sometimes too heavily directed by the teacher. Students reach standards well above the national average. They are well motivated and this contributes to the high standards achieved.
Psychology	Good: Achievement is satisfactory in relation to the high level of attainment on entry to the course. Teaching is good. Attitudes to the subject are very good. There is insufficient use of assessment data to guide curriculum planning
English	Very good: Students are achieving well because of their teachers' very good specialist knowledge. Planning is rigorously focused on assessment objectives so students are well prepared for course work and examinations.
French	Satisfactory: Attainment is well above average. Students' achievement is satisfactory. Teachers' subject knowledge is a significant strength but opportunities are missed to enable students to develop their independence, especially in speaking.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Good: guidance and support for students in many subjects is good. In art and design, home economics-food and religious education it is very good. Overall, advice to help students know how well they are doing and how they can raise their standards lacks rigour and is not carried out frequently enough. Careers guidance and provision is very good. The school ensures students' health and safety.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Good: In most departments leadership and management are good and in several very good. Overall leadership and management by the head of sixth form are satisfactory. However, the monitoring and direction of the pastoral and academic aspects of the sixth form lack co-ordination.

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"> • The range of subjects meets students' choices and aspirations • Printed information about the sixth form is clear and helpful. • School helps students to settle into the sixth form very well. • They are well taught and appropriately challenged. • Work is carefully and thoroughly assessed. • Students are treated as young adults and the school is responsive to the views made by students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is not enough advice on future options post sixth form. • Students do not get enough information about their progress

Inspectors fully endorse the students' favourable replies. During the inspection inspectors talked to a large number of students and a significant majority said that advice about sixth form courses and the quality of careers provision was very good. Students also considered that there is a very good range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities. In both cases these views match inspectors' findings. The inspection team, however, does agree that inadequate and infrequent information is provided on students' progress. While individual guidance is good in many subjects, better provision for general progress reviews would improve students' knowledge of their strengths and weaknesses across their subjects and enable them to raise their standards

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

There is an ethos of hard work and perseverance that leads to pupils working hard and learning well in all years

1. No one visiting Spalding High School can fail to be impressed by the ethos. This is a school where hard work and good relationships are equally valued. The result is a purposeful community, living and working in harmony. The accommodation is inadequate and many public spaces, such as the entrance hall and lobbies at the foot of main staircases, are severely overcrowded at breaks and in between lessons. However, there is never any pushing or jostling and the areas clear quickly as pupils and students make their way to the next lesson. Once they reach their lessons pupils and students settle down quickly and lessons start promptly. There are few latecomers, and teachers do not have to wait for the class to become quiet. This self-control is evident throughout lessons, so that no time is wasted asking pupils to listen and pay attention.

2. Pupils expect to have to work hard, complete homework and carry out research if necessary. In a Year 7 science class, pupils were asked to identify common acids and alkalis in their homes. This homework is set in many schools, and was done much better than usual, because not only did pupils list the usual items such as acetic acid and citric acid, but they also made a much longer list of common alkalis than is usually found because some had been enterprising enough to look for alkali products on the Internet and identify the chemical names of some common alkalis that they could then find in the constituents of materials such as household cleaners.

3. The very good ethos is evident in other aspect of the school's work. Everyone feels valued, and pupils and teachers extend their consideration and respect for others widely. There are a number of pupils and students who, because of their home backgrounds, speak a second language fluently and the school sees this as a valuable additional resource. The school encourages pupils and students to keep up their second language by obtaining books in these languages for the library and by entering the pupils for appropriate examinations in the language. Additionally, the school invites them to share their knowledge of other languages and cultures, in discussions, or through displays in public parts of the school.

4. An Internet link with a school in Ghana helps pupils to appreciate how different communities handle latest developments in technology, and widens their understanding of others' needs. Recently they raised several hundred pounds to send to the school in Ghana to help pay for Internet access there so that they could continue to correspond.

5. Boys who join the school in the sixth form give as one of their main reasons the welcoming atmosphere in the school, and the way they quickly feel at home. Pupils with physical difficulties are supported very well and rapidly settle into school routines, learning and making progress as fast as their peers.

Good teaching and learning enable pupils to achieve high standards

6. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to plan lessons that challenge pupils and students to think hard and extend both their knowledge and their learning techniques. In this there has been a significant improvement since the previous inspection when teachers often dominated lessons and pupils and students were not given enough chance to develop their independent learning skills. In most lessons now teachers are alert to the need to give pupils and students the opportunity to work independently and in groups.

7. In some lessons teachers specifically set out to encourage independent learning in their pupils. English lessons make good use of group work and dramatic activities to get pupils to think about the meaning of the work they are reading, and to share this knowledge among themselves. In a Year 9 English lesson where pupils were studying 'Twelfth Night' as their set text, pupils worked in groups to stage a scene. The teacher's high expectations, and the girls' commitment to their work meant that the lesson got started quickly, with pupils taking up their appointed roles as directors and cast efficiently and without any fuss. Pupils' good understanding of the play and their ability to portray characters through gestures as well as words were evident in some quite polished performances. It was clear from the way Olivia edged away from Malvolio that the girls had a good grasp of the subtleties and humour of the play.

8. In a Year 11 English lesson in which pupils were studying 'Animal Farm' the lesson took the form of a 'Question Time' television programme. Pupils planned their questions, quickly drafting questions and presenting ideas. Those who were not studying history were given background notes to help them and the rest were expected to draw on their own historical knowledge. All found the lesson great fun, and those taking on roles moved into character with zest. The teacher's skilful guidance helped the class to cover a lot of work, and to make useful notes, in one lesson. By the end of the lesson the pupils had not only reinforced their knowledge of the book, but had a clearer idea of its political impact, because the activity put them on the spot so that they were the ones doing the arguing and explaining, not the teacher.

9. In a Year 9 geography lesson the teacher quickly put pupils into groups of her choosing and after a quick question and answer session to remind the whole class of the work they had been doing about population control in economically developing countries, she gave each group a selection of different pieces of information, including newspaper reports, about the ways several countries were tackling the problem of birth control. The girls had to quickly skim read the documents, assimilate the main points, and decide on the strategy that appeared to be the most successful. After only ten minutes all the groups had come to logical and well-founded conclusions that they shared with the rest of the class. Not only did the pupils find the work interesting and challenging, but it was clear that they are used to cooperating, working systematically and finding things out for themselves. When reporting back they spoke clearly and with confidence. When they wrote about their findings they did so cogently, with accurate spelling and punctuation.

10. Teachers are keen to see their pupils extending their knowledge outside their subjects, and this is done very effectively in ICT in Year 9 work on databases. The ICT department, in conjunction with the classics department, has put together a fascinating project based on features of ancient Roman civilisation. Pupils enter data, combine databases, and sort and find information. They use web sites, such as that of the Sussex Archaeological Society to gather information and learn more about The Roman Empire and Roman Britain while acquiring considerable skills with current ICT.

11. Pupils' mathematical skills are good, and in younger pupils these are developing well because the mathematics department is using the Key Stage 3 strategy¹ effectively to teach pupils how to see patterns in numbers, and use this skill to do mental mathematics. Most pupils enjoy the short activities at the start of mathematics lessons, particularly when they are set as competitive games. Older pupils benefit from being taught by able mathematicians who enjoy sharing their skills with pupils. In a top class in Year 11 learning was very good as pupils used graphs to solve trigonometric equations. Pupils sketched graphs of common trigonometric functions and used graphic calculators correctly, helped by the confident encouragement of the teacher who made sure all pupils found the lesson challenging, but not so difficult as to be discouraging.

12. Some of the most effective teaching was seen in all years in food technology. The significant strengths here are the very good planning and assessment of pupils and students. In a Year 11 food technology lesson on food preparation and storage the teacher used knowledge gained from recent in-service training to give pupils up-to-date information on food risks and checked pupils' work frequently. The lesson consisted of a number of snappy activities, including video clips to illustrate points, and relevant computer work for the pupils so that they were continually being reminded of what they knew before, and building on this. They remembered what they had learned about risks associated with food and applied this to considering food they had recently cooked, and industrial implications, based on an industrial visit. Assessment in this department is a model of good practice that other departments could follow. The teacher keeps good records of pupils' progress and shares this with pupils so that they know how they are doing.

13. Teachers are demanding, but in such a way that pupils are encouraged to set high standards for themselves. Where pupils need additional help, for example with spelling, this is dealt with practically and efficiently. Pupils are given additional time in lunchtime sessions to use an effective computer spelling programme that enables them to make rapid progress. The arrangements for this extra help are well managed and pupils are regularly assessed, and can measure their own improvement.

Improvement since the previous inspection has been good and standards have risen

14. This is not a school that rests on its laurels. Although standards were high at the time of the previous inspection, and most of the teaching was good, there were several areas for improvement, the main one of which was to provide more challenge and creativity in teaching. From the account above it is clear that teaching has improved substantially, particularly in the sixth form. The improved teaching has led to improved results in most subjects.

15. Results in tests at the end of Year 9 have risen faster than the national average with the most consistent improvement in mathematics. English results continue to maintain very high standards, and science results are also rising.

16. GCSE results, which were already very high, have continued to rise in line with the national results.

Leadership is good and there is effective planning to maintain existing high standards and develop new initiatives

17. There has been a change of leadership since the previous inspection and the headteacher had only been in post for a few weeks at the time of the inspection. However, he

¹ A national initiative to improve numeracy and literacy among all pupils between the ages of 11 and 14.

had been deputy headteacher for the preceding two years and in this post he had already taken responsibility for a number of plans for the future, so that the changeover appears to have caused little disruption or change in the nature of the school.

18. The new headteacher has a very clear idea of the way the school should develop. With the help of the effective senior management team, he has reviewed the school's current position and set up an effective development plan for the next years. This is a good document on which to build for the school's future. It recognises the school's strengths and seeks to preserve its distinctive character, while keeping pace with changes in education and society. Most of the planned developments match the findings of the inspection team.

19. The school is currently bidding for sports college status, and this is in keeping with the headteacher's philosophy of giving all pupils a chance to benefit from specialist status, and enriching the academic curriculum with a wider range of sporting activities. There are good plans, if sports college status is granted, to extend the curriculum in all years and particularly in the sixth form where the wide range of subjects available would benefit from the addition of other practical opportunities. The way sixth form students already take responsibility for helping with younger pupils, by running the various school councils and supporting form tutors, means the school is already in a good position to set up qualifications such as the Sports Leader Award.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Information from assessment is not analysed closely enough to identify pupils and students likely to underachieve, or to set targets and match teaching to pupils' and students' needs

20. The school tests pupils and students regularly and uses these results to show pupils how well they are doing. Tests help teachers measure their own effectiveness by seeing how much pupils understand and can remember by the end of a piece of work or topic. They are effective tools for ensuring pupils' learning, because tests are taken seriously by pupils who are eager to do well and who, therefore, revise hard. However, tests and assessments are not used so well for setting targets and for measuring how well pupils and students are doing in relation to what they already know and can understand.

21. At present the results of tests in Year 7 are used to predict grades, and to evaluate results on the basis of these predictions. The school does not make full use of these or of other information to set short-term targets for pupils and see whether they are doing as well as expected. This has an effect on the way lessons are planned, because teachers do not give sufficient attention to the needs of individual pupils and students. Test results show that the ability range is greater than in many grammar schools, but teachers do not use this information further to identify ways to match their teaching to individuals.

22. The lack of focus on what individuals need to do to improve leads to lessons in which all pupils and students do the same activity, whether they need to or not. Many of the classes are mixed ability, and while this works well in most lessons, and teachers sometimes deliberately group pupils to see that all get the most out of the activities, in some lessons the higher attainers are not challenged. This happens sometimes in mathematics lessons in Year 7 where pupils are in mixed ability groups. Although pupils' scores in tests earlier in the year are available they are not used and higher attaining pupils who already have a good grasp of abstract concepts such as infinitely large angles have to wait for others who need reminders about properties of different angles, or how to cancel fractions.

23. In some lessons, teachers plan carefully for what they are going to do, but do not link the activities closely enough to what they want pupils and students to learn. For example, in modern languages, lesson objectives may include such statements as 'talking about future holiday plans and revision of future tense', rather than emphasising precisely how pupils will be able to use the future tense by the end of the lesson.

24. At present the school does not make much use of external resources such as National Curriculum levels or the materials available from the Department for Education and Skills to help measure the progress made by pupils from Year 9 to Year 11 and again from Year 11 to A level. The school is not therefore, in a good enough position to evaluate all aspects of its effectiveness.

25. In the sixth form in particular the school does not analyse information in sufficient depth to be able to tell pupils how well they are doing and to focus on what has to be done to improve. Analysis, carried out by the inspection team, of the school's performance against national trends at GCSE showed that students are more likely to achieve grades expected in some subjects than in others. The school is considering whether to use a suitable alternative for measuring progress between GCSE and A level. This would enable subject teachers to have clearer expectations of students, and to know that, for example, English students in 2001 did at least as well as expected in 2001 A level examinations, and some did better. On the other hand, students in the middle range in biology did less well than those who started with lower or higher GCSE results.

Students do not have sufficient access to computers in a number of subjects, particularly in the sixth form.

26. The school's stock of computers is lower than average, and this limits the use some departments would like to make of computers. The school has made good progress with training teachers to use ICT effectively, and most are competent and confident, and know very well the power of computers to extend their students' understanding and enjoyment of their subject. It is a pity then that there are too few computers.

27. This makes their use inconvenient because teachers have to move classes, or pupils and students have to leave the lesson and go and work elsewhere. This is a particular disadvantage in design and technology. Here teachers use computer programmes imaginatively, for example to help pupils design electronic circuits, but have to move pupils to another room. This prevents them easily using computers for a short demonstration or as one of a number of activities in a lesson.

28. Some of the ICT facilities are very good, but there are not enough modern computers outside the main suite, and not enough additional equipment such as electronic whiteboards or data-projectors. For example, in a Year 12 Physics lesson the teacher used an on-line programme to demonstrate refraction in waves, but because there was only one monitor, and neither the web site nor the computer was very reliable, the programme had only limited impact on the 12 students trying to see a rather small screen. It would not have been practicable to take the students to the computer room. In this instance a better display was needed.

29. The head of ICT has made arrangements for two of the computer suites to be available at certain times of day, so that pupils and students who do not have access to computers to the Internet at home can use them, but there is a need for better access, particularly for sixth formers.

Pupils in Years 10 and 11 study fewer GCSE courses than in most schools, and there are few courses other than A and AS levels in the sixth form.

30. Although at the end of Year 9 pupils have a good choice of subjects, including Latin and Greek, individuals only take nine full and one half course GCSE subjects. This is lower than in many schools, including non-selective schools, where the most able pupils often take up to eleven subjects. While the school has taken this decision consciously, with the intention of covering a good range of subjects well, and not overloading pupils with subjects they may not be interested in, there is a possibility that a few additional courses, particularly in less academic subjects, such as business education, would benefit a number of students and give them a better idea of what they want to study in the sixth form.

31. The sixth form curriculum does not cater for students who want to follow a broader, but still demanding, course with vocational elements. This restriction was raised in the previous inspection report but the senior management team and governors decided against making changes. Inspectors feel there is still a case for providing a wider choice, and unifying the provision in the business studies department which currently offers AS courses in business education and economics and a practical business and secretarial course.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

32. In both the main school and the sixth form the school should now:

- (1) Make better use of information from tests and other assessments to evaluate pupils' results, identify pupils who are likely to underachieve, and set pupils targets for improvement.
(Paragraphs: 20, 55, 123, 130, 167, 172)
- (2) Increase the number of computers available, considering alternatives to additional computer suites of computers.
(Paragraphs: 26, 70, 95, 98, 102, 112, 147, 156)

Main school

- (3) Explore the possibility of increasing the number of subjects pupils take at GCSE levels.
(Paragraph: 30)

Sixth form

- (1) Improve the system for informing students of their progress through rigorous reviews at appropriate and regular intervals throughout their courses.
(Paragraphs: 58, 63, 65)
- (2) Teach religious education as required by the Lincolnshire Agreed Syllabus.
(Paragraphs: 48, 66)
- (3) Ensure that the curriculum offers sufficient opportunities for students to follow alternative qualifications to A and AS levels, which still lead to higher education courses.
(Paragraph: 49)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 - 11	45
	Sixth form	64
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		39

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 - 11							
Number	1	15	23	4	2	0	0
Percentage	4	33	51	8	4	0	0
Sixth form							
Number	4	19	29	11	1	0	0
Percentage	6	30	45	17	2	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	763	238
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	13	N/A

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	14	7

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	13

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	3

Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving
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22

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	3.6
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001	0	150	150

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Girls	149	149	149
	Total	149	149	149
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	99 (99)	99 (99)	99 (99)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	97 (99)	94 (94)	93 (89)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Girls	150	150	150
	Total	150	150	150
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	100 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	97 (97)	91 (96)	82 (82)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	0	137	137

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	Girls	134	137	137
	Total	134	137	137
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	98 (97)	100 (99)	100 (99)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	59.8
	National	39.0

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	18	211	229

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	18	211	229
	Average point score per candidate	22.2	24.1	23.1
National	Average point score per candidate	N/A	N/A	N/A

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	18	211	229	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Average point score per candidate	22.2	24.1	23.1	N/A	N/A	N/A
National	Average point score per candidate	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	3
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	1
White	956
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	2	1
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)	57.9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.3

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	13
Total aggregate hours worked per week	332

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	76.1
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13

Key Stage 3	28.3
Key Stage 4	23.1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	2 565 393
Total expenditure	2 488 475
Expenditure per pupil	2 593
Balance brought forward from previous year	33 750
Balance carried forward to next year	110 670

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	6.6
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	8.3

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0.8
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1001
Number of questionnaires returned	267

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	55	39	5	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	60	37	2	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	45	49	2	0	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	23	53	15	6	3
The teaching is good.	46	51	2	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	31	52	14	4	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	50	40	7	2	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	77	23	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	26	52	16	3	2
The school is well led and managed.	52	42	1	1	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	45	50	4	1	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	29	52	7	1	11

PART D: THE SIXTH FORM

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements²

33. Results in examinations in 2001 are evidence that overall, students' achievement in relation to their prior attainment is satisfactory. They enter the sixth form with high GCSE grades and most maintain this level of achievement through their sixth form courses. The most recent results for 18-year-olds were above average, with performance being particularly good in A level home economics, food and design and technology, where results in 2001 were significantly above the national average. In chemistry and business education, examination results indicate underachievement because students did less well than their GCSE grades predicted. A small number of students failed to gain a grade in a few subjects, notably sciences and mathematics. In AS examinations for 17 year olds in 2001, a high proportion of students gained a grade A or B.

34. Girls did significantly better than boys in history, geography, sociology and religious education. Students from minority ethnic backgrounds attained similar standards to their peers.

35. Standards of work seen during the inspection, from observation of lessons and from analysis of written work, were well above average in geography, religious education, psychology, English, home economics, French, history and art and design. In most of the remaining subjects, (sociology, mathematics, business education and biology) standards are above average. In chemistry standards are in line with national averages.

36. Students have very good command of English. They are fluent and articulate, and in many lessons lively debate and discussion are encouraged by teachers to promote both oral skills and deeper subject knowledge.

37. Most students make good progress in developing subject knowledge, understanding and skills. In psychology Year 12 students settle well into the course and their extended writing progresses well as a consequence of the careful teaching of communication and problem solving skills. Higher attaining students are not rigorously challenged to go beyond the confines of the syllabus in biology.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

38. Attitudes are excellent and the attendance record is good. Students are punctual and use their non-lesson time productively. A significant majority appreciates the opportunities available to them in the school and are proud of their school.

39. They are enthusiastic about their work and want to do well. They are confident and articulate, are fully involved in the life of the school and are very good role models for younger pupils. They carry out a range of duties diligently, accepting responsibility in houses and in a range of sporting, musical and drama activities and acting as representatives on the Sixth Form Committee. Students also help form and subject staff lower down in the school as well as acting as very good ambassadors for the school in community activities.

² In the following section, A level refers to the two-year course taken up to 2001. AS refers to the new one-year course usually taken in Year 12 or 13 and A2 is the higher level course students may choose to take in Year 13, after completing an AS course in that subject.

40. Students develop mature, responsible attitudes and are supportive of younger students. Most develop good independent learning skills in and out of lessons. Particularly good examples were seen in psychology and home economics. In psychology, students carry out well-planned research and this skill was also observed in home economics coursework. In some subjects however, for example in religious education, students are sometimes passive and over reliant on the teacher.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

41. The overall quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form is good. Over 83 per cent of teaching seen was good or better and almost all the remaining teaching was at least satisfactory. There has been a big improvement since the previous inspection. Teaching and learning in most subjects are good and are very good in art and design, biology, home economics, and English. Teaching in chemistry and mathematics is satisfactory.

42. A major strength of the teaching is the very good subject knowledge teachers have and their mastery of relevant concepts and skills related to their subject areas. This subject expertise is very effectively used to provide clear, coherent and well-argued expositions of subject content and to ask students probing questions which help to develop their thinking and deepen their subject knowledge. Students recognise this subject strength amongst their teachers and are well motivated and confident as a result. For example, in English, teachers' familiarity and ease with the texts and the views of critics enables students to substantiate their personal responses. In art and design and biology the very good specialist knowledge is used to provide stimulating lessons that fire students' enthusiasm and engage their interest.

43. Sometimes though, students' high level of confidence in their teachers' subject knowledge means that they do not question what they are told or that they become over reliant on teachers. In mathematics pupils listen well but much of the talking is done by the teacher, and although students respond when questioned, they do not seek clarification. This sometimes happens in religious education, chemistry and French. In these subjects, students are sometimes reluctant to work on their own or are given insufficient opportunities to do so. In French limited opportunities are given in lessons to develop speaking skills. Conversely in home economics, students are adept at conducting their own research and discovering new ideas for themselves.

44. In the best lessons students are provided with imaginative and creative tasks to help them learn. In a very effective psychology lesson students used a number of sources, including information on laboratory and field experiments to examine the pitfalls of offender profiling. The point was driven home by the use of a relevant video clip. Teachers of home economics emphasise scientific concepts very effectively to teach theoretical aspects of the subject through practical activities.

45. In some subjects, in certain lessons, discussions and speaking activities are too often dominated by the teacher. This was particularly so in French and in some lessons in religious education. In mathematics while the best lessons have clear objectives, too often the planning is based on what is going to be covered in the lesson rather than on what students will learn. In chemistry the range of teaching and learning activities is limited and they do not fully meet the individual needs of students by challenging the highest attainers.

46. Key skills of communication, application of number and ICT are taught satisfactorily through the general studies course.

47. Teachers make high demands on students' essay writing skills and these are first rate in many cases. Use of numeracy is well developed across most subjects of the curriculum. Greater support for numeracy is required in business education.

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

48. A wide range of "traditional" sixth form courses is available to meet the needs and aspirations of potential students. Other subjects include sociology, psychology, classics, economics and business. Insufficient opportunity is however provided for students to cover religious education topics in line with the statutory requirements of the Lincolnshire Agreed Syllabus. The school is therefore not meeting statutory requirements for religious education in the sixth form. This was the situation at the time of the last inspection when the breach was made a key issue.

49. There are limited opportunities for students to take vocational courses. Students can choose an accredited business administration course, but this currently involves very small numbers. The lack of alternative courses for students for whom A level and AS level may not be the best route to employment or higher education was raised as a key issue in the last report in 1996. Although most students find the sixth form courses appropriate, there are still a few who do not achieve a grade in all their advanced level subjects, and others who achieve low grades, for whom different courses that are rigorous and demanding, but require different learning styles, would be more appropriate.

50. The provision for the small number of students with special education needs is very good.

51. A good general studies course includes a programme for the provision of key skills in communication, application of number and information technology that is taught effectively by a team of specialist staff. In addition, discussion of a wide range of issues contributes effectively towards students' personal development and understanding of citizenship

52. There is a wide range of extra curricular activities. Many sixth form students take part, often in a leading or supportive role. Opportunities including community service, Young Enterprise, Duke of Edinburgh Award and a range of musical, sporting and drama and public speaking activities.

53. Some students who responded to the student questionnaire were concerned about the amount and quality of provision for 'life after the sixth form'. After talking to students and the careers staff and discussing the guidance provided and examining the quality of information available to students inspectors consider it to be a very good provision. There has been significant improvement since the previous inspection.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

Assessment

54. Although day-to-day procedures for assessing students' academic progress are good in most subjects, information from such assessments is not effectively analysed and used to keep track of students' progress. In many subjects there is a need for closer analysis of results and greater focus on providing both short and long term written and measurable targets. Insufficient progress has been made since the last inspection.

55. In some subjects such as chemistry this lack of analysis and monitoring is a contributory factor in the underachievement of some students. In English good procedures have been developed to assess and record progress, but not enough use is made of information to help identify those who need more support. There is little analysis in mathematics. In home economics progress is monitored meticulously and this is an example of good practice that the school could build on.

56. Marking is generally good but there are some inconsistencies in and between subject departments. Marking is very thorough and helpful in home economics, English and religious education. Classroom feedback generally reinforces written comments and all make a positive contribution to students' ability to assess their own progress. In psychology while the marking is thorough some students complained of excessive delay in the return of marked work. In chemistry, work is regularly marked and advice is given on how to improve standards but the comments are insufficiently focused on learning targets.

Advice, support and guidance

57. The school has good procedures for ensuring students safety and welfare. Students are provided with information about a range of issues including substance abuse HIV/Aids and sex education, so that they gain an informed perspective on critical and sensitive issues.

58. Most teachers give good day-to-day advice and support within their subjects and the pastoral team is accessible and provides an effective service for students. Tracking of students' progress over a longer period is less effective and there are too few opportunities for teachers and students to carry out regular reviews of progress. The system of 'one to one' reviews with senior management is currently being revised to make it more rigorous and provide students with clearer guidance. The sixth form pastoral team is doing the same for Year 12.

59. The advice and support provided for students entering the sixth form are satisfactory. Students can attend two induction days for Year 11 students immediately after their GCSE examinations to find out about opportunities available post 16. They are able to talk to teachers about courses and sample lessons are provided in subjects. Full and useful documentation is provided about courses. There are effective arrangements for the induction of external students into the sixth form.

60. Up to date careers information is available from the teacher in charge of careers and in the careers office library. The school intentionally guides students to make informed choices and encourages them to carry out research into options and careers. It is not a "you should do this" approach. Most students spoken to were appreciative of the quality of information and guidance provided. Although some of the students who completed the questionnaire, felt that more should be done for them, this is, in fact, very good provision. There is an effective programme of induction into the sixth form.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

61. Parents' views of the school are very positive. They agree that the school sets high standards, has high expectations and helps their children to become mature and sensible adults by the end of the sixth form.

62. Students in interviews with inspectors expressed their satisfaction with the school and the support and range of opportunities it provides. In discussion students said they were treated in a different way in the sixth form and the school listened to their views. They appreciated it was not always possible to respond, but they were felt they were listened to and points made were considered. Students are particularly positive about the way they were helped to settle in the sixth form; the way they are treated as young adults; the degree to which they are encouraged to develop independent learning skills and the range of subject choices post 16.

63. A significant minority felt that although their work was marked regularly and helpfully, they do not get enough regular advice about how they are doing overall, or what grades they can expect to get. Some felt they had to wait until a parents' consultation evening to find out. Inspectors agreed that they could be better advised about progress.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

Leadership and management

64. Leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory. There is well thought out development planning for the future. However, at present the role of sixth form tutors, and their contribution to monitoring students' progress overall is not clear. The head of the sixth form ensures that there are supportive relationships and all students have equal access to the wide range of opportunities provided. Students are helped to settle into sixth form studies and teachers and tutors are available to assist students.

65. Heads of departments monitor teaching effectively in most subjects, and for the most part the arrangements work well: teaching and learning are good overall. There is however, a need for closer monitoring in mathematics and modern languages. Teachers with delegated responsibility, for example the head of the sixth form and subject heads, carry out their roles satisfactorily. They contribute to the effectiveness of the school and to students' standards. However, the way students are advised about their progress over the two years in the sixth form is not well coordinated.

66. The governing body is very supportive of the school and knows the strengths and weaknesses of the sixth form. Governors have however, failed to provide religious education for all students and this is a statutory breach of regulations. Governors, the head teacher and staff have a satisfactory understanding of the need to obtaining best value for the resources and services provided in the sixth form and put these principles into practice.

67. Performance management forms an integral part of the school's systems for evaluating its own effectiveness. Opportunities for professional development are good and teachers take full advantage of opportunities to improve their skills, to the extent of visiting scientific institutions abroad.

Resources

68. There is an excellent match between teachers and the needs of the sixth form curriculum. The sixth form is cost effective and provides good value for money.

69. Learning resources overall are satisfactory. Classrooms are mostly well equipped. Resources to support learning are very good in French, geography and home economics and good in the rest of the subjects except chemistry where they are satisfactory.

70. The weakness is the number and availability of computers. Attempts have been made by the head of sixth form to provide a computer room for students' independent research, this covers about one period a day in the main computer room, whilst the other two computer suites are available when not being used for whole-class teaching.

71. Sixth form accommodation is satisfactory but there are limited private study facilities outside the common room area.

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

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

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

GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	7	71	62	14	15	1.9	1.5
Biology	28	93	N/A	50	N/A	3.1	N/A
Chemistry	24	92	N/A	33	N/A	N/A	N/A
Home Economics -Food	7	100	N/A	96	N/A	2.8	N/A
Business	28	92	77	22	12	3.0	1.7
Art	6	100	N/A	100	N/A	N/A	N/A
Geography	35	97	92	47	38	6.6	5.5
History	36	97	N/A	64	36	N/A	N/A
Religious education	21	100	85	48	26	3.7	2.4
Psychology	9	100	90	22	11	2.4	1.5
Sociology	42	80	72	22	7	1.0	1.2
English literature	54	100	54	80	37	4.0	2.9
French	12	100	77	33	13	2.9	1.7

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	11	82	87	73	43	7.1	5.8
Biology	15	100	88	47	34	7.1	5.3
Chemistry	14	93	90	29	43	5.0	5.9
Home Economics -Food	10	100	83	100	28	10.0	4.8
Art history	6	100	N/A	17	N/A	N/A	N/A
Art	10	100	96	80	46	7.1	6.6
Geography	21	100	92	57	38	6.6	5.7
History	20	100	88	40	35	6.8	5.5
Religious Education	14	100	93	50	38	7.1	5.8
Psychology	N/A	100	87	72	34	7.9	5.3
Sociology	27	92	90	33	35	5.4	5.3
English Literature	41	100	95	22	37	6.1	5.9
French	16	94	89	56	38	7.1	5.6

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The focus during the inspection was on mathematics, biology and chemistry. Physics was sampled in addition. Teaching in physics is satisfactory and most students achieve at least the standards expected of them. A few students failed to achieve a pass grade at A level last year and results overall were close to the national average.

Mathematics

Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Results are above national averages;
- The standard of work that students produce is above average;
- Teachers' subject knowledge and understanding is very good;
- Students' attitudes are usually very good. Most are highly motivated and work hard.

Areas for improvement

- Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning is not rigorous enough;
- The department does not analyse examinations results closely enough to identify underachievement;
- The progress made by individual students is not monitored closely enough.

72. Most students are achieving satisfactorily in relation to their GCSE results at the end of Year 11. However, the progress made by some students is not monitored closely enough and a small, but significant, number failed to achieve a 'pass' grade at both AS and A levels in 2001. Standards overall have improved since the last inspection. Students gain results consistently higher than the national average. A notable feature has been an improvement in the proportion of A and B grades. This represents satisfactory achievement, given the above average standards of students when they start the course.

73. Numbers taking mathematics have varied over recent years, and the subject is chosen by both female and male students. There have been about 20 in both years, except for last year when they fell. They have picked up again this year. In 2001, 7 students took the AS examination. The pass rate at A-B was broadly comparable to the national average and at A-E it was above the average. Some were not successful. 11 students entered the A-level examination. The percentage attaining A-B was well above the national average, while at A-E it was broadly in line with the average. The subject is not as successful as several others in the school.

74. The standard of work seen in lessons and in students' folders is above average. Students in Year 12 are several months into their course, and are achieving as well they should. They are successfully moving on from their GCSE work into new areas. In a lesson on statistics they quickly learned what 'quartile' and 'inter-quartile' mean. They calculated quite easily the quartile for raw data and ungrouped frequency distributions. Students in Year 13 are benefiting from successes already achieved in their AS work and are responding well to the demands of the more advanced work. In a lesson on pure mathematics they developed a sound understanding of the probability function, and appreciated that a sketch of the data is often helpful. In mechanics they know that a quantity that is specified by a magnitude and a direction is called a vector, and understand the two key concepts of column vectors and

lengths of vectors. The subject makes a good contribution to students' communication skills, particularly note taking.

75. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers' command of the subject is very good. The best lessons always have clear objectives. However, too often the focus is on the broad concept of what is going to be covered during a lesson rather than what teachers expect all students to learn by its end. Ongoing assessment through effective questioning ensures that if students find techniques difficult to comprehend, the discussion is interspersed with practice exercises. In the most effective lesson seen the teacher applied this flexibility well.

76. The pace of lessons has improved since the last inspection and teachers now provide the appropriate levels of challenge. Consequently, most students of all prior attainments work hard. They make notes assiduously. Most are highly motivated and complete their homework tasks diligently. The attendance of a few is unhelpful to their rate of progress. Marking of students' work contains enough detail to help students to see how they can improve. However, insufficient attention is given to the learning needs of individual students, who have quite wide levels of prior attainment. The lack of analysis of results in previous years and the attendant lack of target setting for current students, means that teachers are not alert enough to the need to make sure all students get the attention they need.

77. Mathematics in the sixth form is soundly managed on a day to day basis. However, the monitoring and evaluation of teaching is poor and not enough is done to address the needs of those students who find the subject difficult at both AS and A level. The lack of analysis of students' results and standards is a weakness of the department that means teachers are not sufficiently aware of the best strategies to be used for individual students.

Biology

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

Strengths

- Well above average results at GCE A level;
- Very good teaching using a range of resources;
- Thorough, supportive marking.

Areas for improvement

- Some lessons do not cater for the range of student abilities;
- ICT is not used widely enough

78. Standards of work seen in the sixth form during the inspection are above average. These standards are achieved because the teaching is very good. Students' attitudes and the wide range of practical resources also cause the quality of their learning in biology lessons to be very good. However, some lessons do not cater adequately for the wide ability range. In relation to their attainment when they start the course, achievement overall is good.

79. GCE A level results in three of the last four years have been well above the national average for all schools. In 2001, the results were well above average: all students who took the examination achieved a pass grade and the proportion gaining the highest grades, A and B, was also above average. Male and female students did equally well. Almost all students completed the course. In relation to their GCSE results, most students did as expected but about a quarter did slightly less well. In 2001, GCE AS level results were above average:

almost all students who took the examination obtained a pass grade and half of the passes were at the higher grades.

80. Standards of work of current students are above average, and in line with attainment expected on the basis of students' previous results at GCSE and AS levels. Male and female students do equally well. Students in Year 12 can use models to explain semi-conservative replication of DNA; they are able to extract appropriate material from a journal article to answer questions on recent research in genetics. In Year 13, a very clear explanation, using a projected image from a microscope focused student learning on the techniques of using a haemocytometer. This meant that all students, working individually or in pairs, were able to use this apparatus to count the cells of yeast in three squares of the haemocytometer grid. Higher attaining students obtained the class average count of yeast cells per cm^3 . However, they did not consider sources of error, and the appropriate number of significant figures to quote.

81. Achievement of students in relation to their attainment on entry to the course is good. Students include a range from those with A* at GCSE to others with C at foundation level and these students have not been prepared for advanced work on all topics, e.g. osmosis. The ablest students are achieving a grade A in examinations and their work in lessons is also of this standard. However, teaching does not encourage gifted students to go beyond the confines of the subject specification. The library has a good range of modern textbooks. There are very few books of a more general biological nature, either describing the history of work on the double helix, or of modern research, for example on genetics, microbiology or biochemistry. This means that interested students have little scope, beyond reading journals, for extending their awareness of wider aspects of biology.

82. Teaching is good overall, and students learn well as a result, but learning is to some extent inhibited by the large numbers in the AS class. Both teachers display great enthusiasm for biology, and have excellent subject knowledge. Lessons are very well planned and use a wide range of resources and teaching methods. These include use of models, video, practical and fieldwork, with several different approaches to the same topic to ensure that students understand. Practical work includes ICT, for example the use of pH probes, but is less ambitious than would be expected for the level and ability of students. In other lessons, CD-ROM's or other ICT resources, are not sufficiently used.

83. Teachers support students well. Lessons are well managed and students' attitudes and behaviour are very good throughout. They work well in whole class discussion and in pairs for practical work. They show their learning through the challenging questions they ask and through their evident interest in practical biology. Homework is set regularly and is marked thoroughly with helpful comments and clear grading so that students know how well they are doing. Additional student notes added when the homework is discussed in class also aid learning. Teachers prepare students thoroughly for practical activities and support all students. For example, when Year 12 dissected a heart the ablest students worked out for themselves the reasons for the different thickness of ventricles, and the teacher explained this to weaker students.

84. The department is well managed, with very good teaching schemes that include residential fieldwork courses and a good variety of learning opportunities. However, although day-to-day teaching is very good, teachers are not required to set clear targets for students nor do they regularly monitor to ensure that achievement over the course is at least in line with expectations. One GCE AS level set has 22 students covering a wide ability range and although teachers are arranging voluntary lunchtime sessions for foundation GCSE students, within lessons there is insufficient support to ensure that mid-ability students achieve in line with expectations.

Chemistry

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

Strengths

- Teachers' very good subject knowledge and understanding is shown in clear explanations of chemical concepts;
- Students' positive attitude to work makes a significant contribution to their learning;
- Practical work is taught in a structured way and students have very good investigative skills.

Areas for improvement

- There is some underachievement across the range of attainment;
- The range of teaching and learning activities is limited and does not fully meet the individual needs of students;
- Procedures for tracking students' progress and setting targets for improvement are not systematic enough.

85. Standards of work seen in the sixth form during the inspection are average. Teaching and learning in chemistry are satisfactory, but some students underachieve in relation to their prior GCSE performance.

86. The A-level examination results have varied over the last few years. In 2001, the overall results were in line with the national average. The percentage of A-B grades was below the national average and the percentage of A-E grades above the national average. There was significant underachievement in relation to prior attainment at GCSE. Female students performed better than males. In the new AS examination in Year 12, 92 per cent passed, with 33 per cent attaining the higher grades A and B. Just over half of these students continued into the second year of the advanced-level course.

87. The standard of work seen during the inspection is average. The attainment of some students is not what would be expected from their prior GCSE attainment, indicating underachievement. Students in Year 12 are well supported in making the adjustment to the greater depth of work required in the AS course compared with GCSE. In a Year 12 lesson, students were learning to calculate enthalpy changes. The good relationship between the teacher and students and the encouraging supportive manner of the teacher meant that the students gained confidence in their own ability and experienced success in a carefully structured lesson. The teacher's clear and confident explanation and the students' positive attitude and interest in the work increased their learning. Students were able to use Hess's Law to perform simple calculations. Lower-attaining students had difficulties when they did not write out each stage of the calculation, and did not take care with the signs indicating exothermic and endothermic changes.

88. Carefully structured teaching builds on previous knowledge enabling students to develop their understanding of chemical concepts. In a lesson on organic chemistry Year 12 students learnt how to name and work out the structural formulae of alcohols. The teacher skilfully used questioning to build on students' answers in order to get them to clarify their thinking. Students then discussed the effect of hydrogen bonding on boiling point. They understood why alcohols have higher boiling points than alkanes. The teacher corrected the misconception held by some students that bonds are broken during boiling.

89. Students' experimental skills are developed in a structured way, and these skills are of a very good standard. They can gather the required information and formulate a clear plan,

measure and record results accurately and recognise patterns and trends in a set of data with a good appreciation for error. Students find judging the validity of conclusions drawn from investigations and the identification of areas for improvement of technique more difficult.

90. Students have a very positive attitude to work, are conscientious and attentive and sustain concentration well. They are co-operative and support each other well in-group work. Students' work is generally well organised and presented. However, they do not make sufficient use of textbooks to augment their class work. They are not very responsive when answering teachers' questions or in asking questions themselves. There are not enough opportunities for students actively to discuss and debate topics to increase their scientific curiosity. Students appreciate the willingness of teachers to give them extra help when they perceive the need.

91. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. A key strength of the teaching is the teachers' good knowledge and understanding of chemistry shown in clear exposition. Teachers are encouraging and supportive, making good use of praise to boost students' confidence. Lessons are planned in a satisfactory manner with a variety of activities, involving the students in active learning. Written work is regularly marked and students are shown how to improve their answers. This support is insufficiently sharply focused on learning targets, and this limits their impact. The teaching methods seen during the inspection involved whole-class teaching with insufficient opportunities for students to progress at different rates dependent on their learning needs.

92. Teachers' expectations are generally appropriately high but in some lessons tasks are the same for students of all attainment levels so that higher-attaining students are not sufficiently challenged and, in consequence, make less progress. A narrow range of teaching styles is used in chemistry and there is insufficient use of ICT to enhance learning.

93. Information about assessment is not used systematically to track students' progress and to set targets for improvement. This lack of regular monitoring is a contributory factor in the underachievement of some students. The department is well supported by dedicated technical staff. The subject is soundly managed but there is a need to identify specific strategies to improve standards.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

The focus during the inspection was home economics – food. Textiles - product design, and design and technology were also sampled. In both, provision for students is good and they achieve well, often exceeding expectations based on their attainment at GCSE. Teaching and learning are good.

Home economics

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching and learning is very good;
- Students achieve very high standards;
- Monitoring of students' progress using targets and assessment information is very good;
- The department is meticulous in monitoring its own performance to ensure continued improvement.

Areas for development

- There are not enough computers to fully meet the needs of students.

94. All students gained grade A at A-level in the 2001 examination and results have been consistently very high in recent years. Similar results have been achieved in the advanced supplementary examinations, with all but one gaining an A grade in 2001. Results are very high because the quality of teaching is very good and the progress of students is monitored meticulously to ensure that they are at least achieving their potential and they are guided towards exceeding expectations. The majority of students continue into Year 13 to complete the two year course. No boys currently take the subject.

95. Standards in work seen were very high, reflecting examination grades of past years. In Year 12, students have a very good knowledge of nutrition and the nutritional composition of foods which they relate to dietary needs when planning meals. By Year 13, students have well organised folders of course work, which show depth and understanding of the work. They use computers effectively to analyse the nutritional content of food and to research consumerism, but have insufficient access to computers to enable them to make full use of them to present information. They apply their very good knowledge of food science and the function of ingredients, using investigative methods to create high quality food products. Students have very good skills and knowledge of food preparation techniques, for example when they create dishes using different kinds of bread and pastry. They use their knowledge of industrial practice to apply quality control criteria against which they evaluate their work when they are developing new recipes. In their research work, students express their own opinions confidently rather than repeat published text.

96. Achievement is very good. Students enter the sixth form with good experience of the subject, having achieved high grades in GCSE examinations and build on prior learning. They have adapted well to the additional demands of study at this level. Students make excellent progress with research work and in analysing their findings. Because they are required to think for themselves, students are developing very good independent learning skills which helps them to manage their coursework projects and their time exceedingly well and they are ahead of schedule, with time now available to revise work and extend knowledge and understanding. Students are clearly highly motivated by and interested in their work. They enjoy opportunities to be creative and take problem solving in their stride. Students are interested in the work of their friends and relationships are such that they find frequent opportunities to discuss their work in a supportive atmosphere and so learn from each other.

Students began the course with high expectations and these are being fulfilled. They say that they like and respect the teachers and enjoy good working relationships with each other.

97. The quality of teaching is very good overall and occasionally is excellent. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge. Because they are very familiar with the requirements of examination courses, teachers enable students to reach specific learning targets yet also provide them with opportunities to gain a wider and richer range of experience including the pursuit of topics which interest them. Teachers use methods that emphasise knowledge of scientific concepts very effectively to teach theoretical aspects of the subject through practical activities. Teachers communicate with students on a mature level that supports their personal development and encourages meaningful discussion about their work. Students respond very well to the challenging work set for them and to the high expectations of teachers. Work and progress is monitored meticulously and teachers provide excellent guidance to students on how to improve their work. The excellent relationships teachers have with students create an atmosphere of enjoyment and satisfaction in their work, which leads to very determined efforts to succeed.

98. The subject benefits from excellent leadership and close monitoring of performance to ensure those very high standards are maintained. The subject is organised to make best use of staff expertise. The well-structured learning programme, which begins in Year 7, forms a progressive route towards preparing students for advanced level courses. There has been very good improvement since the previous inspection in the quality of teaching and in standards achieved. Resources for the subject have been maintained at a good level to keep pace with modern developments but there are not enough computers to enable students to use them for coursework or to make a sufficient contribution to the development of their ICT skills.

BUSINESS

The focus of the inspection was business studies. Economics was sampled. Very good teaching provides students with a very good grasp of economic theory that students apply well. ICT is underused.

Business studies

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

Strengths

- Teachers' very good knowledge of business and industry;
- Standards in AS business studies are above the national average;
- Students make good progress in their knowledge and understanding of business;
- Students' attitudes to learning are very good.

Areas for improvement

- There is not enough use of assessment information to evaluate students' results or set them targets for improvement
- Vocational and business courses at advanced level are limited in scope.

99. The department teaches a one-year AS level in business studies, and two one-year level 2 OCR³ courses in business administration and business communication. Students taking AS business studies usually follow this with a further AS in economics.

³ Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations

100. AS-level pass rates for business studies in 2001 were well above the national average, with a high percentage of A and B grades. However, though many students achieved the grades expected on the basis of their GCSE results in other subjects, a significant minority did not do so well.

101. Standards in lessons and work seen in the current Year 12 AS-level course are above average overall, and above the national average at this stage. The oral skills of most students are very good. Students' course work notes are usually well organised and neat, particularly the girls', and students define key terms such as elasticity and market penetration well. Lower attaining students sometimes fail to complete tasks or correct their work.

102. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers' very good subject knowledge underpins enthusiastic class discussions, and lessons have a clear focus and good pace. In a very good AS-level lesson the teacher asked well-focused questions to consolidate previous learning on motivation theories and introduced new theories by asking students to contribute examples from their own part-time jobs. This is very good practice. However, an opportunity was missed for higher attaining students to critically compare the work of Maslow and MacGregor. Students' keen responses to the teacher's questions enabled them to develop a good critical understanding of the consequences of poor motivation in particular businesses. Lessons contained a good mix of activities, although opportunities are sometimes missed for greater use of computers in the AS business studies lessons.

103. Overall standards in lessons and work seen in the business administration course are above average. These standards are achieved because the teaching is good. Students' positive attitudes result in good learning and as a result, achievement overall in relation to standards on entry to the sixth form are good. Business administration results in 2001 were above average and all students passed with credit. Some single-subject secretarial entries were made and standards were high, although the numbers of entries has declined significantly with the introduction of the new AS level courses. The standard of current Year 13 business administration students is above average, although they are not working at a high enough level to stretch themselves, and their achievement is therefore no more than satisfactory.

104. Generally, over time, teachers help business administration students develop very good key skills of communications, number and ICT, as well as problem solving and team working. Teachers' caring, supportive relationships with students are cemented through individual target setting in business administration, though not yet in AS-level lessons. Homework is set and marked regularly, and, for AS-level, mainly involves case studies from the good up-to-date textbook supplied to students.

105. Assessment procedures meet examining board requirements well. Marking is thorough, constructive and regular, and written comments help students improve their work. Whilst business administration students evaluate their own and each other's work well, working on their strengths and weaknesses, this is not yet a feature in AS-level lessons.

106. Students support each other well in small groups to complete their tasks. They show very mature attitudes in discussion. In most lessons seen students showed a good capacity to work independently, but there was little evidence of the use of research from web sites and part-time jobs to enrich written course work.

107. Leadership and management of business courses is good, and a clear sense of direction was shown by the well planned introduction of the new AS level courses at a time when there were several staff changes. However, there is not enough advanced provision, particularly at A2. Schemes of work fully meet examination requirements. Students' progress is monitored well, although their progress is not yet rigorously measured against predicted grades. The department's overall improvement since the last inspection has been good, with increasingly high standards and better teaching, enabling students to contribute more to lessons.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus of the inspection was on art and design.

Art and design

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

Strengths

- The high quality of the teaching;
- The very high expectations of the teachers;
- The positive, hard working response of the students.

Areas for improvement

- There are not enough computers to enable students to generate creative art and design;
- There is not enough teaching time for art history;
- Information about students' attainment is not used enough to monitor and improve their achievement.

108. Art and design is a strength of the school, taught in a way that successfully promotes both skills and knowledge

109. In the most recent examinations, results in art and design, at both grades A to B and A to E, were above average. A small number of boys, who joined the school in the sixth form, all achieved the highest grade. Information available for those students new to the school is not yet incorporated in department analysis of achievement. In history of art, the majority of students achieved grades A or B. Overall, high standards of results have been maintained over time in both specialisms. The department has a very good record of students completing the courses and continuing on to higher education.

110. Standards of work seen in the sixth form during the inspection are well above average. These standards are achieved because the teaching is very good and at times outstanding. Students' attitudes, which are consistently very good, also cause the quality of their learning in art and design and art history to be very good. As a result, students' achievement overall, in relation to their standards when they began in the sixth form, is very good.

111. Students are able to draw and paint to a very good standard from their constant exposure to the best. They work hard and are able to develop their closely observed figure

studies, using soft pastel techniques, by drawing in the same way that Degas treated the human form. Practical advice and demonstration by the teacher is almost always supported by direction to exemplar work, such as the portrait work of Lucian Freud, enabling students to gain mastery of subtle painting techniques. Composition skills are good. In composing their own work students know how to relate shape and proportion, for balance or impact, by analysing how traditional masters of the craft used mathematical systems, such as the Golden Section. Standards improve because teachers have high expectations and have taught students to employ the good practice of pausing and reflecting on their work. Attention to the work of women artists, such as the painter Mary Cassat or the sculptor Barbara Hepworth, provides good role models. Students understand and appreciate the art and values of other cultures from a scheme of work that provides a breadth of experience, such as when exploring African 'Spirit Pots' in ceramics. In this, they are aided by an extensive range of resource stimuli to spark their imagination.

112. Following a comprehensive and well-considered teaching scheme, students are able to support their practical abilities with good research skills, utilising the extensive stock of art and design books and journals in the studios. They know and use an appropriate art vocabulary, building on their previous knowledge of key words. Confident speaking and writing about art and design is reinforced by regular teacher reference to new words and expressions, which, are instantly noted down and used and spelt correctly until they become familiar. They use extensive reading and Internet research to inform personal opinion and judgement. While all students can use computers to support their written work, skills in traditional crafts are not extended into creative computer work, owing to the lack of suitable equipment.

113. In art history lessons, despite the inadequate time allocated for the course, students gain a very good knowledge of art. They are able to research a chosen artist in great depth and present their findings in cogent studies, which are well illustrated with delightful and pertinent acetate overlays and cutouts. Learning is very good because teaching is outstanding, such as when art history students are briskly presented with slides and video and bombarded with stimulating questions enabling them to make accurate connections between the work of Da Vinci and Verrocchio. A student with limited vision is very well supported by an effective learning support assistant and by specially produced learning material and an effective range of visual aids enabling minute details to be studied. This results in an understanding and appreciation of art and design to a standard comparable with the group.

114. Regular visits to national art galleries, contact with local artists through work placement, and working with artists-in-residence are instrumental in students gaining an appreciation of aesthetic values and the contemporary role of the artist. Although the timetable does not enable students to benefit from the normal double periods, a designated studio enables them to continue their work in their free time. Standards achieved in lessons, and demonstrated in well presented, well filled folders, reflect previous good examination results.

115. Art and design has made good progress since the previous report. Leadership is very good resulting in new courses being successfully introduced and managed well. The quality of teaching has improved and now is consistently very good.

HUMANITIES

The focus during the inspection was on geography, history, religious education, psychology and sociology. Classical civilisations was also sampled. Teaching and learning were good and attainment well above the national average.

Geography

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

Strengths

- A level results have been above the national average for the past four years;
- Standards at AS level were also very high, with 47 per cent of students gaining higher A and B grades;
- The teaching of geography is good overall.

Areas for improvement

- Under achievement of some students on the A level course;
- The department does not make full use of assessment and other data to both monitor and promote students' rates of improvement.

116. Students' performance in GCE A-level examinations over the last four years has been consistently well above average for higher attainers. Girls do better than boys, who do not achieve the highest grades. However the number of boys is small and they generally enter the sixth form with lower grades at GCSE. Students' performance in the first AS-level exam in 2001 was very good, with four fifths of students gaining A or B grades, and all but one student gaining a pass. However, although most students do as well as expected, a few underachieve in relation to their attainment when they started in Year 12.

117. In lessons and work seen during the inspection, standards in both Year 12 and Year 13 are above average and learning in lessons is good for all pupils. The quality of discussion is high, and the quality of homework and coursework is very high from both year groups. This is because teachers ask searching questions within well-structured investigations, and because they support students' written work well. Also students are well motivated to succeed: they design and carry out independent research well and understand fully the examination requirements for their coursework.

118. Students at both AS and A-level have a very good knowledge of geographical ideas and methods in both physical and human geography. They can apply this logically, and often independently, to problems and some show considerable imagination in their work. For example, in a lesson on changes in rural land use over time Year 12 students quickly discussed and listed a wide range of research methods, which could be used to indicate changes that had occurred in villages being studied. In the teacher-led discussion that followed, they explained the strengths and weaknesses of the methods listed, showing good understanding of appropriate related geographical ideas, such as morphology patterns.

119. Students use the full range of methods very well in their individual assignments. In A-level fieldwork studies there are many examples of students' ability to design complex investigations in response to their chosen question, and of their using well considered methods to examine it and make conclusions. They use maps, sketches and photographs well and understand a wide range of suitable methods of data collection, achieving very high standards of both thought and presentation. Some students show good use of ICT, but this was not a feature of work seen in lessons, which relied on more 'traditional' sources of information.

120. In Year 12 students have made good gains in both knowledge and technique since starting the course. They are enthusiastic in their response to the interesting and challenging work, which has much emphasis on making their own decisions and choosing appropriate methods.

121. Year 13 students progress further and some are very articulate in their responses to questions, being able to use very good recall and grasp of concepts, such as 'multi-use wilderness'. This good learning results from well-focused and carefully structured teaching and from an emphasis on activity-based work, which suits the students' needs well. Students are also very well motivated and show consistently good application to study both in and out of the lessons.

122. The quality of teaching is good overall and enables students to learn well. Strengths are teachers' good subject knowledge, their good use of structure in lessons and their understanding of, and teaching to, examination requirements. Teachers make good use of geographical models, for example changes in land use, to give structure the students' thinking. They place great emphasis on setting tasks that are broad enough to allow pupils to organise their own learning within a supportive but demanding structure. Year 13 students were asked to evaluate three wild areas using the Australian Wilderness Inventory Model, and to record their views on well designed charts. Others were asked to use a range of interesting sources from recent publications such as 'Practical Geography', to apply the ideas from the lesson to three real examples found by the teacher. Sometimes a spiritual dimension is introduced, as in a Year 13 lesson where a piece of modern literature was used to encourage students to evaluate landscape in a different way. Lessons are also generally delivered with humour and good pace.

Work in the subject is led and managed well, and students appreciate teachers' skills and efforts. However, there is not enough critical analysis of results and assessment data to set targets for students and identify those who are not doing as well as they should.

History

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

Strengths

- A level results have been significantly above the national average for the past two years, with most students achieving satisfactorily in relation to their previous attainment;
- Standards at AS level were also high, with the majority of pupils gaining higher grades;
- Teaching and learning are good overall, with some very good practice.

Areas for improvement

- The department is not yet making full use of assessment and other data to both monitor and promote students' rates of improvement.

124. The standard of work observed during the inspection was very good. These standards are achieved because teaching is good overall. Students' very good attitudes and teachers' careful use of resources also contribute to the good quality of learning in history. Students' achievement overall is good in relation to their standards when they began in the sixth form.

125. Students' performance in GCE A-level examinations over the last four years has been very good, with about half of them achieving passes at A or B grades. This has been consistently well above the national average. The number of passes overall has also been above the national average. Girls do better than boys, who do not achieve the highest grades. However the number of boys is small and they generally enter the school with lower grades at GCSE. In the last two years these results have been amongst the best in the county for all grammar schools. Students' performance in the first AS-level exam in 2001 was also well above average, with nearly two thirds of students gaining A or B grades and nearly all gaining a pass.

126. Observation of lessons and scrutiny of samples of students' work confirm that standards are well above average and that achievement is good. The quality of homework and coursework is very high from both year groups. This is because the teachers support this aspect of work particularly well, and because students are well motivated to succeed: they use independent research well and understand fully the requirements of extended writing.

127. Students analyse historical sources critically and evaluate a wide range of evidence well. Many students give well-balanced answers to essay questions, producing sustained arguments, with much detail and coherent and logical structure. In oral work they can apply their knowledge to new ideas and argue their point with conviction. Most students confidently compare and contrast the views of several authors or commentators, but some do not always cite their sources. Essays and individual studies show that many students have a good command of the higher order skills of analysis and synthesis and some can demonstrate this in debate with the teacher or each other in whole class discussion. Most are confident to explain their views clearly in pairs or small groups. Many use ICT well for individual research and for very well presented assignments, although it is not used sufficiently in lessons to broaden the range of sources and activities available.

128. Students learn well overall in their courses, with progress being particularly noticeable in Year 12, where students have made large gains in both knowledge and technique since taking their GCSEs. In both lessons and written work they show clear progress in their skills of using and analysing sources and in their command of knowledge of the periods studied. For example they know well a range of academic views on the foreign policy of Henry VIII and can produce a convincing synthesis of these in response to set questions. Similarly they can analyse their own written answers and note ways to improve. This good learning results from students' consistently good application to study both in and out of the lessons. It also results from well-focussed and carefully structured teaching. The quality of teaching is good overall. Students maintain this progress in Year 13.

129. Notable strengths are teachers' very good subject knowledge and their understanding of, and teaching to, exam requirements. They consistently challenge students to consider a range of evidence and up-to date views of authors, and to interpret these in their own way. Many students develop fluent oral communication skills, but some remain happier working in pairs or groups. Teachers are very effective at recapping, building on prior knowledge, adding new ideas and then challenging students to use these ideas in new contexts. Their questioning skills are good. Although paired and group work is successful, teachers are not using a full range of techniques. For example students do not automatically analyse which will be the most effective approach within paired or group work, because they are not fully aware of the range of possibilities. Students, particularly the lower attainers would benefit from an approach involving an explicit emphasis on building specific skills and techniques.

130. The department is well led and students are appreciative of the very consistent and effective, work done by their teachers to support them. However teachers are not yet placing sufficient emphasis on developing the full range of ways in which to measure and support students' progress, particularly in the use of assessment data to monitor and predict needs and analyse rates of progress.

Religious studies

Overall, the quality of provision in religious studies is **good**

Strengths

- Results obtained by students are well above the national average;
- Teaching is good. Teachers' specialist knowledge is excellent;
- The subject is very well led and managed;
- Students show very good understanding and are able to articulate their views well particularly in writing.

Areas for improvement

- Some of the teaching is over directed. This does not give students sufficient opportunity to research, debate and present their views in lessons;
- A very limited provision is made for those not choosing an examination course in the subject and it does not meet statutory requirements for these students.

131. The provision in religious studies caters for 37 students following AS and A-level courses. There is a two module programme in both upper and lower sixth general studies for students not on AS or A2 courses. However, this is not sufficient to meet statutory requirements since not all students follow the course.

132. Standards of work seen in the sixth form during the inspection are well above the national average. In recent years in external examinations at AS and A-level similar results have been achieved. These standards are attained because the teaching is always at least good and often very good or excellent and students are highly motivated and work hard. Students enter courses in the sixth form with standards well above the national average. As a result their achievement overall is satisfactory.

133. In 2000 and 2001 A-level results were well above the national average and students achieved better in religious education than in their other subjects. AS results in 2001 were similar with a high proportion of students achieving the higher A and B grades. Students maintain their high standards on entry to the course and achievement in the examinations is satisfactory in relation to their predicted grades.

134. The work seen during the inspection, both in lessons and from an analysis of students' writing, confirms that they are achieving at a satisfactory level, attaining well above average standards. Files are very well organised and students show very good understanding and judgement in their critical analysis of texts. Essays display a high degree of relevance and are mainly structured to support well thought out conclusions. Good examples were seen on the ways in which Jewish scriptures explain the concept of God. Students in both years compare, contrast and evaluate the work of scholars very well. Essays display clear evidence of independent thinking. For example, students write confidently assessing the views of Paley and Hume on the existence of God. Most essays in Year 12 show a promising depth of understanding, but in the files of some of the weaker students, essays lack some detail. Overall, work demonstrates a high level of understanding of subject language and religious thinking.

135. Overall teaching and learning are good and in some lessons very good with some excellent practice observed. All teachers have an excellent knowledge of the subject. Expectations are high and lessons move at a good pace. In the very good and excellent lessons students are rigorously challenged to think and express their opinions. Opportunities are also given for students to discuss case studies and concepts in groups and then present their findings. This was seen in Year 12, when students were discussing the ethical issues raised by artificial reproduction and the dilemmas resulting for Christians. In many lessons up to date resources are very effectively used, as in a Year 13 lesson on the possible implications for the concept of "free will", resulting from recent scientific findings about genetics. Students respond very well to this approach; they are hard working and display an enthusiasm for the subject, which contributes to the high standards achieved. No lessons are less than good but in some, despite well-planned information and very good teacher input, students tend to be passive and are not given sufficient opportunities to debate issues and carry out pair or group research. This was seen when the views of the teleological scholars were compared with those of David Hume, opposing the occurrence of miracles and a designer God. More focused attention needs to be given to the development of oral presentation skills.

136. This subject is very well led and managed. The three teachers involved in teaching the sixth form work well together and are extremely hard working. Monitoring of teaching and learning is in place but greater attention could be given to sharing best practice in relation to teaching and learning strategies. Good work has been done to develop the use of the Internet as a resource, enabling students to find up to date material that is not available in textbooks.

Psychology

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

Strengths

- Students are achieving in a satisfactory manner as a result of the very good attainment on entry and good teaching;
- The attitudes and behaviour of students are very good and assist the pace of learning;
- A level results are improving as a consequence of good leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

- Opportunities for learning outside the classroom are limited;
- Assessment arrangements should be further developed to enable students to know what progress they are making within modules.

137. The sixth form offers opportunities to study psychology via a one-year AS level or a two-year A level programme and both options were inspected

138. Results in the 2001 GCE A level examinations at A and B grade passes were very high in relation to the national average. This represents an improvement on the previous year when they were above the national average. These results indicate satisfactory achievement when judged against the level of attainment of students beginning their sixth form studies. A small proportion of boys chooses to attend the school to take this subject. Psychology is a popular subject choice within the school.

139. The performance of students in AS level examinations is above the national average in terms of the proportions of students gaining A - B grades. Comparisons with earlier years are not possible because of examination changes. These results reflect satisfactory achievement when set against the prior attainment of students.

140. Students complete their courses and many intend to pursue their study of the subject after leaving school. In the work seen in lessons and from students' files, standards achieved by the end of Year 13 are well above the national average. Students discuss key themes such as cognitive development with confidence and balance opinion and evidence well, for example in exploring aspects of abnormality. At AS level, knowledge and understanding in the area of physiology is less secure. Recording skills are of a generally very good standard.

141. Written work shows knowledge of vocabulary and concepts, which is at least good and often very good, for example in work dealing with social development. Understanding and knowledge of key studies are good for middle and higher attaining students.

142. During Year 12, students settle well. Their extended writing progresses quickly. This is a consequence of the careful teaching of core skills, especially in the areas of communication and problem solving. The department use good quality frame working materials for students to work from and these also serve to promote successful learning strategies. Higher attainers are able to produce good quality answers to 'short' questions, for example in work on the principal characteristics of perception within early modules of the course.

143. The quality of teaching is good and enables students to learn effectively. Lessons are very well planned with clear objectives, for example in work being undertaken on criminal profiling and work on health and adherence to medical advice. Teachers present the subject in an animated manner, which is accessible by students of all abilities. Lessons are conducted at a good pace. Careful questioning ensures that all students are fully included in activities.

144. There is a very good focus on encouraging students to develop independent learning skills, for example on research within core modules. This stimulates interest among students and contributes to improving standards. There is good independent choice within coursework with a wide range of topics. There are developing links with the police and a local prison, which support the module dealing with psychology and crime. More attention could be given to exposing students to other applied aspects of psychology through closer community links including work experience.

145. Teachers mark work thoroughly. However, some students complained of excessive delay in the return of marked work. Records of performance are well kept. However, written target setting within modules is under-developed. Students are consequently less aware of progress over shorter time scales.

146. Students' attitudes to study are very good. Those interviewed said how much they enjoyed psychology. Students concentrate well and are very willing to work collaboratively when given the opportunity to do so. They recognise the importance of learning from each other and work well in groups. Respect is shown for the opinion of others and this has helped oral skills and the recognition that understanding in psychology is developed through debate and awareness of a range of perspectives.

147. Leadership and management are good and there is a clear vision for the development of the subject. This is well informed in terms of the priorities that need to be addressed, particularly in terms of developing experimental work. Reporting arrangements are

satisfactory but do not inform students of progress within modules. The department has worked hard to refine schemes of work. Greater use of computers could be made to consolidate learning in statistics and research design. Students are less aware of the potential of computers for developing their knowledge of the subject, but are increasingly making use of appropriate web sites.

148. Resources are well selected and of good quality with up to date texts and material to support study within each of the modules of both AS and A level programmes.

149. The subject was not part of the sixth form curriculum at the last inspection.

Sociology

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

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good, and often very good;
- Standards of attainment are above average, and improving;
- Students' attitudes to learning are very good.

Areas for improvement

- Students sometimes find it difficult to recall theory concepts previously learnt;
- Computers are not easily available for use in lessons;
- Students depend on teachers for the material they use in lessons.

150. Standards of work seen in the sixth form during the inspection are above average. These standards are achieved because of good, and often very good, teaching. The very positive attitudes shown by students result in the quality of their learning in sociology being good. Students' achievement overall in relation to their standards when they began in the sixth form is good.

151. A-level sociology results for the 27 students entered in 2001 were in line with the national average. However, the proportion obtaining the top grades of A and B was only in line with the national average for all schools, indicating some under achievement. Students taking A-level sociology attained in line with their other school subjects.

152. The 42 students taking the new AS-level examination obtained good results in 2001. The pass rate was above national average and the proportion obtaining grades A and B was three times the national percentage. However, whilst many students achieved well, a minority did not do as well as they should in view of their attainment when they started.

153. Overall standards are above average for Year 12, in terms of the critical understanding of essential concepts and ability to evaluate sociological terms, theories and relationships. Boys' attainment is generally lower than girls, and they make less progress in their written work in lessons.

154. Year 12 students show a very good understanding of how gender affects subject choices in school, and how the media reinforces gender differences. Students are able to relate some very pertinent examples of peer group pressure, for example, the ways that the school's 'hidden curriculum' shapes teachers' expectations of students' behaviour. Students' notes are very comprehensive, with essays showing good critical awareness of key concepts. The standard of boys' work seen was below that of girls'. Standards of higher

attaining students are better than in the previous year as a result of teaching, which allows in-depth discussion by groups of students.

155. In their previous AS-level work, current Year 13 students found the examination questions in the education module difficult and this brought down their overall grades. Teaching is now more effective and current students explain most ideas well, with good practical examples, although about a third of the class found it difficult to readily recall or explain the most sophisticated ideas.

156. Lower attaining students struggle to remember concepts they learnt at AS-level, and find some concepts confusing because they have not been taught some key parts of the AS-level course. This means that students in Year 13 find it difficult to link different sociological themes together, a requirement of A2 level examinations. Students' knowledge of research methods and data handling is average. Most students distinguish the main differences between qualitative and quantitative research. They show good basic knowledge of sampling techniques, but limited knowledge of critical analysis of numerical data. Students' use of ICT to research, analyse and present information is limited because computers are not readily available.

157. Teaching and learning in sociology are good overall and two very good lessons were seen. Students made good progress in consolidating previous theory and learning new topics. The teacher's very good subject knowledge helped to give students clear explanations of concepts and theories, although students tended to rely on teachers to provide material for discussion rather than provide material themselves. Lessons are very well planned, so that students made good, and often very good progress. Discussions are lively, relevant and challenging.

158. A good mix of theory and practical tasks make lessons interesting, and increase the pace of learning. This sustains the very good attitudes and motivation shown by students. Students co-operated readily with each other when working in small groups, though few examples of group work involving formal presentations were seen. Students' literacy skills are well consolidated through discussion and written summaries of points from articles supplied. As a result of the good teaching seen, students show considerable enthusiasm to learn. Students in both years read around topics well, supplementing worksheets provided by textbook material. Students currently make little use of web-based research, although the teacher has suggested some relevant web sites. Students' work is very thoroughly marked, and they are given constructive comments to help them improve. Appropriate homework tasks extend work in lessons.

159. The subject is well managed. The experienced teacher has written new schemes of work that cover the requirements of the new AS and A2 syllabuses very well. Students are well monitored, although rigorous individual target setting based on predicted grades is not yet in place. Two areas require further development: planning to develop students' key skills of ICT, number and communications, and further links with the local community for visits and speakers. Improvements over the last year have been good.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus of the inspection was on English literature and French but A level work in German, and GCSE Spanish was also sampled. Teaching in German is good and results in recent years have been consistently above average. Teaching in Spanish is too didactic and standards, particularly in speaking, are below average.

English literature

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

Strengths

- Improving standards;
- Teachers' specialist knowledge;
- Rigorous planning effectively focused on the students' learning;
- Very positive student attitudes;
- The quality of marking;
- The subject leadership and the teachers' commitment and enthusiasm.

Areas for improvement

- Continue to raise standards by:
 - Making better use of students' prior attainment data to set targets and to track progress towards targets;
 - Providing explicit exemplification of models of post 16 writing.

160. The standards of work are well above average. The improving standards are achieved by very good teaching. Teachers have seized the opportunity provided by the new AS and A2 courses to provide collaboratively very good schemes of work and lessons with a sharp focus on the assessment and learning objectives. This development allied to the students' very good attitudes, results in the students' good achievement in relation to their earlier standards.

161. Standards in the 2001 English literature examination were above average with no significant difference between male and female students. Overall achievement was satisfactory, but a small number of students did not fulfil their B grade potential. Subsequently, the proportion at grades A-B was below average: it was above average at grades A-E. Since 1998 standards have been constantly at the average/above average dividing point.

162. Standards were high in the 2001 AS examination. The average grade was B. Nearly four out of five students were graded A-B. All gained at least a C grade. These students tended to do better than might have been expected by their earlier GCSE results.

163. Observation of current work and lesson observations confirms these results and the students' good achievement. Standards in Year 13 are well above average, especially in the students' depth of analysis and clarity of explanations. Most write lengthily and very well structured critical assignments on their texts. Most successfully draw links between a writer's intended meaning and use of language: for example, how Hamlet's mental turmoil is suggested by the rhythm of his dialogue or how Tennyson's 'lonely moated grange' indicates Mariann's sad neglect and isolation. Most also organise their work with clarity, sign-posting the developments of their arguments through well-chosen connective terms and commenting with insight on the significance of their quotations. A few students do not reach these standards. They do not include enough quotations, tend to be emphatic rather than open-

mindful in their judgements, and less mature and accurate in expression. A consistently good feature across all levels of attainment is the students' secure understanding of the themes and issues raised in the texts they study.

164. In Year 12 work observation and department records suggest that most students are making good progress. Their essays on the nature of the relationship between Willy and his sons in 'Death of a Salesman' are well above average in terms of analysis and understanding. A few produce work of below average standards because of flaws in expression and accuracy as well as a tendency to describe or retell rather than analyse.

165. The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the previous inspection and is very good. Teachers have excellent subject expertise. They have supported this by thorough research of the requirements of the new examination system. Consequently they plan lessons with a high degree of effectiveness in terms of what the students need to learn. This means that the students are well informed in terms of knowledge of the texts, the views of critics and how to substantiate their personal responses. They are expected to work hard; research independently via texts, journal and web sites, and make their own significant contributions in lessons. Some tend to be more reticent than others but teachers address this with some success through targeting questions directly to named students, frequent opportunities for pair and group work and the use of student presentations. Two students gave an excellent analysis of the climax of 'Birdsong'. Dealing in depth with the complexity of themes and issues in the text, their affective comments on the symbolic poignancy of Stephen's and Levi's embrace also revealed a deeper and more spiritual response. Their contribution was an outstanding example of Advanced level study and learning.

166. Teachers mark the students' work with the highest standards of professionalism. Students also value their teachers' approachability when they require help. They find the short individual tutorials when work is returned especially helpful. They also value the success of their teachers in giving them many opportunities to develop and articulate their own opinions whilst at the same time ensuring that the lessons and assignments are focused clearly on assessment objectives. Theatre and cinema visits and the judicious use of film adaptations in lessons enhance their learning.

167. The leadership and management of the subject are very good as the rigorous response to AS and A2 courses confirm. Teachers are determined that standards will improve but that the students will enjoy the course. Teamwork is strong and the teachers' enthusiasm for literature is a constant and positive feature. Good procedures have developed to record students' progress. Not enough use is made of their prior standards to set grade targets and to monitor progress towards them. This would also help identify those who need more explicit support in the organisation and expression of their writing to achieve better standards.

French

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

Strengths

- Standards achieved in A level examinations are well above average;
- The excellent subject knowledge of their teachers is effective in developing students' listening skills and in increasing students' understanding of French history and culture;
- Students have positive attitudes towards their learning and benefit from the guidance given them by their teachers in developing high standards in writing.

Areas for development

- Increase opportunities for students to use the language for themselves in order to improve their confidence and independence in speaking and responding spontaneously;
- Develop the use of assessment in lessons to ensure all students are able to build effectively on previous learning and are presented with an appropriate challenge.

168. Standards achieved in French at A level over the past four years have fluctuated slightly but overall are well above average for all schools. The most recent results for A level are well above average and for AS level they are above average. Students' achievement overall is satisfactory with the majority of students achieving their potential. In Year 12 examinations, although students achieved well in the written papers, there is evidence of some underachievement in speaking skills. This may be attributed to students' relative lack of confidence in this area.

169. The evidence from work seen in lessons and in students' files during the inspection shows that standards are above average. Attainment in both Years 12 and 13 are well above average in reading, writing and listening and students display a very good knowledge of contemporary society. Most are able to gather the gist of spoken and written French at this level and identify detail from it. They gather a very wide range of relevant vocabulary and structures that they use effectively when speaking and writing. Written work is of a high standard and students write accurately, in detail and organise their arguments clearly. Students have good research skills and use a variety of resources, including the Internet, to increase their understanding of contemporary issues. Speaking skills, however, are less secure. Although students have a wide range of vocabulary and structures they are hesitant in speaking and have difficulty manipulating the language spontaneously.

170. Teaching, overall, is satisfactory. Some lessons are good, but there is a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching. In the best lessons, students' achievements are good because there is a high level of challenge. Students make good progress when key words and structures are illustrated clearly on the board and resources are used well. In unsatisfactory lessons, discussions and other speaking activities are dominated by the teacher, decreasing students' opportunities to manipulate the language independently; this leads to students' lack of confidence in this skill. In a few lessons students have difficulty completing tasks because steps in learning are omitted and guidance inadequate.

171. In most lessons, teachers use a good variety of resources, including literature, which give students exposure to the language in a wide variety of circumstances and which are effective in developing their understanding of past and present society. Video clips and taped interviews are used effectively to bring topics such as racism vividly to life and provoke discussion in Year 13. A good range of well-chosen texts from the media, including the Internet is used effectively to explore, for example, environmental issues. Marking is regular, thorough and gives very good guidance to students about how to improve. Teachers work hard to prepare challenging tasks and to provide detailed notes and other resources but their

commitment to high standards and their obvious concern for students to succeed is sometimes counter productive. Teachers use skilful questioning to elicit responses from students but these responses are often very brief or restricted to single words or short phrases. Although students are given opportunities to exchange information, for example in a Year 13 lesson about urban transport initiatives in France, and work independently of the teacher these opportunities are limited.

172. Teachers get on well with students and communicate their enthusiasm and love of the language to them. Students respond well. Students are mature, attentive and are concerned to do well. They appreciate the excellent subject knowledge of their teachers and the guidance to them. They value the willingness of teachers to give up their time to give additional help when they encounter difficulty. They work hard to produce written work and correct their work according to the comments of their teachers. They work through a programme of listening and reading tasks independently but they find this difficult largely because of the sheer volume of work and because listening tasks are sometimes too challenging.

173. French and German departments work together effectively to establish common policies and procedures. Management of the department is satisfactory. Good use is made of the resources available and the subject curriculum is relevant and meets the requirements of the examination but places emphasis on reading and writing skills to the detriment of speaking. The most significant impact of departmental management has been the recent critical analysis of examination results, which has identified appropriate areas for development. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning has gone some way to addressing inconsistencies in teaching across the department but there is still scope for further development of teaching strategies which make better use of assessment to enable all students to reach their potential.