

## INSPECTION REPORT

**SHIPSTON HIGH SCHOOL**  
**[Formerly - until September 2001 -**  
**Stour Valley Community School]**

Shipston-on-Stour

LEA area: Warwickshire

Unique reference number: 125737

Headteacher: Paul Billing

Reporting inspector: Brian Evans  
1049

Dates of inspection: 18-20 September 2001

Inspection number: 193389

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Secondary Modern

School category: Community

Age range of students: 11-16 years

Gender of students: Mixed

School address: Darlingscote Road  
Shipston-on Stour  
Warwickshire

Postcode: CV36 4DY

Telephone number: 01608 661833

Fax number: 01608 663459

Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr Chris J D Russell

Date of previous inspection: November 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
1049	Brian Evans	<i>Registered inspector</i>	Equal opportunities.	What sort of school is it? The school's results and students' achievements; How well are students taught? How good are the curricular opportunities and other opportunities offered to students? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
1731 5	David Holroyd	<i>Lay inspector</i>		Students' attitudes, values and personal Development; How well does the school care for its students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
2013 2	John Plant	<i>Team inspector</i>	Mathematics.	
8076	Terence Bendall	<i>Team inspector</i>	Design and technology.	
1315 5	John Dixon	<i>Team inspector</i>	French; Spanish.	
2919	Philip Armitage	<i>Team inspector</i>	Science.	
3054 5	David Castell	<i>Team inspector</i>	History. Religious education.	
8002	Lionel Farraway	<i>Team inspector</i>	English; Drama.	
4834	Richard Frostick	<i>Team inspector</i>	Music.	
1532 0	Arthur Penn	<i>Team inspector</i>	Art.	
1505 1	Lynn Kaufman	<i>Team inspector</i>	Special educational needs.	
1085	John Laver	<i>Team inspector</i>	Geography; Physical education.	
3144 1	Maggie King	<i>Team inspector</i>	Information technology.	

The inspection contractor was:

*Westminster Education Consultants  
Old Garden House  
The Lanterns  
Bridge Lane  
London  
SW11 3AD*

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Shipston High School is a non-selective secondary school in the market town of Shipston-on-Stour in south Warwickshire. The school takes students from Shipston and the surrounding villages. There are 288 students on roll, which is very small compared with the average secondary school. One hundred and sixteen students are on the school's register for special educational needs, which is well above average. Fourteen have statements of special educational need, which is again above average. There are no students who have English as an additional language and none from ethnic minority groups. Twenty-seven students are eligible for free school meals, which is below average. Many parents in the local area choose to send their children to either grammar or comprehensive schools which are well within travelling distance from Shipston. The intake to the school does not represent the balance of abilities of students locally and the overall ability range is skewed towards the middle and lower end of that range. The school is recognised by the DFES as a school in challenging circumstances.

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

The school provides a good learning environment and students' behaviour and attitudes to learning are good. Standards in most subjects are improving. Over half the teaching is good or better. Staff morale is good. The headteacher and senior staff, together with support from the local education authority and from its partner Beacon School, are implementing a sound programme for raising student performance but need to make better use of assessment data. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

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

- Standards in mathematics and in science are rising.
- Students' attitudes to learning are good.
- The school provides good care for students.
- Relationships in the school are good.
- Behaviour is good.

### **WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED**

- Students' writing skills.
- Procedures for using assessment data to raise student performance.
- Opportunities for students to apply information and communication technology (ICT) skills across all subjects.

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in November 1996. Overall, it has made satisfactory progress on the key issues identified at that time. Teachers' planning has improved. Schemes of work are better organised to support teaching and learning. There are focused visits to lessons from senior managers and external advisers to support teachers. The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection, when a fifth of lessons were graded as unsatisfactory. Data collection has improved but the use of assessment to monitor and support student achievement is still at an early stage of development. Finance and success criteria are clearly defined in the school development plan. Tutors give a higher priority to monitoring and supporting individual student's academic achievement and personal development. The school does not have a daily collective act of worship. Subject schemes of work highlight spiritual opportunities in their programmes of study. The school's close partnership with a Beacon school, together with a new management structure, provides a strong base for further improvement.

## STANDARDS

The table below shows the standards achieved at the end of Year 11 based on average point scores in GCSE examinations.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
GCSE examinations	E	E	E	E

**Key**

*well above average*    A

*above average*        B

*average*                 C

*below average*

D

*well below average*    E

When they join the school at the age of 11, students' overall attainment is well below average. Average points scores per student in the national tests for 14 year olds in English, mathematics and science between 1996 and 2000 were well below average. The results have been well below average when compared with similar schools. The results in mathematics and science show an upward trend. English results in 2000 were very low and were in the bottom 5 percent nationally. By the end of Year 9, overall standards of work are currently higher than those indicated by the previous year's results. In English, writing skills are well below average. Speaking and listening and reading skills are closer to national expectations. Students make satisfactory progress in mathematics when compared with their test scores at the age of 11. In science, students of all abilities achieve well by the end of Year 9 and their attainment is close to the average. Standards in art, history, ICT, religious education, French and German are below average. They are average in other subjects.

GCSE results have been well below the national average. The trend is well below the national trend, even allowing for an intake in which average and lower-attaining pupils form an ever-increasing proportion. When compared with similar schools, the proportion of students achieving 5 or more GCSE A\*-C grades in 2000 was very low and was in the bottom 5 per cent nationally. It was well below the average for similar schools for the proportion attaining 5 or more A\*-G grades but above average for the proportion achieving 1 or more A\*-G. Although girls tend to perform better than boys, there is some variation in most subjects from year to year. GCSE results in 2001 were similar to those in 2000. By the end of Year 11, current standards in English are below average. In mathematics, standards are average but rising. Science standards are close to the average and show a positive contrast to previous years' results. In art and in design



and

technology, the impact of on students' learning of high quality teaching has significantly raised levels of attainment from well below average in 2001 to average for the current Year 11 cohort. In geography, history, music students' attainment is average; attainment is below average in other subjects. Students with special educational needs achieve satisfactorily because individual education plans are well constructed.

The school's GCSE targets for 2001 were over optimistic. The targets it has set for 2002 are realistic and are based on a more rigorous monitoring of student achievement by senior managers and on a sound analysis of value-added data.

## STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Students enjoy school and have positive attitudes to learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Behaviour is very good around the school and mostly good in lessons. There are a few classes where the disruptive behaviour of a small group of students affects the learning of others.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Students of all levels of attainment mix well and respect each other's views. Relationships among students and between teachers and students are good.
Attendance	Satisfactory and close to the national average. Unauthorised absence is below the national average.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory throughout the school and students make sound progress. Students made good progress in over half the lessons mainly because the teaching was planned to meet the needs of all students. Good relationships between students and teachers assist learning.

The quality of teaching in mathematics is good. It is satisfactory in English and science, where it varies more than in mathematics. In English, teachers develop students' speaking and listening skills well but do not give enough attention to the basic skills of writing. In mathematics, teachers have high expectations and plan well-structured lessons for all students. The emphasis on mental and oral number skills is popular with students and encourages them to become confident learners. In the best science teaching, teachers' high expectations lead to students making good progress as independent learners. However, there are insufficient resources for practical work in both mathematics and science, which adversely affects students' achievement.

Teaching is good in art, design and technology, geography, history, music, and physical education. In these subjects, teachers plan well for all groups of students, including those who have special educational needs. It is satisfactory in other subjects. In most lessons, students show good attitudes to learning and have a capacity to take responsibility for their own learning. The development of students' research skills is restricted by the poor quality of the library.

The teaching of writing skills is unsatisfactory. The school is addressing this weakness through its well-defined strategy for raising student achievement. It is in its early stages and though good progress has been in few subjects, for example in mathematics, history and design and technology, it is not consistently implemented across all subjects. Students' number skills and

their application in subjects other than mathematics are improving. The teaching in designated ICT lessons is satisfactory overall and good when taught by the specialist teacher. In all subjects, students' learning is slower when taught by non-specialists because there is not routine monitoring of individual student's progress.

The teaching of students with special educational needs is satisfactory. Learning is good in most lessons where support staff and teachers work together. However, in a minority of lessons, the planning and preparation of work between support staff and subject teachers does not sufficiently take into consideration students' individual education plans.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. The curriculum meets statutory requirements except that there is insufficient provision for religious education in Years 10 and 11 and for the teaching of ICT in many subjects.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Satisfactory. Staff are knowledgeable and develop students' self-esteem well. Learning resources in ICT are inadequate and the library resources are not well developed.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Satisfactory overall. It is good for students' moral and social development and satisfactory for spiritual and cultural development. There is a good school ethos, characterised by good relationships and mutual respect.
How well the school cares for its students	Satisfactory. Pastoral support is good. Parents appreciate the accessibility of the headteacher and teachers. Assessment of students' progress and the school's reporting to parents is satisfactory and improving. The monitoring of departmental assessment procedures by senior management is inconsistent.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory. The headteacher has maintained good morale amongst staff and students during a difficult period. The reorganised senior management team is working together effectively and operating more as a team than at the time of the previous inspection. The quality of leadership by heads of subject is satisfactory overall, but ranges from good to satisfactory.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. Governors work closely with the headteacher. They are supportive. Their review of the school's performance is satisfactory.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. The school has analysed its strengths and weaknesses and is now setting more realistic targets for improvement.
The strategic use of resources	The school generally makes good use of its limited staffing resources, though there are deficiencies in some subjects. The school gives careful consideration to all its spending options when purchasing resources.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The school expects their child to work hard and achieve his or her best.</li><li>• Their child likes school.</li> <li>• Parents feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions and problems.</li><li>• Parents are happy with the change of name for the school.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The quality of homework.</li><li>• The school working more closely with parents.</li><li>• More extra-curricular activities.</li> <li>• The behaviour of a minority of students.</li></ul>

Inspection findings support parents' positive views about the school. Inspectors found inconsistencies in the setting of homework but generally the homework set by teachers enhances students' learning. Inconsistencies arise when teachers do not set homework at the appropriate time and so students find that they have several subject homeworks to complete on the same evening. The pastoral staff work closely with parents. Teachers, including the headteacher and senior staff, are easy to approach. After school activities are constrained by the fact that most students travel in to school by bus from outlying villages. The school has extended the range of extra-curricular activities and increased opportunities for clubs and practices during the lunch hour. Behaviour in classrooms and around the school is generally good, but in a few classes teachers' classroom management is unsatisfactory. Parents believe that the change in name of the school has had a positive impact in the local community.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. When they join the school at the age of 11, students' overall attainment is well below average. The overall attainment of boys on entry is below that of girls. In the current Year 7 intake, the proportion of students who achieved the national expectation of level 4 or above in the National Curriculum tests taken at the age of 11 was below average in English, mathematics and science.
2. At the age of 14, students' overall results in the National Curriculum tests for English, mathematics and science have been well below average in recent years. They indicate mostly satisfactory achievement over the first three years at the school when compared with students' previous attainment in the national tests taken at the age of 11. However, results in all three subjects have generally been well below average when compared with similar schools. Mathematics and science show an upward trend. English results in 2000 were very low and in the bottom 5 per cent nationally. The overall trend in test results between 1996 and 2000 was below the national average and below those for schools in a similar context. By the end of Year 9, standards of work overall are currently higher than those indicated by previous year's results.
3. There is little difference at Key Stage 3 in the achievement of boys and girls in mathematics. In English and science, girls achieve better than boys because their writing skills are more developed. Improving writing skills is a high priority in the school's strategy for raising attainment for all students. Generally, high-attaining students perform well in all three subjects but a lack of confidence in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy hinders the progress of average and lower-attaining students.
4. By age 14, inspection evidence shows that standards are below average in English, mathematics, information and communication technology (ICT) and religious education. Standards are close to the average in art, design and technology, geography, history and modern foreign languages. In physical education, games skills are average and dance performance is below average. There are insufficient opportunities for students to develop their ICT skills in many subjects. Overall students achieve satisfactorily in most subjects. In geography and history, students achieve well because the quality of teaching is good and builds on students' good attitudes to learning.
5. Results in the GCSE examinations taken at the age of 16 vary from year to year in line with different levels of attainment within successive year groups. The small numbers of students in each year group also means that a few students can significantly affect overall percentage figures. Taking into account the large proportion of students who have special educational needs, students achieve satisfactorily overall. Nevertheless, the trend in GCSE results for students achieving 5 or more GCSE grades A\*-C has been well below the national trend.
6. Over the past five years average and lower-attaining pupils have formed an ever-increasing proportion of the intake. When compared with similar schools, the proportion of students achieving five or more GCSE A\*-C grades in 2000 was very low and well below the average in 2001. The proportion of students achieving five or more grades A\*-G and 1 or more grades A\*-G are consistently below the average. Although girls tend to perform better than boys there is some variation in most subjects from year to year.

7. By the end of Year 11, inspection evidence shows that standards in English, mathematics, geography, ICT, music, physical education and religious education are below average. They are average in science, art, design and technology and history. There is a significant difference between the progress made by higher attaining students and most others in English. In mathematics, standards are average but rising. For example, a fifth of the current Year 11 have already achieved GCSE A\*-C grades at the end of Year 10. Science standards are close to the average and show a positive contrast to previous years' results. In art and in design and technology, the impact of on students' learning of high quality teaching has significantly raised levels of attainment from well below average in 2001 to average for the current Year 11 cohort. In geography, history and music, students' attainment is average; attainment is below average in ICT, French, German, physical education and religious education.

8. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in Years 7 to 9 because the effective work of the support staff builds on primary records. In addition, the needs identified in students' individual education plans are well matched by the planning of the special educational needs department. In Years 7 to 9, students with special educational needs receive good support from special needs assistants either in class or through withdrawal from some lessons. These activities maintain and build on learning according to need, and raise individual standards of work and behaviour. A few students with special educational needs in Year 8 find concentration and mature behaviour difficult and disrupt the learning of others.

9. In Years 10 and 11, students with special educational needs attain well. This is because the school have adopted and embedded initiatives such as SWIFT (South Warwickshire Initiative for Training) to capture the interest of students and encourage them to take more responsibility for their learning. This positive programme enriches personal development and basic skills. SWIFT involves students in a well-organised one-day placement in industry or public services over a two-year period. However, this has an impact on a minority of students who consistently miss subjects such as art because of SWIFT. A further initiative is now in place, RAP (Raising Achievement Programme) to solve this problem. In Years 10 and 11, eighteen students are taking part in RAP. Effective individual mentoring through this programme maintains students' interest and progress in their schoolwork. Mentoring allows them to catch up with work missed. Across all years, girls' attainment and achievement are better than boys.

10. The school's GCSE targets for 2001 were over optimistic and not achieved because they were based on flawed assessment data and insufficient attention was given to monitoring students' coursework. The targets it has set for 2002 are realistic and are based on a more rigorous monitoring of student achievement by senior managers and on sound analysis of value-added data. Inspection evidence shows that many students are achieving well and that the current Year 11 students have a realistic chance of achieving a substantially higher number of GCSE grades in the 2002 examinations.

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

11. Students' attitudes and behaviour have improved significantly since the previous inspection. Most students have good attitudes to school and behave well.

12. Most students have good attitudes to school and to their learning. Parents are pleased with the school's values. This was evident both in discussions held with students and in all but a few lessons. For example, students were attentive in school assembly and entered and left the hall in a mature and responsible way.

13. Nearly all students are happy to be in school. Students show keen responses to the school clubs and extra-curricular activities. During the inspection, 16 boys arrived at school at 7:30 am to train for a newly formed basketball team. Extra-curricular activities also include information and communication technology (ICT) sessions and drama productions. Many students find homework clubs supportive and helpful especially at important examination or course work times.
14. Students with special educational needs concentrate well and achieve satisfactorily. They achieve well when actively involved in their learning. For example, in a Year 11 group, students with learning difficulties confidently up-dated their work experience diaries. In this exercise, students showed good presentation skills and clear, concise forms were completed well.
15. Students' behaviour is generally good around the school. Students' behaviour in lessons is mainly good and often very good. Students in a Year 9 ICT lesson were highly motivated and completed unfinished work in their own time. There is some unsatisfactory behaviour in a few lessons and these lapses in behaviour are handled well by senior staff.
16. Most students are courteous to each other and to adults. There is no evidence of graffiti or vandalism in the school. Relationships between students and between students and adults are good. In a Year 7 mathematics lesson, students worked well and helped each other and followed this up with further discussions at lunchtime.
17. There is a good range of opportunities for exercising personal responsibility in the school. Senior pupils are given responsibility around the school at break times. There is little evidence of oppressive behaviour. No incidence of sexism or racism was observed during the inspection. Most parents believe there is a good social atmosphere. Bullying is generally dealt with quickly and effectively. The school is developing a pupil-to-pupil bullying support system. There are strong links between the school and welfare agencies and police.
18. Since the start of this year there have been two incidents of the use of fixed term exclusion. The school's analysis of the use of exclusion shows a decrease in the number of pupils excluded. Few of these exclusions have been as a result of a long-term deterioration in behaviour. The majority have resulted mainly from verbal abuse to staff. Issues relating to exclusion are regularly raised at assemblies and in personal and social education lessons. Care is taken that exclusion does not prejudice the education of the students involved.
19. The attendance rate is average and similar to that at the previous inspection. There is a lower than average level of unauthorised absence. During 2000/2001 this involved only 9 students. The small size of the school means that individual circumstances are well known and relevant strategies to help are developed, involving the education welfare service and other agencies, as appropriate. Punctuality within the school is satisfactory, with lessons starting on time and students moving quietly and purposefully around the school.
20. During the last academic year a significant number of students arrived late to school, often because buses from outlying areas were late. Effective new measures, including a signing-in book and late detentions, identify unnecessary lateness. Registration times are crisp and efficient and mean there is a purposeful start to the school day.

## HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

21. The quality of teaching is satisfactory throughout the school. Students make satisfactory progress. Teaching was satisfactory or better in 97 per cent of the lessons seen. It was good or better in 53 per cent and was very good in 16 per cent. One per cent of the teaching was excellent and three per cent unsatisfactory. Very good and good teaching occurred in similar proportions in Key Stages 3 and 4.

22. The quality of teaching in mathematics is good. Teachers have high expectations and plan well-structured lessons for all students. The emphasis on mental and oral number skills is popular with students and encourages them to become confident learners. Teaching is satisfactory in English and science but varies more than in mathematics. In English, teachers develop students' speaking and listening skills well but do not give enough attention to the basic skills of writing. In the best science teaching, teachers' high expectations lead to students making good progress as independent learners. However, there are insufficient resources for practical work in both mathematics and science, which adversely affects students' achievement.

23. Teaching is good in art, design and technology, geography, history, music, and physical education. In these subjects, teachers plan well for all groups of students, including those who have special educational needs. It is satisfactory in other subjects. In most lessons, students show good attitudes to learning and have a capacity to take responsibility for their own learning. The development of students' research skills is restricted by the poor quality of the library.

24. However, in otherwise satisfactory lessons, the work is not always matched to all students' individual needs. In a number of lessons, teachers set work that is either too easy or too hard for groups of students and occasionally there is ineffective management of students who have behavioural difficulties. The few unsatisfactory lessons were because a minority of students disrupted the learning of others in the class.

25. There are good relationships between teachers and students. Lessons generally have a clear introduction indicating the objectives to be achieved. In very good and good lessons, teachers provide a range of interesting and challenging activities. Teachers' expectations are generally good but in most lessons, which are just satisfactory or even unsatisfactory, they were not high enough. Important features of good or very good lessons were the active participation of students and the effective use of the teacher's good knowledge of the subject to inspire the students. In these lessons a variety of well-planned activities were carried out at a brisk pace.

26. Learning is good in most lessons because the lessons are purposeful. Students generally maintain their concentration and interest throughout lessons. In mathematics, design and technology and art, students work at a fast pace and produce work of good quality. In other subjects the pace of work is satisfactory but students do not have sufficient awareness of their own learning and what they need to do to improve.

27. Teachers make satisfactory use of assessment to set targets. Marking is usually thorough and encouraging for students; it is not, however, clearly linked to National Curriculum levels. Students are not sufficiently clear about what levels they are currently working at, or what they need to do to reach certain standards. This means that they do not always study aspects of the course in sufficient depth to reach the highest possible level in the National Curriculum tests.

28. Teaching and learning for students with special educational needs is generally satisfactory. It is good where support staff and subject teachers work closely together. Individual education plans, although fully understood by the special needs support assistants, are not



consistently considered in the planning and preparation of work between support staff and teachers.

29. The special educational needs co-ordinator and support team are well trained and have good access to continuing professional development. The annual review of students is praised by parents, through the many letters and cards of thanks sent to the special needs department. Teachers have copies of the special needs register, but it is unclear whether teachers fully understand the detail of the specific learning needs of students. There is good team teaching in ICT and science lessons. Learning resources are generally satisfactory and matched to individual needs. For example, in science, Year 9 used different worksheets on the immune system at two different levels to match the students' attainment levels. However, this approach is not consistently reflected in planning across all subjects. The special needs co-ordinator has limited time to build on the good practice of some departments such as design and technology.

30. The teaching of basic skills of literacy and numeracy is not fully developed and is satisfactory rather than good in most subjects. The teaching of computing skills in ICT lessons is good. Most students learn how to use computers independently and appropriately. However, teachers make insufficient use of students' ICT skills to enhance their learning in most subjects.

31. The school has improved the quality of teaching and learning since the previous inspection report. It has increased the proportions that are good or very good and has significantly reduced the amount of unsatisfactory teaching from 20 per cent to three per cent.

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

32. The school provides most students with a broad and balanced curriculum. The curriculum meets statutory requirements in all areas except for information and communication technology (ICT), which is not integrated into all subjects across the curriculum.

33. The school works hard to ensure that all students enjoy full access to the whole range of learning opportunities available in each year. Written materials promote positive images and are free from stereotyping.

34. The teaching timetable covers two weeks. In Years 7 to 9, all students have appropriate teaching time for the subjects of the National Curriculum. The teaching time for religious education meets the requirements of the Warwickshire Agreed Syllabus, although the allocation of teaching time is below recommended levels.

35. The school tries very hard to minimise the impact that being a small school has on the range of subject choices available to students in Years 10 and 11. However, the small intake in September 2001 (43 pupils) is a major concern because of its impact on staffing and financial resources. For example, in most foundation subjects there is only one specialist teacher.

36. A well organised and good programme of personal and social education is taught throughout the school. Topics covered suitably include study skills, careers education and guidance, rights and responsibilities, health education, bullying and citizenship. Students value their lessons in personal and social education, especially the careers guidance that includes self-evaluation, job skills and evaluation of post-16 opportunities. Topics also include discussion of moral and spiritual issues. The good programme of drugs education is taught through personal and social education lessons and through lessons in science.



37. Provision for students with special educational needs is satisfactory. Students in Year 11 receive good support. Provision for the teaching of basic skills across the curriculum is satisfactory but uneven. Whole school policies for literacy and numeracy are embedded in the school's Raising Achievement Programme (RAP). There is good practice in a few, but not all, departments. The provision of additional activities for students outside the formal lesson timetable is satisfactory and improving.

38. Links with partner primary school are satisfactory and improving. Specific curricular links that enable students to continue to build on their knowledge, understanding and skills in primary school is an area for development. The school has benefited greatly from its partnership with a similar size Beacon secondary school in the local education authority.

39. Links with partner organisations are good. There is a good programme of induction for new students. The school has good links with local primary schools, which help Year 7 students cope with the secondary curriculum in their transition year.

40. There is a wide and growing range of community links. These include the shared use of the site for sport and the swimming pool and a number of strong commercial and sponsorship links. These enhance the breadth of the physical education and technology programmes of study.

41. The provision for careers education and work related education is good. Good support and guidance is given to students when making their GCSE choices. The work experience programme in Year 10 is used well and helps students make their plans for further education and work. The school takes great care to ensure that students have good information on which to base their decisions about opportunities post-16.

42. The provision for students' personal development is good. A strong school ethos is characterised by good relationships and mutual respect. It provides a supportive context for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

43. Provision for students' spiritual development is satisfactory. Most subjects provide some opportunities for students to develop spiritual insight. In religious education, art and music, for example, students are able to reflect and respond to topics in a personal way. The school does not provide a daily act of collective worship, which was an issue identified in the last inspection.

44. Good provision is made for students' moral development. The daily life and routines of the school successfully promote very positive values and help students distinguish between right and wrong.

45. Social education is good, with opportunities for students to develop social and collaborative skills in various aspects of school life.

46. Provision for cultural development is satisfactory. Students have opportunities in many of their subjects to develop their knowledge and understanding of their own and other cultures.

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

47. The school has a supportive and caring ethos. This is demonstrated in the tone of much of the routine correspondence to parents. Parents believe the school is generally successful in generating mutual respect between students, staff and the school community in general. The

school has good arrangements for ensuring the health, safety, care and protection of students.

48. The school has good links with outside support agencies. There is strong awareness amongst staff of the child protection issues. The nominated senior staff member has a good understanding and experience of the issues involved.

49. The school has good procedures and a concern for students' health and safety. The head teacher and a designated governor regularly carry out a detailed risk assessment of the school site and any concerns are addressed. These regular audits and inspections of the school environment ensure the school maintains a healthy and safe environment.

50. First aid procedures are good and they are carried out effectively. These include reporting accidents promptly to parents.

51. The school has arrangements through a local volunteer and a trained member of staff to provide extended support and counselling in special circumstances. This provision is managed by the school and provides good individual support for students.

52. Procedures for monitoring students' attendance and punctuality are good. Senior staff carry out a regular review of student absence and lateness. This helps to identify students at risk or where absence may be indicating other concerns. There are good follow-up procedures for absence. These have been enhanced by the designation of a member of staff to pursue absences on the first day. Nearly all absences are authorised, which is an improvement upon the previous inspection.

53. Students who have special educational needs receive good support. Teachers and other adults give these students positive encouragement to promote their self-esteem, so that they play a full part in all aspects of school life.

54. The school has a good behaviour policy. It is based upon high expectations and fostering students' self-esteem. Class and school behaviour rules and the range of rewards and sanctions are displayed in form and subject rooms and reviewed each year. Students understand and respond well to the system of merits, yellow and red cards and detention. Good examples of positive reinforcement for behaviour were seen in many lessons. In many instances there was liberal and relevant use of recognition of good contributions or effort. For example, in a Year 11 science lesson, where students' attentiveness and concentration during an individual task was recognised sensitively by the teacher.

55. The school maintains good links with local health services and has an allocated school nurse. The nurse is involved in the development and continuing review of the personal and social education curriculum, which includes the sex education programme.

56. The school has a considerable amount of very useful and informative data relating to students' assessment. It is not effectively used in all subjects. Monitoring students' work and tracking their progress is very effective in mathematics and design and technology. Improved systems are being developed to make best use of performance data, particularly value-added information. However, target setting for individual students or groups of students is not used consistently to help raise standards. Monitoring of departmental assessment procedures by senior staff has not been sufficiently rigorous in the past few years. The current arrangements are much tighter and more effective. Students' targets this year are based on a realistic awareness of individual strengths and weaknesses.

57. The quality of day-to-day assessment in lessons is generally satisfactory, and in some

subjects, such as modern foreign languages, it is good. Most teachers use assessment effectively to inform their lesson planning. There is good use of questioning in some subjects, such as history, that helps teachers to form accurate views of the extent of their students' learning. However, there is too much variation in the quality of assessment procedures. For example, marking is good in geography, but weak in religious education. The school meets the requirements of the National Curriculum and for public examinations. Most teachers accurately assess the levels at which their students are achieving. Reports to parents are informative and indicate ways in which students can do better.

58. In some subjects, assessment is used well plan schemes of work. For example, Key Stage 2 tests results are effectively used to identify students for the Year 7 numeracy support programme. Assessment is not yet sufficiently well developed in subjects such as ICT, physical education and music to fully inform curriculum planning. In some subjects, the progress of students is closely monitored. For example, there are very good assessment procedures in design and technology that include students evaluating their own work. In mathematics, a close check is kept on students' work and performance. As a result, at Key Stage 4, nearly all students complete the GCSE mathematics course and gain a grade. By contrast, last year in many other subjects, significant numbers of students did not complete or hand in their coursework and, as a result, failed to gain a grade. This led directly to disappointing GCSE results for the school.

59. Overall the monitoring of students' progress is inconsistent, even in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. The good practice that is being established in mathematics has yet to have a significant impact on the other two subjects, where elements of assessment are still unsatisfactory. Last year, assessment procedures in science were very poor and it was a failure of senior management that this was not recognised and addressed.

60. The performance of students with special educational needs is well managed through the individual education plans, which are of good quality. The plans are regularly audited and they usefully map attainment and track progress. Procedures involving the students, their parents and external agencies work well and influence planning. However, many staff are unaware of individual student targets and are not able to plan lessons accordingly. The schools' policy for gifted and able students is not yet operational.

61. Systems for the better monitoring and tracking of students' progress are being developed. There is a new assessment co-ordinator who has made an excellent start in improving procedures for measuring and comparing students' performances. The school has a published action plan for raising attainment. Detailed analysis of student performance data, including national and school test results, is increasingly being used to establish benchmarks and targets for departments. However, students themselves too often remain unclear about how well they are doing, what is expected of them and what they need to do to improve. Overall, the school has made insufficient progress in developing assessment since the previous inspection.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

62. The school has good parental support. Evidence from parents' questionnaire and from their meeting before the inspection shows that they have positive views of the school and its work. They are keen to know about their students' progress and the school's educational priorities. Parents feel that their students are happy in school. Parents feel that the school wishes to encourage parents and believe it is an approachable school. The benefits of being a small school and thus teachers knowing all the students were noted at the parents meeting. Parents considered the school had made a significant improvement in the last few years.

However, a number of parents believed that the school could publicise the success of some of its students more effectively. For example, there was little publicity in the local area when the school won a major national award in environmental education.

63. Overall parents are happy with what the school provides and achieves. In the survey more than nine out of ten parents considered that the school expected students to work hard and achieve their best.

64. The good links between the school and parents supports students' learning. Parent representatives contribute to the work of the governing body and its committees. In addition, parents with particular expertise occasionally contribute to extra-curricular activities as, for example, in physical education and information and communication technology (ICT). The Parent Teacher Association is being reformed as a Friends' Association in order to enable the group to be more inclusive and involve the wider community.

65. A survey of parental views earlier in the year led to improvements in home-school communication. These included more appropriate arrangements at open evenings for parents to meet subject teachers. The information the school provides to parents is sound. The school prospectus is adequately presented and meets statutory requirements. Reports on students' progress describe satisfactorily the work undertaken and the progress made by the student. Students' individual targets for improving work are not always clear.

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

66. The overall quality of leadership and management in the school is satisfactory. The headteacher sets a good personal example to students and staff and is respected by students, parents and staff. The morale of students and staff is good and has been maintained despite difficulties in the recruitment of staffing. The newly established senior management team has a shared commitment to raise standards in the school. In this small school, teachers know their students well and good relationships create a positive learning environment.

67. The school has made good progress in meeting its aims in the last term. Its partnership with a neighbouring Beacon school has led to the implementation of improved arrangements for monitoring and evaluation of learning, which have contributed to higher student achievement. The governors are very supportive of the work of the school and carry out their duties responsibly. The nominated governor for special educational needs works well with the coordinator for special educational needs. The school fulfils its statutory requirements, including those for special educational needs, apart from a daily act of collective worship.

68. Procedures for monitoring and evaluating student performance were unsatisfactory for much of the last academic year. Many students failed to achieve their full potential in the GCSE examinations because, for example, they were unable to meet course work deadlines. The headteacher, senior staff and governors have successfully addressed this weakness over the past six months and procedures are now satisfactory. The quality of leadership and management in subject areas is satisfactory overall but there are variations in quality between subjects. Leadership and management is satisfactory in English, science, ICT, modern languages and religious education and good in all other subjects. The head of science also leads on ICT in the school and carries a heavy management load, which is partially relieved by the very good support he receives in ICT.

69. There have been changes in the structure of the special needs department during 2001.

Management is unsatisfactory because of the lack of time the coordinator for special educational needs has to monitor and raise the profile of response for the high level of special need in the school. The department workroom is small and makes storage and access to materials difficult, so reducing their use across the curriculum. The department use specific grants from the DfES well to provide a flexible response to students' needs.

70. The school's performance management policy is developing well. Senior managers carry through arrangements for monitoring the classroom work of departments and take effective action to make improvements. There are good strategies in a few subjects such as mathematics and design and technology. Line management responsibilities are clear. Targets are set appropriately.

71. Following consultation with staff the governing body has prepared a comprehensive school development plan, which sets out the school's priorities over the next three years. The development plan is regularly reviewed and updated. The identified educational priorities are entirely appropriate. Departmental development plans are in line with school priorities for raising achievement.

72. The school's annual budget reflects the priorities identified in the development plan. Financial administration is detailed and thorough. Specific grants for areas such as staff development, special educational needs and computing are all spent as intended. The governing body evaluates the quality and cost of all areas of expenditure. In 2000-2001 the school balanced its income and expenditure. However, the governing body is negotiating with the local education authority a continuing deficit of £90,000 in its budget from year to year because of high staffing costs in previous years.

73. The number, qualifications and experience of the teachers satisfactorily match the needs of the curriculum. The school has skilfully managed its timetable so that there are a minimum number of lessons taught by non-specialist teachers in any subject. This will become more difficult to achieve if the school roll continues to fall. There is an appropriate level of support staff, including that for special educational needs. Procedures for the induction of new and newly qualified teachers are good. Accommodation is adequate overall. Resources are not adequate in a few subjects, for instance, for practical work in science and mathematics.

74. The socio-economic background of the students is broadly average. The attitudes of students to their work, and their relationship with one another, and with their teachers are all good. Teaching overall is satisfactory. Students entering and leaving the school with broadly below average levels of attainment. There have been a number of improvements since the previous inspection. These include schemes of work that are better organised to support teaching and learning and an overall improvement in the quality of teaching. Data collection has improved but the use of assessment to monitor and support student achievement is still at an early stage of development. The school's overall effectiveness in its educational provision is therefore satisfactory. The school provides satisfactory value for money. The school's close partnership with a Beacon school, together with a new management structure, provides a strong base for further improvement. However, if the roll continues to fall, the improvement in the quality of teaching and learning and student performance will be at risk because of the reduced level of financial resources.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

75. In order to further raise standards, the headteacher, governors and staff should

- Improve students' writing skills in all subjects by:  
(Paragraphs: 3,22,23,77,82, 83,111,113,130,141,171)
  - \* \*all teachers implementing the school policies on spelling, handwriting and presentation;
  - \* developing strategies for raising the achievement of boys' writing, and of average attainers and low attainers at Key Stage 4;
  - \* enabling independent learning through the development of the library as a learning resource centre;
  - \* providing students with special educational needs with greater opportunities for using ICT in their learning.
  
- Use assessment data effectively to raise student performance by:  
(Paragraphs: 10,22,56-61, 74,107,114,148,166,174,181)
  - \* \*implementing the good practice on target-setting in some curriculum areas, such as mathematics, across all subjects;
  - \* \*ensuring that all students are aware of what they must do to improve their performance.
  
- Improve the opportunities for students to use ICT in the curriculum by:  
(Paragraphs: 4,30,32,95,104,113,123,135,149)
  - \* \*linking the New Opportunities Fund training plan to improve teachers' personal ICT skills with a programme of training in the use of ICT in their subjects;
  - \* analysing schemes of work in all subjects for appropriate opportunities;
  - \* timetabling subject use of the rooms to fit in with these opportunities;
  - \* monitoring the impact of the programme through the evaluation of teaching and learning and performance management.
  
- meeting the requirement for a daily act of corporate worship;  
(Paragraphs: 43,67)

The school also needs to address:

- \* increasing the time allocated in the curriculum allocated for religious education;  
(Paragraphs 34, 180, 182)
- \* improving curriculum provision for students studying GCSE physical education in Year 10.  
(Paragraphs 170, 171, 174)

\*The school has recognised some of the above issues already and the items marked \*



are already in the school development plan.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	102
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students	43

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

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
<b>Number</b>	1	16	37	45	3	0	0
<b>Percentage</b>	1	16	36	44	3	0	0

*The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching.*

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

Students on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11
Number of students on the school's roll	288
Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals	27

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	14
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	166

English as an additional language	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	0

Student mobility in the last school year	No of students
Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	1
Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	3

### *Attendance*

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.7
National comparative data	7.7

#### 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)

Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year:	<b>Year</b>	<b>Boys</b>	<b>Girls</b>	<b>Total</b>
	2001	36	18	54

<b>National Curriculum Test/Task Results</b>		<b>English</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>
Numbers of students at NC Level 5 and above	<b>Boys</b>	13	21	18
	<b>Girls</b>	12	10	12
	<b>Total</b>	25	31	30
Percentage of students at NC Level 5 or above	<b>School</b>	46 (50)	57 (59)	56 (53)
	<b>National</b>	N/A (63)	N/A (65)	N/A (59)
Percentage of students at NC Level 6 or above	<b>School</b>	28 (14)	28 (30)	19 (31)
	<b>National</b>	N/A (28)	N/A (42)	N/A (30)

<b>Teachers' Assessments</b>		<b>English</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>
Numbers of students at NC Level 5 and above	<b>Boys</b>	16	26	15
	<b>Girls</b>	13	12	11
	<b>Total</b>	29	38	26
Percentage of students at NC Level 5 or above	<b>School</b>	54 (70)	70 (49)	48 (49)
	<b>National</b>	N/A (64)	N/A (64)	N/A (60)
Percentage of students at NC Level 6 or above	<b>School</b>	22 (14)	26 (31)	32 (17)
	<b>National</b>	N/A (31)	N/A (37)	N/A (28)

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

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

Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year:	<b>Year</b>	<b>Boys</b>	<b>Girls</b>	<b>Total</b>
	2001	38	25	63

<b>GCSE results</b>		<b>5 or more grades A* to C</b>	<b>5 or more grades A*-G</b>	<b>1 or more grades A*-G</b>
Numbers of students achieving the standard specified	<b>Boys</b>	6	21	37
	<b>Girls</b>	6	20	25
	<b>Total</b>	12	41	62
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	<b>School</b>	19 (18)	65 (88)	100 (91)
	<b>National</b>	N/A (47.4)	N/A (90.6)	N/A (95.6)

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

<b>GCSE results</b>		<b>GCSE point score</b>
Average point score per student	School	21 (26)
	National	N/A (38.4)

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

<b>Vocational qualifications</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>% success rate</b>
Number studying for approved vocational	School	13
		85

qualifications or units and the percentage of those students who achieved all those they studied

National

N/A

***Ethnic background of students***

	<b>No of students</b>
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	288
Any other minority ethnic group	0

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

	<b>Fixed period</b>	<b>Permanent</b>
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	57	1
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

**Teachers and classes****Qualified teachers and classes:****Y7 – Y11**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	17.82
Number of students per qualified teacher	16.94

**Education support staff:****Y7 – Y11**

Total number of education support staff	12
Total aggregate hours worked per week	341.39

**Deployment of teachers:****Y7 – Y11**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	78.3
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**Average teaching group size:****Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	21.6
Key Stage 4	19.1

*FTE means full-time equivalent.***Financial information**

<b>Financial year</b>	<b>2000-2001</b>
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	£
Total income	1,101,604.00
Total expenditure	1,113,461.00
Expenditure per student	3,687.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	(84,176.00)
Balance carried forward to next year	(96,033.00)

**Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	8.7
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	6.4

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	2

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	288
Number of questionnaires returned	43

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	58	30	5	7	0
My child is making good progress in school.	37	49	0	2	12
Behaviour in the school is good.	30	42	21	0	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	14	42	33	5	7
The teaching is good.	33	49	7	2	9
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	26	49	12	7	7
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	56	33	7	2	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	58	33	7	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	16	51	16	9	7
The school is well led and managed.	42	40	5	7	7
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	37	47	5	2	9
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	14	30	33	5	19

Parents were pleased with the change in the school's name.

## **PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES**

### **ENGLISH**

76. Overall, the quality of provision in English is unsatisfactory.

#### **Strengths**

- Teachers develop students' speaking and listening skills well.
- Students have good attitudes to their work, which provides a good base for raising standards.
- Group work and discussion by students in lessons are good.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- Students' writing is below average in Years 7 to 9.
- The proportion of students entered for GCSE English language examinations is well below average.
- Work is not consistently matched to the attainment levels of students.

77. The proportion of students entering the school in Year 7 with average or above average attainment is below the national average. By the age of 14, attainment is below average. The Key Stage 3 tests for 2000 showed attainment to be below average and well below the average for schools in similar contexts. There has been little improvement in overall attainment in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 over the past five years. Inspection evidence shows that high-attaining pupils achieve well. However, average and low-attaining pupils do not attain as well as they should, mainly because their basic writing skills are weak.

78. By the age of 16, attainment is below average. The proportion of students achieving A\*-C grades in GCSE English language in 2000 was well below average. Girls generally attain higher GCSE grades than boys, which continues the trend in the lower school. A significant factor for the school to consider is the well-below-average proportion of students entered for GCSE English language examination. For example, in 2001 two-thirds of students in Year 11 were entered for GCSE, which is well below the average figure for all schools nationally. A further fifth were entered for the Certificate of Achievement in English examination, of whom half gained pass grades. The main impact of this entry policy is to further bring down the already low GCSE average points score for Year 11 as a whole. Just over a quarter of Year 11 pupils were entered for the GCSE English literature examination. The proportion of GCSE A\*-C grades achieved in English literature was well above the average.

79. Students with special educational needs who have individual education plans make satisfactory progress and generally attain standards commensurate with their capabilities. The progress and attainment of lower-attaining pupils generally is less secure. In a few classes, there is insufficient support and where extra help is provided it is not always used effectively.

80. Most boys and girls make good progress in the development of their speaking and listening skills. Attainment is in line with national expectations by the end of both key stages. Students listen attentively in lessons and participate well in small group and class discussions. Year 7 students enjoyed 'Chinese whispers' when exploring the purposes of different kinds of information. In a Year 9 lesson discussion on the purposes of punctuation marks students spoke confidently and articulately and suggested possible slogans to convey their meaning to others. Higher-attaining pupils in Year 11 argued cogently and were prepared to try out their ideas as they discussed their interpretation of poems and short stories.

81. Reading is in line with national expectations by the end of both key stages. Most students in Year 9 read accurately and fluently. Each student has a personal reading record but their range and choice of book is not always appropriate to their attainment levels. In Years 10 and 11, students read fluently but not always with understanding.

82. Students' writing is below national expectations by the end of both key stages. There is a significant gap between the progress made by higher-attaining students and most others. There is a focus on writing in different forms and for different audiences in Years 7 to 9. Teachers use a range of supportive structures to help students. Teachers do not give enough attention to the continuous and progressive development of the basic skills of writing. A significant number of students have difficulty in expressing their knowledge and understanding in writing in GCSE examinations. This was an issue in the previous inspection report. Students' handwriting and general presentation are generally satisfactory. A number of Year 10 and 11 students present their assignments well and demonstrate good information and communication technology (ICT) skills.

83. Teaching is satisfactory overall but ranges from very good to unsatisfactory. The previous inspection teaching was reported as being good overall. Many lessons are well planned with imaginative approaches to motivate students. Year 8 students watched an episode from the television series 'Superman' as an aid to distinguishing between human characteristics and those of fantasy. The teacher skilfully enabled students to build on this experience when writing a brief autographical account of an eventful episode in their own lives. In a Year 9 lesson, both teacher and students worked well together on a piece of writing, thus providing opportunities for students to evaluate their own skills in relation to others. Teachers generally provide good opportunities for students to develop their speaking and listening skills through the effective use of group and class discussions. In a Year 10 lesson studying 'Porphyria's Lover', the teacher successfully encouraged students to explore their own ideas and discover the wide range of views in the class.

84. In some lessons, there is limited support for average and low-attaining students, and the work is not matched to attainment levels. The pace of learning in these lessons is slow and teaching does not allow all students to learn equally well. Class management is occasionally weak and then students' behaviour adversely affects learning. However, this is not generally the case as, in most classes, students' good behaviour and positive attitudes to their work enhance their learning.

85. Assessment is satisfactory. Teachers' marking supports students' learning and provides students with practical short-term targets. The department has yet to apply consistently procedures that identify the strengths and weaknesses in writing skills of individual students.

86. The overall leadership and management of English are satisfactory. There has been insufficient improvement since the last inspection. However, there are good indicators that the department is addressing the need to raise achievement. The department, with external help and advice, is implementing sound strategies for improving students' literacy skills. The introduction of the National Literacy Policy this year is providing a further base for the development of basic skills teaching in Years 7 to 9. Access to the new computer suite is enhancing the range of resources available for teaching and learning in English.

87. Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Most teachers take opportunities to discuss these dimensions as they arise naturally. For example, students discuss multi-cultural poetry as part of the English literature programme in Year 11. The curriculum is enriched by extra-curricular activities. There are theatre visits each year and last year younger students produced a school play.

## Literacy

88. Levels of literacy are below average. The school has begun a good strategy of improving students' writing, spelling and presentation skills. All staff are aware that these are the key priorities in raising student achievement, particularly for average and low attainers. However, the strategy is being implemented unevenly across subjects. For example, departments have written policies on literacy but not all provide key word lists. The mathematics department provides an excellent model for all subjects because it integrates the teaching of basic literacy skills into its lesson planning.

## Library.

89. The school library is under-used and there are not enough appropriate texts to develop students' research skills

## MATHEMATICS

90. The quality of provision in mathematics is good.

### Strengths

- GCSE results showed a marked improvement in 2001.
- Teaching is good, enabling students to behave well and work hard.
- Improved systems for assessing students' progress and setting targets are being successfully introduced.
- Initiatives, such as the development of oral and mental work, are helping to raise standards of numeracy.
- The management of the mathematics department is good.

### Areas for improvement

- The proportion of students achieving GCSE grades A\* - C is too low.
- The support given to students with special educational needs is of inconsistent quality and lacks appropriate co-ordination.
- Students are not given sufficient opportunities to engage in practical work and to use information and communication technology (ICT).

91. Students enter the school in Year 7 with below average mathematical skills. By the age of 14, attainment is still below the national average. Students, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress between Years 7 to 9. Over the last three years there has been a rising trend in attainment at Key Stage 3. In the National Curriculum tests in 1999 and 2000 the proportion of students reaching level 5 or higher rose significantly. The results in 2001 were similar to those for 2000. In the present Year 9, higher-attaining students manipulate fractions, percentages and decimals with increasing accuracy. Lower attaining students are able to apply their number skills to solve problems such as area and perimeter. Such levels of attainment indicate that the improved standards at Key Stage 3 are being consolidated, although many students struggle with basic numerical problems, and also find it difficult to articulate their mathematical thinking.

92. By the age of 16, attainment is below average. Students make satisfactory progress and almost all of them are entered for the examination. In both 2000 and 2001, nearly all Year 11 students gained GCSE grades A\*-G. This represents a significant success for the school. The



proportion of students achieving grades A\*-C is too low. However, higher levels of attainment in the present Year 11 suggest that standards will rise further and that the school's challenging target of over 35 per cent for 2002 is achievable. Indeed, 22 per cent of this year group have already achieved grades A\*-C by taking the examination at the end of Year 10. Overall, students in Years 10 and 11 work confidently when handling data. The most able mathematicians in Year 11 are following a GCSE statistics course. Students are less confident in algebra and need constant reinforcement and practice.

93. Overall, attainment is consistent across different aspects of the subject and there is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls. Most students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, although in some of the lowest attaining sets unsatisfactory behaviour hinders progress. In many lessons, students are organised into groups according to prior attainment, so that students of different abilities can be given appropriate tasks. In general, students benefit from being in classes of less than 25 students. Students with special educational needs are often well supported by the sensitive work of the learning support staff. In Years 7 to 9, there are several new initiatives to support lower-attaining students such as the Springboard numeracy programme. However, the intervention arrangements for lower-attaining students are not well co-ordinated. Non-specialist teachers teach some of the weakest students in mathematics and this can result in unsatisfactory provision. For example in a Year 8 lesson, students were set inappropriate tasks and this result in disruptive behaviour. Learning support assistants are sometimes unsure of their role in numeracy sessions and do not have access to important apparatus such as cubes, 100-squares and number lines.

94. The quality of teaching in mathematics is good throughout the school. It has improved since the previous inspection. Teaching is satisfactory or better in nearly nine out of ten lessons; good in around three out ten lessons; and very good in about three out of ten lessons. In the best lessons, the teachers set high expectations of students' work and behaviour. They plan carefully for the wide range of ability in their classes so that all students are challenged. Most lessons are well structured. Lessons often start with whole-class mental warm-up activities that effectively engage and challenge the students. At the end of a very good Year 9 lesson, the teacher skilfully used a whole-class plenary session to highlight and celebrate the work of three groups of widely differing ability. In lessons, teachers and support staff regularly praise good attitudes and this encourages the students to behave well and work hard. Overall, students are interested in their work, they are able to maintain concentration for long periods and most achieve their objectives. The increasing emphasis on mental and oral work is popular with the children and has helped them to develop good numeracy skills and is increasing their confidence. This was demonstrated in a very good Year 7 numeracy lesson in which the students had great fun manipulating numbers when playing a mathematical game.

95. Generally, teachers use their good subject knowledge to provide their classes with clear and lively instruction, which has helped to raise standards. Sometimes, however, teachers use too narrow a range of teaching strategies and there is not enough use made of practical work. Good opportunities for supporting learning through practical work are sometimes missed. The use of ICT is insufficiently developed, although a very good lesson was observed in which students used spreadsheets to generate number patterns. This activity helped to raise attainment, as students were introduced to different types of symbolic notation.

96. Two lessons observed during this inspection were unsatisfactory. Both were lower ability groups taught by non-specialist teachers. Sometimes lessons are spoiled by the poor behaviour of students, particularly when the teachers fail to assert sufficient discipline. In groups with a large proportion of students with special educational needs, teachers are sometimes over-dependent on direct teaching methods. They do not provide tasks that would help students to meet the targets on their individual education plans. Overall, sanctions are used more often than rewards.

For example, in none of the lessons observed did teachers award merits for good work or good behaviour.

97. The head of department provides purposeful leadership. The department operates in an inclusive way that supports all students, as is evident in the GCSE results. The focus of developmental planning is on raising standards. Many initiatives have been introduced. For example, the department has adopted the Key Stage 3 Numeracy Strategy's Framework for Teaching to guide curriculum planning and to support assessment. Secure systems for monitoring students' progress are in place although arrangements for setting individual targets are not yet fully developed. Overall, the quality of leadership and management in the department is good and progress since the previous inspection has been satisfactory.

## **Numeracy**

98. Overall, students' skills and knowledge in number work are improving. However, opportunities to support students' learning of number through the use of practical apparatus are often overlooked. Weak numeracy skills still hinder the progress of many students in mathematics and in other subject areas. For example, in a geography lesson on tropical rain forests, the teacher had to provide weaker students with a simplified data handling activity sheet. As part of the school's strategy to improve students' literacy skills, the mathematics department has raised its expectations of students' work in terms of neatness, presentation and spelling. As a result, students' written work is much improved. Key mathematical vocabulary is displayed in classrooms but is not sufficiently highlighted when introduced to students in lessons. Oral work is not sufficiently well promoted, for example, through the setting of collaborative tasks.

## **SCIENCE**

99. Overall, the quality of provision in science is satisfactory.

### **Strengths**

- The department has new leadership and a sense of purpose.
- Teachers are implementing good strategies for improving students' achievement.

### **Areas for improvement**

- The use of assessment data to match students' work to their attainment levels.
- The teaching of ICT skills.
- Resources for practical work.

100. By the age of 14, students' results in the 2000 National Curriculum Key Stage 3 tests were below average and below the average for schools in a similar context. However, the trend over the past three years has been towards a slight improvement in standards. In 2001, students' average points score for science was below that for mathematics but above that for English. Girls performed better than boys in 2001 which was a reversal of the previous year.

101. In contrast to the test results, inspection evidence shows that by the end of Year 9, students' attainment is close to the average and that students achieve satisfactorily. Two-fifths of student are achieving above average standards. Higher-attaining students have a sound knowledge about population pyramids across a range of habitats. Students of average attainment name decomposers in the process of natural decay and the significant nutrients involved. Lower-

attaining students use the information and communication technology (ICT) network proficiently, and apply a range of computer software to develop their coursework. Students with special educational needs achieve satisfactorily, often because of the additional help they receive from support staff. Girls tend to show greater application than boys, and stay on task more effectively.

102. Students' results in 2000 GCSE examinations were below average. The overall 2001 GCSE results showed a continuing downward trend. Students entered for a GCSE single science in 2001 achieved very poor results, partly because of a failure in following examination coursework requirements. The newly appointed head of department has quickly corrected this weakness. The GCSE 2001 double award science results were significantly better than in 2000. Overall performance in GCSE science, measured by students' average points score, is below that of English and mathematics. Students following the double award science course achieved better grades than in their other subjects. Girls achieved better results than boys.

103. By the end of Year 11, and again in contrast to the previous years' GCSE results, inspection evidence shows that students' attainment is close to the average. There are fewer higher-attaining students than at Key Stage 3. Higher-attaining students know the nature of radioactive gases emanating from igneous rocks and which human organs are particularly at risk from radioactivity. Students of average attainment are able to discuss properties of noble gases. They make comparisons on the reactivity of alkali metals depending upon their place in the Periodic Table. Lower-attaining students are clear about the different functions and properties of arteries and veins in the human body.

104. In all classes students with special educational needs work at an appropriate level. However, teachers have only limited enrichment tasks with which to extend the skills and understanding of gifted and talented students. Girls tend to play a more active role in lessons and stay on task better than boys. There is little evidence in science lessons of teachers linking the teaching of literacy, numeracy and ICT to school policies. As a result, opportunities are missed to reinforce the basic skills that students learn in other subjects.

105. Students' learning is satisfactory. It is better at Key Stage 3 than at Key Stage 4. Many students in Years 7 to 9 show good independent study skills. For example, younger students began an experimental investigation into pollution with minimal intervention by the teacher. Most students in Years 10 and 11, on the other hand, need much more input from the teacher to direct what they are doing. In Year 7, the youngest students worked well over a long period investigating light rays and reflection. They produced work which was good in relation to their prior attainment levels. Achievement for a minority of Year 11 students is adversely affected by poor behaviour and a lack of enthusiasm. Work produced by this group of students is often incomplete and poorly presented.

106. The teaching of science is satisfactory. It is marginally better at Key Stage 3 than at Key Stage 4. At Key Stage 3, teachers' preparation and high expectations in one lesson led to a high level of work from the students who consequently covered unfamiliar material with enthusiasm and a degree of excitement. At Key Stage 4, the teacher's careful practical demonstration on radioactive sources ensured that the students understood a variety of related health and safety issues as well as recognising the key features of radio-active radiation. The department has insufficient resources to provide a full programme of practical work for small groups, and this was seen to impact adversely on the quality of learning.

107. Until very recently, assessment and target setting has been very poor. Most students had no clear measure of how well they were achieving compared to national standards. The department now tracks the progress of individual students. Assessment data is used to set targets which are linked to national standards. Inspection evidence shows that these initiatives

are beginning to lead to a significant improvement in standards. However, assessment strategies are not fully in place yet. Their impact on raising achievement levels for all students is dependent on their being fully implemented throughout the school year.

108. The new head of department gives good subject leadership. Its development plan is soundly based on priorities for raise standards and supported by a good programme of staff development.

109. Since the last inspection, Key Stage 3 tests have shown a slight improvement. GCSE results have fallen. However, standards up until the inspection have also fallen below those in other subjects because many students were not taught well. For example, they were not given good guidance on coursework completion or on the standards necessary to achieve their full potential in external examinations. Inspection evidence shows that weaknesses in science are being addressed and that standards at both key stages are rising.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

110. Overall. The provision for art is satisfactory.

### **Strengths**

- The quality of teaching is good.
- New, enthusiastic leadership and good teamwork are improving standards in both key stages.
- A strong emphasis on the development of students' knowledge and understanding of artists' work from many cultures is providing a rich and stimulating base for students' learning.
- Students are given accurate assessment and regular feedback on the quality of their work.

### **Areas for improvement**

- Students' responsibility for learning and the development of their higher level research skills are inhibited by lack of access to information and communication technology (ICT) and the poor quality of the school library.
- Students are not sufficiently involved in the evaluation of their own work and that of others.
- Standards of three-dimensional work are low.
- There is insufficient emphasis on the spiritual meaning and significance of art.

111. Standards of art and design at the end of Year 9 are below average. Students lack confidence in three-dimensional art and have a limited knowledge base. However, standards across the key stage are now rising rapidly. Confidence in drawing, awareness of surface texture and use of colour is improving. Students' knowledge of the work of artists and craft workers from many cultures is growing. Students make careful drawings of African masks and Australian Aboriginal paintings as well as detailed studies of western art forms. Year 8 students have clearly enjoyed a Picasso meets Pop Art project and have made lively relief card portraits in brilliant colour. The use of word banks of art terms displayed in the art room extends students' vocabulary and supports students' literacy effectively. A greater use of annotation when drawing would help extend writing skills

112. GCSE results were satisfactory in 1999 and 2000 but fell well below the national average in 2001. Standards of drawing and painting and knowledge of artists' work were poor. However, high quality teaching from the newly appointed staff is having a very positive impact on students' learning and the standard of current work is now rising quickly. The standard of work in Year 11 is now at least average, with some students showing the potential to attain above-average results at GCSE next year. Their designs for prints display flair and are the result of careful research. The care and sensitivity displayed in painting by Year 10 students shows that this group is on track for at least average results. All students are making good progress. There is no difference in progress between boys and girls and those students with special needs are making sound progress.

113. Students learn art with interest and enthusiasm. They are responding to the teachers' increased emphasis on the development of knowledge and understanding of artists' work and this is beginning to deepen and enrich their learning. Behaviour is very good and discipline is being forged through projects that are well matched to their age and level of development. All students enjoy art and in one Year 11 lesson a buzz of pleasure flowed through the class as they pulled the first prints from their blocks. Students have the capacity to take responsibility for their learning and do work well from the good quality art books in the dept. However, the development of higher-order, independent research skills is inhibited by the lack of access to ICT and the poor quality of the library. Teachers make strong and clear judgements on standards but students need to develop these skills too. Students need to be encouraged to take a more active part in the evaluation of their own work and the work of others.

114. The quality of teaching is good. All teachers have high expectations for both behaviour and standards and students are rising to these challenges. Skills and techniques are expertly demonstrated and help students understand the clear objectives for learning. The emphasis on the study of images from other cultures needs to be balanced with a greater attention to the meaning and significance of imagery. This will help students be aware of, and be able to reflect upon, the spiritual dimension of art. Lesson aims should be tied more closely into National Curriculum objectives to aid the assessment of levels of students' achievement at the end of Year 9. Assessment during lessons is accurate and is efficiently moderated. Teachers are constantly supporting students during lessons by giving helpful feedback on students' progress. Planning is carefully structured and the new scheme of work is providing an exciting range of learning opportunities. Planning can be improved by projects that encourage students to work collaboratively and on a larger scale. Teachers do not have clear and recent information on students with special educational needs and this affects their planning for inclusion. Homework is set regularly and reinforces students' work in class.

115. Leadership in the subject is good and has provided a clear direction for the department. It has been necessary for staff to rapidly structure learning programmes and establish disciplined ways of working in the classroom. These changes have been achieved exceptionally well in a very short period of time and the resulting rise in standards is a tribute to the quality of management as well as to enthusiastic teamwork.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Strengths**

- Standards are rising.
- Students' have positive attitudes to learning.
- The quality of teaching is good.

### **Areas for improvement**

- The scheme of work does not include enough opportunities for students to apply ICT skills at Key Stage 3.
- The layout of the design and technology rooms and storage of resources is unsatisfactory.

117. Standards of work in design and technology are average by the end of Year 9 and below average by the end of Year 11. Attainment in food technology at Key Stage 4 is better than in the other specialist areas of the subject. Standards at GCSE level have been below the national

average over the last few years, but there has been a significant improvement in the results for 2001. Even though there were a small number of students following examination courses who failed to complete coursework. At both key stages, the standards achieved by boys are slightly below that of girls, but the difference is not great.

118. Standards of current students, as seen during the inspection, show a marked improvement over previous years. This is especially noticeable in Years 10 and 11. Most Year 11 students are making good progress with their course work projects. An excellent food technology project was seen where the student had taken particular care to research her topic fully and produce a wide range of possible solutions. In a Year 10 graphics group, excellent results were achieved in one lesson where students developed their skills in quickly sketching possible design ideas without being constrained by technical matters related to methods of drawing. In Year 8, a group of low-attaining students made very good progress in developing design ideas through modelling in three dimensions in card. Aspects of literacy are being developed well. The department makes use of 'word walls' where technical words are displayed and referred to. Students also keep personal dictionaries where new words and their definitions are noted.

119. Information and communications technology (ICT) is used in Key Stage 4, mainly in the form of word processing and desktop publishing. There was little use of ICT to support designing and research at Key Stage 3 during the inspection. However, aspects of control and the use of computer aided design and computer aided manufacturing occur appropriately in the scheme of work for Key Stage 4.

120. Staff are aware of those students who have special educational needs and work is set which is matched to their levels of attainment. The design and technology curriculum is accessible to all students in the school.

121. The achievement and progress of students is improving both at GCSE and in Key Stage 3 and show an improvement when compared to prior attainment, especially in examination courses. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 show that some students are working at level 7 and that the majority of other students are at appropriate levels of achievement. Improvement at Key Stage 3 is evidenced by the quality of work shown in two different Year 8 classes, where the quality of the design ideas produced by students was good as a result of using modelling to develop ideas. At Key Stage 4, improvement is clear in the quality of skills developed in Year 10 and in the quality of planning in design folders by students in Year 11.

122. The quality of learning was good or better in all of the lessons seen. The vast majority of students showed a very positive attitude to the content of the lessons and to the subject as a whole. In many lessons seen there was a real desire to learn new things and to make progress. In some lessons it was clear that students were learning throughout the lessons and that clearly measurable progress was being made as was evident in the Year 10 graphics lesson described above. Students were able to identify clearly the objectives for the lesson and respond positively to the teaching. Teachers made good use of support staff provided to assist students with special educational needs, and also used technician help effectively to enhance the learning of all students in the class.

123. In the lessons seen, the quality of teaching was always good, with some very good or excellent teaching in a few lessons. Students' learning was good as a result of the high standard of teaching. Characteristics of good teaching included careful preparation, a good range of teaching styles and different approaches directed towards the need of the students. Objectives for lessons were clearly set out on the board. In all lessons, students were managed well and high standards of both work and behaviour were set, and were achieved. Teachers give good

advice to students on how to develop ideas and improve standards of work. The department has taken steps to provide different tasks to meet the needs of different groups, including work set for homework. Teachers have considered those students who have special educational needs and provide additional help and support as required. The last inspection referred to the need to have greater coherence of approach to the subject and to have differentiated work to allow for students of differing ability. The scheme of work has been totally re-written in the last year and meets National Curriculum requirements. Alternative tasks and activities for students are provided and all students have the opportunity to achieve success in the subject.

124. There have been Improvements in the assessment of pupils' work. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 are accurate and the results are recorded for future reference. Students are informed of their National Curriculum levels at the conclusion of each unit of work. Students are also encouraged to make an assessment of their progress through the use of 'Target Cards'. These describe what they need to do to achieve a particular level.

125. Leadership and management of the department are good. Teachers are well qualified and well together as a team. In the last year, all staff have worked hard to make good to produce a department handbook, which is very comprehensive and clearly indicates how the scheme of work is implemented. The needs of all students are considered and all students have equal access to all aspects of the design and technology curriculum. Some further consideration needs to be given to the ways in which the department contributes to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Whilst it is clear from lesson observations that such aspects are considered, these are not made explicit in the scheme of work.

126. Resources in the department are generally good, although the capitation allowance is not sufficient to allow further developments to be made. There is an urgent need to update text books. Whilst the range of ICT provision is good, many of the resources are located in one room and consideration should be given to expanding the provision in other rooms. The last inspection report expressed concerns about layout of the workshops. Since that time, the workshops have been refurbished but unfortunately the positioning of some machines is poor. Store rooms are not used to best effect and lack racking for the storage of wood and metal. A good level of technician support is provided.

127. Provision for health and safety within the department is good. Some good examples of teaching students about health and safety were seen, including the application of recently taught graphic skills to produce health and safety posters. All equipment and machines are guarded and students are instructed to wear aprons and to use eye protection.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

128. Overall, the quality of provision is good.

### **Strengths**

- Good teaching supports students' learning, especially in Years 7 to 9.
- Students work very well together.
- Very good management of resources and leadership.

### **Areas for improvement:**

- Students do not have sufficient opportunity to apply their ICT skills to meet National Curriculum requirements.
- There are insufficient fieldwork opportunities in Years 10 and 11.



- GCSE results are well below the national average.

129. Although standards are low on entry to the school, by the end of Year 9 attainment is close to the national expectations for all schools and well over half of the students are working at Level 5 or higher. There is little difference in the attainment of boys and girls. Results at GCSE have fallen in recent years and in 2001 were well below the national average, not meeting the set targets. There was no marked difference in the attainment of boys and girls, nor in the extent to which boys and girls performed relative to their targets. However, a quarter of the students who started the GCSE course did not complete it and these were mainly boys.

130. In Year 7, students acquire a sound understanding of new concepts such as settlement hierarchy, and develop skills in presenting their work. This results in attractive display work on rural villages. Although middle and higher-attaining students develop their writing skills in Year 7, students with special educational needs make less progress than in later years. Students in Years 8 and 9 have good enquiry skills resulting, for example, in impressive project work on Antarctica in Year 8 and the ability to assess the social and environmental impact of tourism in the National Parks. Higher-attaining students are pushed hard. Students' work during Key Stage 3 shows increasing confidence in numeracy and some students make effective use of information and communication technology (ICT) for writing up project work and show increasingly refined use of graphical representation. By the end of Year 9, all groups of students have made good progress relative to their prior attainment.

131. The standard of work of students currently following the GCSE course is average and their progress is consistent with their attainment at the end of Key Stage 3. Students show appropriate initiative in researching their personal investigative studies. For example, one student used a wide range of first-hand sources in a very successful study of bridleways in Warwickshire.

132. Students learn well. They pay attention, settle to work quickly, stay on task and take pride in their work. They work well in small groups, supporting and reinforcing their learning. This promotes their social education. They are keen to contribute in oral work and lower-attaining students are especially willing to volunteer to read aloud, which they do comfortably in a secure environment. However, some students of middle-attainment are inclined to mark time repeating work that they have already mastered, such as constructing climate graphs instead of interpreting them ready for describing characteristics of the climate to the rest of the class.

133. Teaching is good in both key stages and helps students to move forward, especially in Years 7 to 9. In the lessons observed during the inspection, the quality of teaching ranged from satisfactory to very good. Teachers have a secure knowledge of the subject and their skilful question-and-answer technique forges good understanding by students. Lessons are planned carefully, the learning objectives are made clear to students and teachers have high expectations of the students. Some lessons were enlivened by imaginative teaching. For example, in a Year 9 lesson students closed their eyes and were introduced to the feel and climatic regime of a rain forest by the teacher's guided journey. Thus, teachers plan opportunities to promote spiritual education, which was also evident in a lesson on Niagara Falls. In some lessons, however, learning activities could have been more stimulating, such as when Year 8 students were copying diagrams and captions of the stages in the formation of a waterfall. Learning is well supported by homework resource booklets and by regular 'catch-up' coursework and revision sessions at lunchtime and after school.

134. Students' work is marked regularly and it is especially helpful in Years 9 to 11, with comments relating to the strategy of answers as well as correcting content and spelling and grammatical errors. Students are set targets on the basis of assessment and academic progress

is well monitored.

135. Fieldwork now takes place in each of Years 7, 8 and 9 and further teaching of fieldwork and reporting skills is under consideration for Year 10. Lesson planning takes account of the need for differentiated aims and activities for different groups of students. Opportunities for promoting

numeracy and literacy and spiritual, moral, social and cultural education are identified in schemes of work and the department makes a good contribution in these areas. However, there is no planned use of ICT and in this respect the provision in geography does not conform to the requirements of the National Curriculum.

136. The management and leadership of the department are good. The enthusiasm of the head of department has assured the quality of provision during a difficult period of staff changes and a staff vacancy, which has now been filled. She has been anxious to extend the range of provision, notably by introducing more fieldwork. Limited resources are well managed, planning is thorough and school policies are implemented. Progress since the last inspection has been good. A major issue is now to ensure that a variety of uses of information technology are planned in the curriculum of all students.

## HISTORY

137. Overall provision in history is good.

### Strengths

- Attainment is improving at Key Stage 4.
- Teaching and learning are good overall.
- There is a sound focus on improving levels of literacy, which is having a positive impact particularly on the quality of extended writing.

### Areas for improvement

- Raising attainment at Key Stage 3.
- Making more use of ICT in history.
- Making some lessons less teacher-directed and actively involving students more in their learning.

138. Students in Years 7 to 9 achieve well in history. Although their standards are below the expectations for fourteen year-olds nationally, students enter the school with standards considerably below national expectations, and make good progress in acquiring knowledge and understanding and a range of historical skills. The teacher assessments for 2001 confirmed that the proportion of students at the age of fourteen achieving at Level 5 or above was below the national average, with boys performing slightly below the level of the girls. The evidence of the inspection confirmed these findings. Although a minority of higher-attaining students show a good level of knowledge and understanding and a good level of skill, for example in evaluating historical sources as evidence, lower-achieving students have difficulty in communicating effectively due to low levels of literacy. Nevertheless, the department is addressing this issue with some success, for example by emphasising key vocabulary, so that the great majority of students, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in their writing of history. Students generally show a good level of confidence in contributing to class discussion and responding to questions. This was evident for example in a Year 7 lesson in which students considered possible outcomes in the crisis of 1066, and in a Year 8 lesson in which students discussed quite sophisticated concepts about success in relation to Charles I's rule before the Civil War. This was particularly effective in enabling higher-achieving students to make good progress in their learning.

139. The proportion of students attaining GCSE grades A\*-C in the 2001 GCSE examination was well below the national average for both boys and girls, continuing the trend of recent years. However, students in the current Year 11 demonstrate knowledge and understanding of modern

world history and a range of historical skills in line with the national average, and this represents

good achievement for students of all abilities. The great majority of students show good knowledge, for example appreciating the causes and consequences of major events such as the rise of the Nazis in Germany. They are also able to analyse sources for their reliability and usefulness and show good comprehension skills.

140. The quality of teaching in history is good overall. It is never less than satisfactory and is good or very good in two out of every three lessons in all year groups. Where the teaching is good or very good the teachers provide effective feedback to students on their progress, helping them to improve. Pace and challenge are often good: as seen for example in a Year 8 lesson when the teacher got students to analyse the background to the English Civil War, a task which encompassed quite sophisticated religious and political concepts. Teachers question students effectively to assess and further their understanding, as in a Year 9 lesson when students were considering the nature of trench warfare. Homework is used constructively to reinforce what is done in lessons, and sometimes involves independent research, as for Year 8 students studying the Civil War. Occasionally there are insufficient opportunities to involve all students more actively in discussion, as for example when higher-attaining Year 11 students were considering how the Nazis consolidated their power inside Germany.

141. Leadership and management of history are good. The head of history has senior management responsibilities and has had to cope with a shortage of specialist teachers in the department, but due attention has been given to improving attainment. For example, assessment is a strength of the department, and students are set targets as an aid to raising attainment. Teachers also work to improve students' literacy skills, particularly through widening students' vocabulary and the accuracy of their writing, and this is beginning to raise standards. The use of information technology as an integral part of teaching and learning is underdeveloped, as it was in 1996. However, students' attainment at Key Stage 4 has improved. Therefore there has been satisfactory progress in history since the previous inspection.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)**

142. Overall, the quality of provision in ICT is satisfactory.

### **Strengths**

- There is good timetabled curriculum provision in Years 7 to 9.
- There is good provision of General and National Vocational Qualification courses (GNVQ) for all students in Year 10.
- There are good assessment arrangements in the recently introduced GNVQ course.
- The quality of support staff is good.

### **Areas for development**

- A better structure is needed for monitoring and evaluating ICT teaching.
- Teachers generally need more specialist training.
- Key Stage 4 standards are not high enough.
- The application of ICT skills is not sufficiently included in all programmes of study.

143. The attainment of students at the end of Year 9, as assessed by the school, is below national expectations. Those who achieved level 5 or better took a short course GCSE examination at the end of Year 9 in 2001 and nearly a quarter of these students achieved grades B or C and two thirds achieved grade D or better. In the GCSE examinations in 2000, results were well below national standards. In 2001, results were the worst in the school, with no students achieving GCSE grades A\*-C.

144. Standards observed in current students' work in Key Stage 3 are variable, with the higher-attaining groups showing expected levels of attainment, while lower attaining students' work is mainly at National Curriculum levels 2 and 3. Students can find and save information, and organise and present their work effectively, using word-processing and desktop publishing. In a low-attaining Year 8 group, for example, students were able to incorporate headers and footers to improve presentation of a report. High-attaining students collect and analyse information; students in a high-attaining group in Year 9, for example, had designed a questionnaire on healthy foods, and were creating a spreadsheet for the capture and analysis of the data. Progress through the key stage is variable; most progress is made in information handling.

145. Standards of work observed in the very small group in the current Year 11 are also lower than expected. The present Year 10 students are following a newly purchased GNVQ IT scheme, and there is evidence already of higher standards of work from these students in their first three weeks. Students can research effectively on the Internet and download appropriate text and pictures for their tasks. In a Year 11 lesson, students were finding information on peripherals and organising this into folders of input and output devices. All abilities of students in Year 10 were analysing different types of documents for suitability and presentation and linking this to ICT skills and literacy. No evidence was available of work in control and measuring data.

146. Teaching is always at least satisfactory and often good. The scheme of work for Years 7 to 9 provides a framework of topics and students are encouraged to work independently within these. All observed lessons started with a very quick plenary session to set the objective for the lesson and to remind the class of any deadlines. This was followed by individual work on computers for the remainder of the lesson. Teachers provide individual support and challenge and most students remain on task throughout and sometimes beyond the lesson. In some lessons, very effective intervention by the teacher ensures that students sustain interest and concentration. In a Year 10 lesson for low attaining students, for example, the teacher intervened to explain 'justification' and this enabled all students to analyse effectively this aspect of the documents they were studying. In a Year 7 lesson where students had a wide range of ICT skills, the selective withdrawal and tutoring of small groups was used effectively to maintain pace and momentum for all students. In some lessons, attention to the computer screen is mistaken for on-task behaviour, as in one year 10 lesson when two boys spent the whole lesson surfing the net for information unrelated to the objective of the lesson. Even when students are working on the task, this can be repetition of established skills, as when high attaining Year 9 students were designing questionnaires and capturing the data – a skill they had mastered in Year 8. Resources are used very effectively, especially the large number of computers which enable every student to work independently and support staff.

147. Students are enthusiastic about the subject and many of them work independently. Lower attaining students are more dependent on their teachers and are reluctant to show initiative. Relationships are good, and students help each other if the teacher is not immediately available. Occasional calling out, particularly by students in lower-attaining groups sometimes distracts others from working.

148. Leadership and management are satisfactory, overall, but with strengths and weaknesses. The quality and management of the accommodation and resources are real strengths and contribute greatly to the quality of teaching and learning. Government funds have been very well used as part of a four-year plan to improve resources, and a clear plan for phased training of staff as part of the New Opportunities Fund training is in place. A recently appointed technician is very well used to support the work of the department and there are plans to extend his role across the school. Teaching by non-specialists and the absence of any monitoring of teaching and learning leads to variability in interpretation of the scheme of work in Years 7 to 9, and to a comparative

lack of progress in those groups not taught by the ICT co-ordinator. The lack of time that he has for his management role as well as leading the science department is a contributory factor. The GNVQ scheme brought in this year is excellent, although it has not yet had time to lead to improved results. The rigour of the assessment processes in this scheme could usefully be brought into all the schemes in the department. Although work is assessed against national curriculum and GNVQ criteria, there is no routine monitoring of student progress against prior attainment or targets for future attainment.

149. Progress since the last inspection has been mixed. There have been some improvements in the use of ICT across the curriculum, for example, in modern languages where word processing and desktop publishing are planned and used, mathematics where spreadsheets are used effectively and science where use of CD-ROM for research on energy was observed. Despite the good resources available, in most subjects, ICT is not planned into the scheme of work or used to support subject learning. Research skills have developed well although the links with the library could be improved further. Standards have deteriorated in Years 10 and 11 and the progress of lower-attaining students and their dependence on the teacher remain areas for development. There are clear signs of recent improvement, particularly the introduction of the new scheme in Year 10, having a single coordinator across the school, the use of government funds and the employment of a full time technician.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

150. Provision for modern languages is satisfactory and is an area of the curriculum, which is developing well and improving steadily.

### **Strengths**

- Teaching is overall good, especially with younger students.
- There has been a marked improvement in modern languages since the last inspection.
- Students beginning their study of French and Spanish make good progress.

### **Areas for improvement**

- Teachers do not always have high enough expectations of the higher-attaining students.
- There are insufficient languages teachers in the school to fulfil the requirements of the curriculum.

151. Students' performance in GCSE examinations in modern languages has been below the national average in German and well below the national average in French. Girls performed markedly better than boys in both languages. A majority of students in each language achieved lower grades than those predicted by standardised tests, but did better than their attainment had shown in the teacher assessments at age 14.

152. Students' attainment in listening and speaking is in most cases below the levels expected nationally. Standards in students' written work seen are closer to the national average at ages 14 and 16, but still slightly below. Younger students beginning their study of French are making a good start and achieving levels, which are at least in line with expectations, and sometimes above average. The highest standards of work relative to students' age and prior attainment are in Year 7.

153. Older students preparing for the GCSE examinations in French and German attain levels of performance, which are below average at the present stage, although some have produced good written performances as part of the modular examination. There is some under-

achievement in both languages in listening and speaking, which is due to insufficiently demanding opportunities



being given to students to rehearse the language they know, to 'make the language their own', before they move to writing and more formal activities. Where there was extended language rehearsal, students had more confidence to express themselves and were able to speak with better accents and fewer mistakes. The attainment of boys and girls in work observed during the inspection shows less disparity than in recent examination results.

154. Lower and average-attaining students and students with special educational needs make at least satisfactory progress, and some make good progress. By the of age 14, they are able to respond well in class to the teacher's questions and have good recall of the work they have completed. They can write extended passages about themselves, their families and what they did, making use of present, past, and in some cases future tenses. Higher attaining students at the age of 14 produce a similar range of work - occasionally with greater correctness and awareness of language – but in most cases the progress which they make could be better. Rapid progress is made by most students who are beginning their languages study: students in Year 7 beginning to learning French and in Years 8, 9 and 10 starting off with a course in Spanish.

155. Students are willing and often eager learners of languages, responding well to the variety of learning experiences on offer. They participate well in listening activities, are keen to answer questions and take part in work in pairs. There are opportunities for them to use information and communication technology (ICT) to support their languages study, and to seek information from the Internet. Readers are available for students wishing to work independently, but the reading scheme is not as yet built into the work of all students.

156. Teaching is satisfactory overall. It is good in a clear majority of lessons with younger students. Lessons are well planned for the majority of students, and proceed at a good pace, which keeps learners involved and interested. Objectives are precise and attainable, and clearly explained to students at the beginning of the lesson. Each lesson contains a variety of activities to cover the four attainment targets required by the National Curriculum. However, lessons are not always challenging enough for some higher-attaining students, and this affects the progress which they are able to make. Teaching groups have students with a wide range of prior attainment, and although there are often extension activities for those who need them, higher-attaining students are not sufficiently required to assimilate language quickly and to use it in different and more extended contexts. For example, new vocabulary is often introduced to the class as single words, when some students would benefit from the requirement to incorporate new words immediately into more continuous speech.

157. Students' written work is marked helpfully and conscientiously, and close checks are kept on their progress. All are aware of the level they have reached in their language study, and are given the opportunity to assess their own progress and set themselves targets for improvement.

158. The languages curriculum is good. Most students begin to learn a second language from Year 8 onwards. The newly revised and developing programmes of study are well-planned to help students learn, but as yet have insufficient extension tasks at each stage to make the work more challenging for the higher-attaining students. Unfortunately, there are not enough teachers of modern languages, which means that some students are not receiving direct specialist teaching in languages.

159. The modern languages department is led well by an enthusiastic and well-organised teacher, and the subject has made considerable strides forward since the last inspection. Teaching standards have improved, and with them the attitudes of students towards learning languages. Students now make a good start to their language learning and attainment seems set to rise in line with teachers' expectations.

## MUSIC

160. Overall, the quality of provision in music is satisfactory.

### Strengths

- GCSE standards are above average.
- Students' good attitudes to learning.

### Areas for improvement

- The development of larger ensembles and choirs.
- The use of assessment to inform future planning.

161. Attainment by the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 is in line with national standards. There is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls. The latest GCSE examination results are very good and reflect a marked general improvement in attainment since the last inspection.

162. In Key Stage 3 the students' instrumental skills on keyboards and percussion are sufficient to enable them to improvise and to compose effective pieces. Students of all abilities have imaginative ideas and show some awareness of structure when creating and developing their own music. In a Year 9 class, students composed short pieces using graphic scores prepared by the teacher; they were able to perceive links between their music and the visual symbols. Students understand technical terms such as 'riff' and 'bass line' and are able to demonstrate their understanding in their music making. There is little evidence of any attainment in classroom singing. In Years 10 and 11, students use a range of instrumental and vocal skills effectively when composing. Skills gained in individual instrumental lessons are well deployed in the classroom. Students use appropriate technical language when discussing their pieces and are willing to try out each other's ideas.

163. The teaching and learning in both key stages is good. In Years 7 to 9, short-term planning is thorough. Lessons are carefully planned and reflect National Curriculum requirements. Care is taken to find interesting and enjoyable ways of sustaining the students' interest. As a result, most students remain focused for the whole lesson. Because activities are well structured within modules of work, students understand the context of their learning. The teacher's careful questioning helps to ascertain whether or not basic concepts have been absorbed; this has a positive impact on the students' understanding of key principles. Advice to individuals and groups is well targeted during practical lessons; students of all abilities receive appropriate support. On occasion the teaching takes place against too much background noise. In Years 10 and 11, the teacher makes very good use of his own instrumental skills to illustrate teaching points. A brief demonstration of musical styles on the keyboard inspired respect and admiration from students; they returned to work with enthusiasm and a renewed sense of purpose. They try hard to follow their teacher's suggestions for improvement.

164. Precise target setting in Year 11 has helped to ensure that all students have clear aims and has given them a sense of progression. This practice should now be extended to Year 10, where a significant minority of students is not sufficiently challenged or occupied.

165. The students' attitudes and behaviour are very good in both key stages. They come to lessons anticipating enjoyment and are polite and respectful to the teachers and each other. In group work they are supportive and encouraging of each other and applaud each other's achievements. Most students in Years 10 and 11 work well independently.

166. The department's long-term planning is underdeveloped and assessment does not inform future planning. The schemes of work have an appropriate range of activities and are in line with National Curriculum requirements, although there is insufficient singing. There is a good range of instrumental and vocal tuition. In these lessons the teaching is of good quality overall; in one very good singing lesson students were taught basic breathing techniques and were shown how to improve their intonation. Students are given opportunities to perform in assemblies and in Christmas productions. Students use the music room well at break times for small group practice. There are no larger ensembles or choirs.

167. The department is competently managed and well supported by the management of the school and the local music adviser.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

168. Overall, the quality of provision in physical education is good due principally to the addition of new specialist teachers to the department.

### Strengths

- Specialist teachers are now in place, committed to further improvements in the quality of provision.
- Students' attitudes are good, assisting their progress in learning.
- Teaching is never less than satisfactory and is often good, contributing directly to an improvement in standards.

### Areas for improvement

- Further raising of standards at both Key Stages 3 and 4.
- Improving curriculum provision for students studying GCSE physical education in Year 10.

169. Only two lessons were observed at Key Stage 3, one in dance and one in hockey, and therefore it was not possible to make an overall judgement on standards of students in physical education by the age of 14. However, in a Year 7 dance lesson at the beginning of the school year, students with limited or no experience of dance were below expectations in their ability to perform interpretative dance as part of a group sequence. In a Year 9 hockey lesson, the majority of students achieved a standard of stick control in their dribbling and passing which was in line with the expectations for their age group.

170. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are below the expectations of similarly aged students nationally both in knowledge and understanding and in the development of practical skills. This applies both to students in core physical education lessons and those following the GCSE course. The proportion of students achieving an A\*-C grade in the 2001 examination was well below the national average for both girls and boys, although girls achieved better than the boys. However, these students did not receive specialist teaching in theory for several months, and despite this several boys attained a higher grade in physical education than in any of their other subjects, and so this represented good achievement by these students. The small number of students taking the GCSE examination each year makes any judgement about trends insecure. The current Year 10 students on the GCSE course, however, have no theory lessons timetabled during the normal school day.

171. Students in Years 10 and 11 were observed in games and fitness training. A minority of higher-achieving students, mainly boys, showed a good standard of handling, dribbling and shooting skills in basketball. The majority of students demonstrated less consistency in these

skills, particularly in the pressure of a game situation. However, all students made good progress in developing greater tactical awareness in a game. In tennis, only a small minority of students showed the ability to sustain a rally using a forehand and backhand drive, whilst volleying skills were poorly developed. However, the achievement of the majority of students, particularly lower-achieving students and those with special educational needs, is good, given that, until very recently, there has been insufficient specialist teaching of physical education in the school.

172. There is currently no specific programme for addressing literacy or numeracy in physical education, nor is there much use of information and communications technology. However, most students have good listening and speaking skills, and this assists their learning when the teacher introduces practices in a range of sports. Students with special educational needs are fully integrated into the department's programme and make good progress in developing basic skills, commensurate with that of other students.

173. The overall quality of teaching in physical education is good, and is leading to good achievement and rising standards. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. In Years 7 to 9, the teaching was good in one out of two lessons, and in Years 10 and 11, it was good in three out of five. The good teaching is characterised by several features, which result in good skill development by students of all abilities and in all year groups. A notable feature of the good teaching is the brisk pace of relatively short lessons, which, combined with good classroom management, keeps the students focused on the activities. Along with the positive attitude of students towards the subject, these features lead to rapid gains in skill and awareness. For example in a Year 11 basketball lesson, the teacher not only reinforced basic ball handling skills, but used his good subject knowledge and lively explanation and demonstration to transfer these skills to a game. It also enabled students to increase their tactical awareness of how to break down a zonal defence. In almost all lessons teachers combine explanation with good questioning to test and extend students' understanding, for example of the purpose of good warmup techniques. The teacher's ability to convey good subject knowledge to students was also seen in a Year 9 hockey lesson in which students practised their reverse stick technique. Occasionally in a minority of lessons there is insufficient explanation and demonstration necessary to ensure that students learn good technique..

174. The physical education department has only just received specialist leadership after a long gap, and significant steps have already been taken to improve provision, for example by setting up a new programme of extracurricular activities. This development has already been welcomed by students. The head of department is auditing provision and assessment practice, but it is too early to evaluate the impact of new measures on overall standards, although these are rising.

175. Overall the current levels of attainment are similar to those in 1996, and the amount of good teaching has improved slightly. Therefore there has been satisfactory progress in physical education since the previous inspection.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

176. Overall, the quality of provision is satisfactory.

### Strengths

- Schemes of work now conform to the local Agreed Syllabus and which provide good opportunities for creative work in Key Stage 3;
- Extension of Key Stage 3 programme to include religions other than Christianity and its positive impact on students' attitudes;
- Good relationships in the classroom.

### Areas for improvement:

- Differentiated activities for students at different levels of attainment are not identified;
- Marking of students' work is superficial and there are no departmental records of students' progress through the school;
- Boys are slow to settle to written work;
- The time provided for religious education is insufficient to teach the Agreed Syllabus in enough depth.

177. Standards of attainment in religious education by the end of both key stages are below the national average. In all years, the attainment of girls is higher than boys, especially for students of middle and lower attainment.

178. In Year 7 there are opportunities for creative work, such as composing a modern hymn and scripting a drama based on the life of Siddhartha. In these, students show good understanding, but the quality is limited by poor writing skills and presentation. Students in Year 7 are able to explore the concepts of right and wrong and Heaven and Hell. Good progress is made in Year 8 and higher-attaining students are able to produce extended factual writing about Guru Nanak's journey and demonstrate research into the differences in the Christmas story according to Matthew and Luke. However, all through Key Stage 3 lower-attaining students need more support to enable them to extend their writing and avoid direct copying of text. As they move through Key Stage 3, students show increasing maturity and understanding of value systems other than their own, and increasing awareness of the spiritual and moral dimensions of life experiences. In a Year 10 lesson on religious conversion, based around Moses, Saul and Hugh Montefiore, students who had just started the GCSE course could appreciate the effect of an event, whilst at the same time regarding the event as an illusion or imagination. There was no opportunity during the inspection to observe evidence of work in Year 11. Overall, students' achievement is satisfactory considering the low standards on entry.

179. Students learn satisfactorily. The response of students currently in Key Stage 3 is more positive than that of students taking the short GCSE course introduced for all Year 10 students in September 2001, and which is based on the study of Christianity. In the school based unit, Art in Religion, Year 8 students produce interesting designs from observation of stained glass windows during visits to Stratford and St Edmund's, Shipston, and other students carried out impressive studies of their local church's architecture. Students take pride in their work although the content of work of middle and lower-attaining students is often limited because their writing skills are weak. They work well in groups, leading to effective brainstorming. For example, following a lesson on the symbolism of infant baptism in the unit on rites of passage, Year 9 students worked in groups to identify ways in which they take on increasing responsibility and then learnt how different religions celebrate the passage from childhood to adulthood. Girls respond more positively than

boys do. Although all students usually listen and contribute well during oral work, boys in Years 9 and 10 are slow to settle to written tasks, so that their progress is limited in that part of the lesson. There is no evidence of numeracy in religious education and only one reference in schemes of work to the possible use of ICT, suggesting research on two Christian leaders.

180. Teaching was satisfactory in all lessons that were observed and is satisfactory according to all available evidence. The teachers have a secure knowledge of the subject, plan lessons well and use examples which are relevant to their student's experience. They show enthusiasm for the subject. Learning objectives are made clear which, together with good class control practice, including the use of humour, makes for overall satisfactory progress. Although some differentiated activities are now being introduced in the classroom, there is no overall planning for students of different attainment levels. There is also a need to adopt a literacy strategy to enable lower-attaining students to develop their writing skills. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues are all implicit in the curriculum, so that religious education teaching contributes to students' personal development through these areas, but opportunities to explore them deeper, or afford time for reflection in class, are not identified in the schemes of work.

181. Marking of students' work is superficial and there is no system for monitoring students' progress through the school by the department, as opposed to short term monitoring by the class teacher. The use of assessment in planning for students' needs also only takes place on a lesson-to-lesson basis. Practice in these areas is not in line with humanities department policy.

182. Leadership and management of the subject is satisfactory. The school conforms to the statutory requirement to teach the local agreed syllabus although the time allocated for teaching is less than the recommended amount and insufficient to cover all aspects in depth. Teaching and learning would further benefit from a classroom dedicated to religious education and a wider range of resources for class use and reference.

183. Good progress has been made in the provision of religious education since the last inspection: the introduction of new syllabuses throughout the school; the study of religions other than Christianity; an increase in creative work and displays; and greater consistency between teachers. There is a good working relationship between the teachers. Overall, leadership and management in the department are satisfactory.