

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **BELFAIRS HIGH SCHOOL**

Leigh on Sea

LEA area: Southend on Sea

Unique reference number: 115350

Headteacher: Mr J Duprey

Reporting inspector: Mr J Bald  
17932

Dates of inspection: 15 – 18 October 2001

Inspection number: 193556

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Modern
School category:	Foundation
Age range of students:	11 18
Gender of students:	Mixed
School address:	Highlands Boulevard Leigh on Sea Essex
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Ms E Mashford
Date of previous inspection:	April 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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			Special educational needs	
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31329	Katie Barratt	Team inspector	History	
14871	Beryl Buteux	Team inspector	English	
3958	Maureen Cawdron	Team inspector	English (sixth form)	How good are the curriculum and other opportunities offered to students?
31685	Valerie Girling	Team inspector	Art and design	
8131	Charlotte Goodhill	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
			Equal Opportunities	
8622	Heather Housden	Team inspector	Physical education	
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11185	Colin Picton	Team inspector	Geography (sixth form)	
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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Belfairs High School is a large modern school. It has 1180 students, with many more boys than girls. A high proportion of students in the area attend selective schools. The standards reached by most students joining the school are well below average, and very low in English and mathematics, particularly amongst boys. Most students are White, but roughly a tenth are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Some 80 students have English as an additional language, of whom half are in the early stages of learning English. The proportion of students with special educational needs is broadly average, but many students have unsettled lives outside school. An exceptionally high proportion of students have joined or left the school partway through their secondary education over the past two years. The social and economic circumstances of the school are below average, and the school is part of an Education Action Zone. The school has sufficient teachers in most subjects, but has had recent staffing difficulties in geography, religious education and information and communication technology. Numbers of students are rising, and Year 7 is fully subscribed.

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

Belfairs High School is providing satisfactory education in exceptionally difficult circumstances. Most students reach well below average standards in their work, but some achieve good standards, and achievement overall is reasonable in the light of students' starting points. Provision for personal development is good, and the headteacher and governors provide a clear direction for the school. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, and the school provides satisfactory value for money.

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

- Achievement in the main school is good in science and mathematics
- Standards at 16 are above average in art, music, drama and food technology
- Provision and achievement are good in science
- The school is led and managed well
- There is a significant proportion of good and better teaching
- Students have good attitudes to work, and relationships are good
- All students are included and valued, and support for those with problems is very good
- There is a very good range of learning activities outside the classroom
- The school has very good relations with partner institutions

#### **What could be improved**

- Standards need to be raised, particularly in literacy
- Some teaching, mostly for students aged 11 to 14, is unsatisfactory
- Middle management needs improvement in several key areas
- Arrangements for assessing students' work and tracking progress are not fully effective
- Some sixth form courses are too small to provide value for money
- There is not enough provision for special educational needs and for English as an additional language
- Attendance is still well below average

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

When the school was last inspected, in April 1997, it had serious weaknesses in management, and a very large budget deficit. Teaching was unsatisfactory in a fifth of lessons, attendance was well below average, and value for money was unsatisfactory. The school's circumstances have changed greatly since the last inspection, and its overall improvement has been satisfactory. There is less unsatisfactory teaching, especially from permanent staff, and much teaching is now good or better. Except where subjects are understaffed, learning is satisfactory in most lessons, though the school has not yet developed an effective approach to raising standards in literacy. New students have settled in well, and feel fully included in the school's work. While attendance is still well below average, punctuality has improved. While there are still weaknesses in middle management, senior management has recently been effectively reorganised and gives the school a strong sense of direction. The budget deficit has been eliminated, but some sixth form courses are too small to give value for money. The school has built well on its strengths in music, art and drama, and on its cultural provision. It is well placed to improve further if it can solve its staffing problems.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	Compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
GCSE examinations	E	E	E	C
A-levels/AS-levels	E	E	E	

**Key**

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

The school's results, as might be expected from its extremely high turnover of students, have been improving at a below average rate in recent years. GCSE results remained in line with those of comparable schools overall, but improved in science. GCSE results were above average in art and design, music, drama, food technology and modern foreign languages. A significant number of students achieved A\* grades in art, drama and music. The standards reached by the oldest students during the inspection were similar to those at GCSE, and well below average overall. They were well below average in mathematics, though this represented good progress from the standards students began with, and below average in English and science. Achievement in English was only just satisfactory because of weak writing, but achievement in science was good, and standards were rising.

Results in national tests in 2000 were below average overall, and well below average in mathematics, though they were broadly average in English. Results in mathematics and science improved in 2001, and overall results were a little above those of similar schools. There was no significant change in results in 2001. Standards during the inspection were similar to the test scores, but were average in art and design. Standards at 14 in information and communication technology, religious education and geography are affected by shortages of qualified teachers. There is, however, evidence of rising standards and



good achievement in several subjects, including mathematics, science and music, and of good achievement in a significant number of lessons in English and physical education. Standards in food technology are above average.

Most students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, but some with statements of special educational need are not learning as well as they should. Students with gifts for art and music do well, but those with strengths in academic subjects are not systematically provided for, and some of their learning is unsatisfactory. Most students with English as an additional language do well in the early stages, but their later work suffers from lack of specialist teaching. The school's targets for improvement are below those for most modern schools but are realistic, and it has begun to meet and sometimes exceed them in subjects where teaching is consistently good or better. The overall level of achievement in the school is reasonable, with good features in individual subjects, but standards of literacy need to be improved.

### STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Mostly good, and very good when the teaching is outstanding. A large majority of students are keen to learn, though a minority of boys are not.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory. Most behaviour is good, but some is unsatisfactory, often in response to weaker teaching.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Most students grow in responsibility, and there are good relationships between students and teachers, including support staff.
Attendance	Well below average, but punctuality is satisfactory.

Some students join the school with very poor attendance records from their previous schools, and have long daily journeys by bus. Students' participation in music, dance and drama performances is excellent.

### TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching is satisfactory or better in well over nine tenths of lessons, and good in three fifths. Roughly a quarter of teaching across the school is very good or excellent, and most teaching by permanent staff is good. Where this teaching is consistent across a subject, it enables students to achieve good or better standards in relation to their starting points. On the other hand, teaching by teachers who are not suitably qualified holds learning back, mostly in Years 7 to 9, and the quality of some marking and homework is unsatisfactory. Students with gifts for art and performance are well taught, but in most subjects those with academic talents need more challenge. Teaching in the sixth form is good overall, and often outstanding in biology and in arts-related subjects, but the teaching of literacy to sixth formers needs to be improved.

The teaching of English is satisfactory in almost all lessons, with much good teaching in Years 7 to 9. Teaching in mathematics is good overall throughout the main school, and is well adapted to the needs of students. Science is well taught throughout the school, with some very good and excellent teaching that is leading to a pattern of rising achievement. The teaching of numeracy is satisfactory, but the teaching of literacy does not meet the wide range of students' needs. Specialist teaching for students with special educational needs, and for those with English as an additional language, is of satisfactory quality, but does not meet all of these students' needs in literacy. Teaching assistants do well to ensure that they are fully included in lessons, but lack the skills to tackle underlying problems.

### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory overall, though provision for literacy needs to be improved. Very good opportunities for learning outside the classroom.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Unsatisfactory. Students are fully included in lessons, but are not making the progress they should. Some students are not receiving the full provision set out in their statements of special educational need.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	Unsatisfactory. Adequate for students in the early stages of learning English, but not beyond this. Students with English as an additional language are fully included in the life and work of the school.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Provision for moral and social development is good, and very good for students with problems. Provision for cultural development is satisfactory overall, but has excellent features in music, art and performing arts. There are too few opportunities for reflection.
How well the school cares for its students	Good provision for students' welfare, but too little effective guidance on their work, as assessment arrangements are weak.

The school has a good partnership with most parents, and its programme of performance evenings is very well attended. There is no daily act of collective worship. The school's provision of additional care and support for vulnerable students, in the main school and in the sixth form, is a most important strength.

### HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory. Following recent reorganisation, senior management is effectively tackling problems and building on strengths. Most middle management is satisfactory to good, but there are some weaknesses.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Well. Governors have guided the school well since the last inspection, and are well informed on its strengths and weaknesses.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. The school uses national statistics well, but needs to make better use of its own evidence in strategic planning.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory overall. Additional funds are properly allocated. The library and computers need to be used better.

The school has adequate staff for most subjects, but a lack of suitably qualified and experienced teachers is the cause of most of the teaching that remains unsatisfactory. Accommodation is adequate, but some is in poor decorative condition, and this does detract from the learning atmosphere. Resources are adequate overall, but the library is not meeting the needs of students in the main school or in the sixth form. The provision of computers is below average, but just adequate.

There is a good range of skills among senior managers. Much middle management is good, but more effective management is needed in literacy, in modern languages and in the use of computers. The principles of obtaining and providing best value are understood and applied well in the main school, but not in the sixth form.

### **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>• Their children like school</li> <li>• The school is approachable</li> <li>• It has high expectations of students</li> <li>• Teaching and management are good</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Homework</li> <li>• Information and cooperation with parents</li> <li>• Behaviour</li> <li>• Activities outside lessons</li> </ul>

Many more parents expressed positive rather than negative views, and some parents expressed strong appreciation of personal support from individual teachers. Inspectors agreed with most of the positive points, although they found some weaknesses in teaching and in middle management, both of which reflected staffing problems. The inspection team shared parents' concerns about homework, and found that behaviour was unsatisfactory in some classes. They found that the school cooperated well with parents, but that the quality of information in annual reports needed improvement. Inspectors considered that activities outside lessons were very good in the main school, but inadequate in the sixth form.

**INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM**

The sixth form is expanding, and now has 139 students, 85 in Year 12 and 54 in Year 13. There are ten per cent more male than female students in the sixth form, but more female students in Year 12. The composition of the sixth form is otherwise similar to that of the main school, and includes significant proportions of students with unsettled lives outside school. The school provides a broad range of vocational and advanced academic courses, all on its own site. A high proportion of students are enrolled on courses in information and communication technology and business studies. There are no fixed standards for entry to the sixth form, but students are guided on their choice of courses on the basis of their GCSE results and other evidence of their capability to complete the course. The sixth form is expanding, and roughly two fifths of students stayed on in 2001. A very small number of students transfer from other schools. The standards reached by most students entering the sixth form are below average or lower, but a growing number of students start from good GCSE results.

**HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS**

Provision in the sixth form is satisfactory, and meets the needs of most students well. As in the main school, most reach below average standards in their work, but some do better, and standards overall represent reasonable achievement from standards at GCSE. Leadership and management are satisfactory, but a minority of advanced courses have a high failure rate, and too few students to justify their cost.

**Strengths**

- There is a good range of vocational and academic courses
- Most students follow suitable courses
- There is good achievement in biology, art, music, geography and performing arts
- Teaching is good, and outstanding in some subjects
- Relationships are good, and most students are committed to their work
- There are good links with the world of work

**What could be improved**

- Standards and value for money are unsatisfactory in a minority of courses
- Students' literacy skills are well below average
- A tenth of students need to improve their attendance and work rate
- The library is inadequate, and too little use is made of computers
- There are too few sporting and other additional activities for sixth formers

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

## THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Unsatisfactory. Results are well below average, teaching groups are too small, and some students are inadequately qualified for advanced work.
Biology	Excellent. This course is well matched to the needs of students, and taught to an outstanding standard. Results are good, and students are well prepared to proceed to higher education.
Design and technology	Satisfactory. The course is well designed and taught, with good resources and links to local industry. Some students do not take full advantage of the opportunities offered by this course.
Business (vocational)	Satisfactory overall. Teaching and planning are good, but resources, including computers, are barely adequate. Results are well below average, but students with English as an additional language do well.
Information and communication technology	Satisfactory. Courses and teaching have recently improved and are now good. Resources are barely sufficient, and some students are making up ground from previous low standards. Standards are still well below average as a result, but provision is improving.
Physical education	Satisfactory overall. Good teaching and learning on the advanced course, learning to standards in line with national average levels. Standards in the vocational course are well below average.
Visual and performing arts and media.	Very good overall. Teaching and learning are very good, and at times excellent, in performing arts, and the recent pass rate has been very high. Teaching and learning in art are good, and standards are broadly average in advanced courses.
Geography	Good. Teaching is effective and enthusiastic. There are good opportunities for fieldwork and independent study. Students' attitudes contribute to the standards achieved.
English	Satisfactory. Students develop good knowledge and understanding of literature, but inaccuracies in written work hinder progress.

Standards in other subjects sampled reflected the range of achievement in the subjects inspected. There was good, and some very good work in music and art, but there were weaknesses in history, psychology and chemistry, where course numbers are too low. Standards in health and social care were broadly average, and good in relation to students' GCSE results. Work in lessons to develop students' key skills was satisfactory in numeracy and in most literacy lessons, though teaching in literacy needs to be more closely matched to students' existing skills. The key skills course in information and communication technology had not begun by the time of the inspection.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	The overall quality of guidance and support is satisfactory. Most students receive good guidance, and there is excellent personal support for vulnerable students. A small number of students are not given enough guidance on suitable courses, and a significant minority need more guidance on their use of time for study outside lessons.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Satisfactory. Management is well organised to meet the needs of students who have unsettled lives outside school, and is developing a good learning atmosphere which promotes equality of opportunity. The school identifies suitable courses well, and builds on strengths. Management is not, however, taking strong enough action when courses are too small to be viable or where results are low.

### STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They enjoy the sixth form</li> <li>• Teaching is good</li> <li>• Courses meet their needs</li> <li>• They have good support from teachers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment and information on progress</li> <li>• Activities outside lessons</li> <li>• Support, and response to students' concerns</li> <li>• Careers guidance</li> </ul>

The inspection team agreed with most of the positive comments, though a small minority of students are not assigned to suitable courses. They agreed that assessment needed to be improved, especially in the key skill of literacy, and that there were too few activities outside lessons. However, there are excellent opportunities to take part in performances, and the school finds it difficult to arrange further activities outside lessons as many students have part-time jobs. It was not possible to make a secure judgement on careers guidance, as the programme was due to start immediately after the inspection, but there was evidence of effective provision in some vocational courses.

### COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

## PART B: COMMENTARY

### HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

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

1. Most students joining the school at 11 have reached well below average standards in English, mathematics and science. Their results in national tests for 11-year-olds over the past three years have been exceptionally low in writing. Under a third of all students in Year 9 at the time of the inspection, for example, had reached the nationally expected standard in writing when they joined the school. While there was some improvement in 2001, only a third of boys and just over half of the girls joining the school in the term of the inspection had reached the nationally expected standard. This is particularly significant as there are substantially more boys than girls in four out of five year groups. Over the past two years, very large numbers of students have joined the school after the age of 11. Over two years, the turnover of students has been well over two-fifths of the whole school population. Many of these new students have special educational needs, and a significant proportion have experienced disturbance to their education and in their lives outside school. Significant numbers of students are looked after by the local authority. The school has well above average numbers of students with English as an additional language, including a substantial proportion of refugees who are in the early stages of learning English. Standards and learning in geography, religious education and information and communication technology are affected by a shortage of suitably qualified and experienced staff. No lessons for students in Year 11 took place during the inspection, as the students were on work experience placements. Inspectors interviewed a representative sample of these students, and analysed their written work.
2. During the inspection standards in English, mathematics and science were below average to well below average throughout the school. However, the difficulties the school is facing are exceptional, and achievement is satisfactory or better in most subjects where the school is fully staffed. Standards in mathematics, for example, are well below average overall at 14 and at GCSE. However, this represents good achievement from the very low standards on entry and also good improvement from the very low levels seen during the last inspection, when a significant proportion of older students were still in the early stages of learning to count. There is also a good pattern of rising achievement in science. High-attaining students are beginning to achieve good results at GCSE in all subjects. In art and music, standards are broadly average at 14, and well above average among students taking the subjects at GCSE – nine students achieved A\* grades in art at GCSE in 2001. The historical understanding of 14-year-olds is close to average levels at 14, but standards are held back by weaknesses in their writing. Standards among students taking the subject at GCSE are broadly average. Standards in physical education are below average throughout the school. Achievement in this subject is satisfactory rather than good, despite good teaching, because of some students' poor attitudes.
3. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are well below average, and lower than they should be. The school has recently extended the range and quality of its courses in the subject, but improvement is held back by the lack of qualified and experienced teachers, and by a split in management responsibilities which is leading to poor organisation of resources. In geography and religious education, standards are in line with what students should be achieving at GCSE. However, achievement is unsatisfactory at 14, as up to half of the lessons for students

aged 11 to 14 are taught by teachers who do not have the skills and qualifications they need to teach the subjects effectively. As most of these teachers have had to be appointed over the summer holidays, the school has not yet had time to provide them with the professional development they need. Standards in design and technology are below average overall, but above average in food technology, where the school has an established pattern of excellent teaching. Standards in French and Spanish are below average at age 14, but the small proportion of students who take a language at GCSE achieve well above average results. Standards in drama at 16 are above average, and significantly higher than those in comparable schools.

4. Standards in almost all subjects are limited by students' weaknesses in reading and writing, and there is no consistent approach within the school to the very difficult task it faces in raising standards in these areas. Writing in particular is of low quality in almost all subjects throughout the school and there is not enough use and encouragement of reading; poor library resources limit opportunities for learning. The policy document for raising standards in writing does not focus closely enough on patterns of achievement within the school, and does not provide an effective basis for improvement.
5. Students enter the school with very low numeracy skills. They develop these skills gradually in mathematics lessons, and by using numeracy in some other subjects. For example, in science they solve speed-distance-time problems, substitute in formulae and evaluate wave lengths. In ICT they use spread sheets to calculate costs, analyse data and construct graphs and charts. In these and other subjects, numeracy skills are used and developed, and overall progress is satisfactory. Nevertheless, number skills would be further improved by systematic coordination across the school.
6. Students with English as an additional language and those with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in response to specialist teaching. However, there is little of this, and most are given support by teaching assistants. This enables these students to take part in lessons and to achieve a basic understanding of their work, but assistants have not had opportunities to develop the skills they need to make an impact on underlying difficulties with English. In these cases, support in lessons is effective in the short term, but is not enabling students to move towards learning independently, and they struggle, for example, in religious education, when support is not available. Students with statements of special educational need are particularly vulnerable when this happens, and are not making the progress they should. The progress of students with severe difficulties in their lives outside school is good, and benefits from the school's extensive provision of additional support.
7. The school's targets for improvement are realistic. The achievements of departments which are fully staffed indicate that the school has the capacity to raise standards provided it can achieve some stability in its intake, and can recruit suitably qualified staff.



## Sixth form

8. Standards in the sixth form are below average overall, but represent a satisfactory level of achievement for most students. Students reach well above average standards in music, and above average standards in art. Standards in performing arts, biology, physical education, religious education, health and social care and in the new AS course in Spanish are broadly average. Standards in all of these courses represent good levels of achievement. Standards are well below average in business education and below average in information and communication technology. However, in both of these subjects, which attract large numbers of students, many of them with relatively low GCSE results, achievement is satisfactory, and learning during the inspection was good. Standards and learning in English during the inspection were satisfactory, but students' control of formal English in their writing did not do justice to their good understanding of the texts they were studying.
9. There are weaknesses in standards and achievement in mathematics, chemistry, history and psychology. These courses attract small numbers of students, and suffer further from high dropout and failure rates. While most students in Year 12 during the inspection were appropriately placed on their courses, standards at AS level in 2001 were low, and too few students were proceeding to A level. Standards were also well below average in the intermediate vocational course in leisure and tourism. This course attracted significant numbers of lower attaining students, a substantial proportion of whom left to take up employment in the first half term.
10. As in the main school, standards in the sixth form are affected by weaknesses in literacy. Achievement in the school's programme of key skills teaching in literacy and numeracy is satisfactory overall, and effectively supported in some tutorial periods, but work in some lessons needs to be matched more closely to students' needs. Planning for a key skills course in information and communication technology was satisfactory, but the introduction of the course had been delayed due to a lack of access to equipment.

## Students' attitudes, values and personal development

11. Most students have good attitudes to learning, show enthusiasm in lessons and sustain concentration well. They take an active part in extra-curricular activities, particularly in music, drama, and performing arts and technology, where the school was the most successful in the country in this year's Shell Challenge for fuel economy. Students are interested in their school, want to do well, and are welcoming to newcomers. Recently arrived students with English as an additional language, for example, told the inspectors that they felt part of the school and were making friends. These positive attitudes contribute to the climate of inclusion in the school. The small but significant minority of students who do not share these good attitudes have little or no influence on the majority, but their behaviour makes teaching in some classes difficult, and limits learning. The school's extensive provision of support and guidance enables many students who have had disturbed lives outside school to develop positive attitudes to education. Students with special educational needs have good attitudes in most lessons, and are very attentive in lessons specifically directed to their learning difficulties. Attendance at a Wednesday evening homework club during the inspection was good.

12. Behaviour is satisfactory overall. Behaviour during the inspection was satisfactory, and often good, in almost all lessons for students aged 14 to 16. Most younger students also behaved well, but there was some disruption to learning from a minority of pupils, mostly boys in Year 9. Lapses in behaviour often followed unsatisfactory teaching, but the behaviour of students in some classes, notably in physical education, held up learning despite good teaching. Students move around the school in an orderly manner and are polite to adults. There is little or no graffiti but some students drop litter at break and lunch time. Inspectors investigated parents' concerns over bullying. They did not see any instances, but students told them that there were pockets of oppressive behaviour in parts of the school, for example, in toilets. These students also said, however, that the school dealt quickly and effectively with incidents that occurred. Racial and social harmony in the school are good, and almost all students showed respect for the rights and beliefs of others. Over three quarters of parents responding to the questionnaire felt that behaviour was good, and inspectors for the most part shared this view, though some breaches of good behaviour during the inspection were significant. Overall, behaviour and attitudes are similar to those seen during the last inspection.
13. Since the last inspection, few students have been permanently excluded from the school, though exclusions for a fixed number of days have risen significantly. This reflects changes in the school population, including a significant overall rise in the number of students, and an influx of students who had either been, or were under threat of, permanent exclusion from other schools. The level of exclusion is not excessive, given the school's context.
14. Students show initiative in their work when teaching allows it, for example in food technology, where boys as well as girls were keen to offer and try out ideas. However, as at the last inspection, there are too few opportunities for them to demonstrate independence and initiative, and scope for independent study is limited by the lack of books and other resources in the library. Students respond well to other opportunities to take responsibility, for example in the school council, as prefects or working on reception duties. However, there are too few such opportunities. Students usually collaborate well when working in pairs and groups. Relationships, between students and staff and among students, are good, though a few students do not show proper respect to teachers. A small minority of teachers with overseas qualifications cause friction in relationships by overrigid classroom management which does not allow students to form a constructive learning relationship with them.
15. Attendance is well below average. In the school year 2002/2001 attendance overall was lower than at the time of the last inspection. Only in Year 7 was attendance above 90 per cent. One reason for low attendance has been the school's recent acceptance of several students from other schools who had been at risk of permanent exclusion, and whose attendance records had been very poor. A significant proportion of absence is also caused by holidays taken in term time. In the first few weeks of the current school year, attendance has improved by one per cent over last year's figures. Punctuality, to school and to lessons, has improved since the last inspection, and is now satisfactory.

## Sixth Form

16. Attitudes in the sixth form are satisfactory overall, and have changed little since the last inspection. Most sixth form students have good attitudes, and there is a friendly

atmosphere, with no evidence of oppressive behaviour. A significant minority of students, however, do not have satisfactory attitudes to work.

17. Most students understand that they are responsible for their work. They show initiative in lessons, for example in biology and performing arts, where the best work shows total commitment to learning. They use their time well outside lessons, for example by engaging in independent research in geography, and by working quietly in the private study area, though their private reading is limited by the lack of library resources. On the other hand, attendance and attitudes are poor in a significant minority of courses, for example in the vocational course for leisure and tourism, and in some subjects where students are being taught on their own. Some students during the inspection were using their time outside lessons to socialise rather than work, and the school's procedures were not picking this up quickly enough. While attendance in most classes was very high, overall attendance during the first half-term was significantly below that in the main school.

### HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

18. The low standards reached by many students entering the school, and the exceptional turbulence in the student population, pose great difficulties to teachers. Nevertheless, teaching has made an important contribution to students' personal development by helping them to settle and giving them a sense of purpose. Teaching in some subjects, notably mathematics and science, is well adapted to the diverse learning needs of the students, and leads to good achievement in the longer term, even though standards remain below average to well below average.
19. Teaching in mathematics and science during the inspection was good throughout the main school. The teaching of English was good for students aged 11 to 14, and satisfactory for students aged 14 to 16. With rare exceptions, lessons taught by the school's permanent teachers were satisfactory or better, and three fifths were good. Teaching in a quarter of lessons was very good or excellent. On the other hand, the teaching of students aged 11 to 14 was unsatisfactory or poor in a tenth of lessons. Most of this was caused by the school's having to rely on temporary teachers who did not have the qualifications and experience they needed to teach the subject. Moreover, analysis of students' work showed further evidence of unsatisfactory teaching of written work in subjects such as design and technology, and of inadequate marking and homework. Overall, the school's teaching is having a good impact on learning for students aged 14 to 16, but is not meeting the needs of students aged 11 to 14 adequately.
20. Excellent and very good teaching during the inspection was based on high levels of professional knowledge and understanding, combined with personal commitment to meet the needs of students, many of whom began with low standards in the subject. This teaching led to exceptional involvement of students in their work, and to learning that enabled students to reach average or above average standards in the aspects of subjects that were being covered. Excellence was consistent in food technology, where boys and girls were keen to develop and try out new ideas for dishes. The high quality of teaching in drama and in art are engaging a large number of students in effective learning, and preparing them well for the sixth form. Where excellent teaching took place only in a minority of lessons, as in information and communication technology, its impact on learning was much more limited.

21. Where the teaching was good, work was well matched to students' learning needs, and teachers sustained good relationships and pace of work. Teaching was good overall in science, art, music, design and technology, and physical education. Good teaching generally promoted good learning, but learning in physical education was limited by the poor attitudes of some students, and was satisfactory overall. In geography and modern foreign languages, teaching was good for older students, and was contributing to success at GCSE.
22. Because of the broad range of learning difficulties of the students, teaching only had a significant effect on learning in the longer term when it was consistently good or better. Satisfactory teaching enabled students to make reasonable progress in the lesson itself; work was thoroughly planned, though the pace in most of these lessons needed to be improved, and some work needed to be more finely tuned to the needs of the class. Teaching assistants made a very effective contribution to teaching through personal support for lower attaining students, including those with special educational needs and for students with English as an additional language. This ensured that these students were engaged in their work, and in most lessons prevented those with behaviour difficulties from disturbing the learning of others. On the other hand, some teaching assistants were having to try to help students with serious literacy problems, and had had too little training to enable them to make an impact on these problems. Specialist teaching of students with special educational needs is satisfactory. There have been recent improvements in the teaching of students with Statements of Special Educational Need, but they have not been enough to ensure that the full provisions of statements are in place for all students. Some teaching of students with special educational needs makes good use of computers, but the potential contribution of computers to the work is not fully exploited.
23. Where teaching was unsatisfactory, too little was expected of students, and they did too little work to ensure satisfactory learning. In most of these lessons, teachers did not know the subject well enough to teach it effectively, and there were weaknesses in class management, including in some cases an overrigid style that prevented the development of working relationships. Most unsatisfactory teaching took place in geography, religious education and information and communication technology. Standards in these subjects at age 14 suffered as a result. Inadequate teaching of writing was more widespread. While there were examples of more effective teaching in some subjects, including history, too many writing tasks were not thought out clearly enough to help students develop their writing and to use it to support learning in the subject. Talented students are benefiting from teaching of high quality in some departments, including art, music and drama, and from the extra-curricular activities. Students with very high ability in academic subjects, however, are not effectively identified and provided for across the school, and only in isolated cases, for example, when one student obtained an A grade in mathematics a year early, is provision for their needs satisfactory.
24. The school is gradually building up its specialised teaching of students with English as an additional language, but has not been able to do so quickly enough to keep up with the influx of students. Provision is satisfactory for those in the early stages of learning English, but there is very little for students who have passed this point, and errors and misunderstandings in their work are not consistently dealt with. This limits these students' chances in examinations.

25. Teaching at the time of the last inspection had significant weaknesses. The present picture represents satisfactory overall improvement, and good improvement on the part of the school's permanent staff.

### **Sixth form**

26. Teachers in most subjects pitch work at the right level to enable students to learn well, and create a good learning atmosphere, sustaining good relationships and a good pace of work. Teaching is strongest in biology, drama, music and art, where much of it is very good to excellent. There are examples of very good teaching in individual lessons in other subjects and vocational courses, including health and social care and physical education. There was very good teaching of history during the inspection by a temporary supply teacher. Where the teaching is very good or excellent, it is based on high levels of knowledge and understanding of the subject, combined with clear explanations and presentation which provide students with a very good balance of challenge and support. Students respond in kind, for example showing outstanding commitment to learning in an excellent lesson in performing arts, based on the work of Stanislavski. Teachers in the most successful lessons often make very effective use of technology, for example in analysing soil samples in biology using computers. Where teaching of this quality is provided consistently, it enables students either to keep up high standards they have reached at GCSE, or to make better progress than might be expected from their GCSE results.
27. Where students start with low standards in relation to the demands of their courses, as in mathematics and in chemistry in Year 13, good and satisfactory teaching is not sufficient to give them a reasonable chance of success. Where teaching is good in some aspects of the subject, as in English, it does not pay sufficient attention to weaknesses in students' skills, chiefly in writing, its impact on learning is only partly successful.
28. Teaching in the sixth form was unsatisfactory in under one lesson in 20. This teaching lacked pace and drive, and too little was expected of the students. The use of information and communication technology in this teaching masked weaknesses in the learning that was taking place, and in one lesson learning was held back by the attitudes of some students, who did not fully understand the importance of the work. The quality of learning in business education, design and technology and the intermediate vocational course on leisure and tourism is also limited, despite good teaching, by a lack of commitment to learning on the part of some students.
29. Teaching across the sixth form, including some tutorial work, is making a satisfactory contribution to key skills in literacy and numeracy, though it would be more effective if weaknesses identified in the main school were tackled immediately on entry to the sixth form. Planning for key skills in information and communication technology is satisfactory, but the course had not begun at the time of the inspection.

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

30. The curriculum makes suitable provision for all subjects of the National Curriculum and health education, including sex education and education against the misuse of drugs. Learning opportunities are particularly good in music, art, science and food technology, all of which contribute very well to students' personal development and

study skills. During the inspection, learning opportunities in geography and religious education were restricted by a shortage of suitably qualified teachers, which prevented students from receiving the full benefit of effective leadership and organisation in these departments. The school's arrangements to include all students in its work are based on carefully considered programmes of additional support, with modifications to the curriculum for students aged 14 to 16 to give them additional vocational experience. While this results in a low proportion of students taking a modern foreign language, the overall effect is successful.

31. The school does not provide a daily act of collective worship, and there is no provision for religious education for all students in the sixth form. However, assemblies are of good quality. The curriculum during the inspection met all other legal requirements.
32. The school has begun to use the National Literacy Strategy for students aged 11 to 14, but its provision is not adequate to tackle the very low standards achieved by many students in literacy when they join the school. This issue affects standards and learning in all subjects that involve reading and writing, and is particularly serious for boys, whose standards are significantly weaker than those of girls. Many students joining the school after the age of 11 have serious learning difficulties related to literacy, and there are 30 students in the early stages of learning English. Provision for these students is satisfactory overall. Beginners in English receive effective individual teaching, and teachers in most subjects adapt work so that all students can take a constructive part in lessons. However, there is no systematic support for students who have progressed beyond the early stages in English and this seriously impedes learning. Provision for numeracy is satisfactory overall, with good reinforcement of students' skills in science lessons. There is too little use of computers to promote learning in most subjects across the school.
33. Specialist teaching for students with special educational needs is sound, but some students with statements of special educational need are not receiving the full programme of teaching set out in their statements. Teachers in most lessons match work to the standards students have reached, and teaching assistants are very effective in including students with special educational needs in the work of their classes. However, these arrangements are not enough to ensure that these students make consistent progress in their work. For example, one student in Year 11, who was given consistent support, was regularly advised to take more care in presenting work, but did not receive the specific teaching of handwriting that might have helped him to improve. The school has recently used computers well to help students improve their literacy through typing, but is otherwise not making enough use of computers to help students with learning difficulties.
34. Students with talents in art, drama, music and sport have good opportunities for learning and performance. The highest-attaining students in academic subjects have some additional learning opportunities, for example in mathematics, but these opportunities are not always thought out closely enough to match individual needs, and the school does not have effective systems for identifying gifted and talented students at an early stage in their school career.
35. There are long-established ties with local primary schools, which ensure good continuity in learning and effective transfer of students joining the school at 11. These arrangements have recently been improved by the appointment of teaching assistants who work with students in their last year of primary education and then move with them into secondary school. There are good community links, including sponsorship

of prizes at the school's awards evenings, and of equipment for the chess club, which helps students to learn to play to time limits.

36. Opportunities for students to learn outside the classroom are extensive and of very good overall quality. Students have excellent opportunities to learn a musical instrument, and to take part in music and drama performances. These include a regular series of well-organised musical and dramatic evenings, for which the school hall is very imaginatively adapted to provide a cabaret atmosphere. Most of the items are taken from their GCSE and A-level courses, and the opportunity to build experience and confidence makes a vital contribution to the results students achieve. There are good arrangements for study support, chess and sport, though sometimes students do not take part in these activities as consistently as they might.

### **Sixth form**

37. The curriculum for the sixth form contains a broad range of vocational and academic courses, supported by work in key skills. It is meeting the needs of the students to a satisfactory overall standard. The most popular courses, for example in information and communication technology and business studies, are meeting the needs of the students well, and there are good new AS courses in Spanish and geography. A minority of courses, however, are too difficult for the students who are allowed to start them. These are chiefly in advanced mathematics and chemistry, and the outcome is often individual tuition for students who do not have a realistic chance of success.
38. Provision for developing students' key skills in information and communication technology, mathematics and literacy is satisfactory overall. There is a carefully organised programme, which is given adequate time, and which is adequately reinforced in tutorial periods and lessons. However, the quality of this provision is limited by weaknesses in assessment, particularly in the early stages of the course. Activities outside lessons for sixth form students have been cut back as part of the school's drive to reduce its financial deficit, although football and netball teams have been established very recently. Many students find it difficult to take part in activities outside school time because they have part-time jobs. Nevertheless, the inspection team agreed with students' view that there were now too few additional activities.
39. Overall, the development of the curriculum, in the main school and in the sixth form, has been satisfactory since the last inspection. The school has suitable plans to develop it further, for example by developing teaching techniques to meet the specific needs of boys, and to expand provision for pupils with English as an additional language.

### **Spiritual, social, moral and cultural development**

40. The school makes good provision for students' personal development, in the spirit of its aim of 'Success for all, shared by all'. Moral and social development is strong, and most parents support the attitudes and values the school promotes. Students have very good opportunities to learn about their own culture, but there is limited provision for them to learn about other cultures. However, there is too little provision for spiritual development.

41. There is a clear spiritual content in many lessons in religious education. Most assemblies create good opportunities for reflection on spiritual values, but these are not daily events. Art, drama and music provide opportunities for reflection on themes that go beyond the material, and encourage self-awareness and self-evaluation. As at the time of the last inspection, there is very little planned development of spiritual awareness in most subjects, although there are good opportunities for reflection in a minority of English lessons, for example in discussing the persecution of minority ethnic groups in 'The Merchant of Venice'.
42. The school's programme for personal, social and health education (PSHE) makes an effective contribution to students' moral development, with units on topics such as bullying, discrimination and understanding disability. Moral issues are discussed in English, form the basis of many topics in drama, and occasionally arise in science and geography lessons. The recent revision of provision for combating bullying has been particularly effective, and the school's policies have a positive impact on behaviour. Teachers' example and encouragement helps students to see clearly the difference between right and wrong.
43. Social development is promoted effectively through the PSHE programme, which explores topics such as friendship and relationships, through work experience in which young people take on adult responsibilities, and through a variety of extra-curricular sporting activities, many encouraging team work and fair play. A well-attended breakfast club and an afterschool homework club help to foster social development, as well as providing support for learning. Students learn to work together effectively in many lessons, notably drama, and geography. Students joining the school party through their secondary education have often had much disturbance in their lives outside school, and provision for their social development is outstanding. Several recently arrived refugees, for example, commented to inspectors on the opportunities they were offered, and on the friendliness of students.
44. There are many extracurricular musical activities, ranging from individual tuition on a variety of instruments to participation in different bands. The junior band offers opportunities to students with a wide range of ability, from new learners to those who have had four years learning an instrument. The main school band gives performances of high quality and had just returned from a North American tour at the time of the inspection. Regular evening performances involve an unusually high proportion of students in performing music and drama to a high standard, and are well attended by students' families. Several students taking part in a performance during the inspection had achieved A\* grades in music and drama, and the best of the performances approached professional standards. Pupils are introduced to a broad range of artists, mostly European, in art, and benefit from visits, for example to Kew Gardens. They have good opportunities to learn about other cultures in some lessons in topics which include Indian cuisine, aboriginal art, African and Caribbean writers, Buddhism and Islam. However, this work is not effectively coordinated, and students' understanding of other cultures remains relatively underdeveloped.

### **The sixth form**

45. Personal development in the sixth form is good overall, although some aspects of it need to be improved. In A-level subjects such as English and religious education, the topics or texts studied clearly promote the development of students' spiritual awareness, although this is not planned across all subjects. Students of A-level English literature consider in some depth the relationship between religion and



society, while studying Wordsworth's poetry involves students in serious reflection on key memories from their own childhood. One student explained that studying at this level had enabled her to develop self-knowledge as well as self-expression. On the other hand, that there are no assemblies and no religious education for all students: this is a breach of statutory requirements. Students' moral and social development is enhanced by the good tutorial arrangements, which enable all to have individual contact with their tutors on a regular basis.

46. Sixth form students have further opportunities for social development through voluntary work, helping younger students, and the school council. As in the main school, creative subjects such as music and performing arts promote very good cultural development, but there are too few contributions from other subjects. Students' knowledge and understanding of cultures other than their own is promoted through art and music, and in some subjects such as geography. However, this is not systematic.

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

47. Procedures for child protection are sound and there is good provision for students' welfare. The school has effective additional support services for the significant numbers of its students whose lives outside school are troubled. These include effective support to students who have suffered bereavement, and to those who are looked after by the local authority. Some of the problems dealt with by these services are very serious, and they play a crucial role in enabling students to continue with their education. Students feel confident of being supported if they need help, and parents whose children have suffered from long-term illness greatly appreciate the long-term support they have received. The school has a well-developed programme of careers guidance, supported by extensive arrangements for work experience and a well-stocked careers library. There are very effective arrangements to support new students transferring from primary school, with good additional support from teaching assistants funded by the Education Action Zone. The school has extended its provision in this area well to meet its changed circumstances since the last inspection.
48. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are satisfactory. Codes of conduct are displayed in every classroom and students know them well. Staff expect good behaviour from students and generally obtain it. However, the approach of a small minority of teachers is too rigid to enable students to form an effective working relationship with them, and students sometimes respond to this approach with poor behaviour. There is some bullying, but the school deals with this quickly and effectively where it is found. Provision for health and safety is satisfactory overall, and is reinforced by good teaching in the programme of personal, social and health education. However, some fire exits are not properly marked, and some toilets are in poor condition.
49. The school has experienced additional problems in promoting attendance since the last inspection, chiefly through the influx of new students with very poor attendance records. Nevertheless, its procedures for monitoring and improving attendance have yet to make a significant overall impact on attendance levels. Individual cases are pursued energetically, but there is not enough systematic monitoring of attendance data to ascertain causes, trends and patterns. Within its new management structure, the school has allocated specific responsibility for attendance and punctuality, and is developing new strategies. There are early signs that these are leading to

improvement, particularly on punctuality. This is significant, as many new students have difficult journeys to school by bus.

50. The school has good arrangements to assess standards and support learning in science. These arrangements contribute to achievement by helping teachers to pitch work at the right level for students. Assessment is adequate in mathematics, but weak in information and communication technology. Assessment is poor in English. This seriously limits teachers' ability to promote good progress in literacy, and in turn affects standards in other subjects in which students have to write. The quality of assessment arrangements in other subjects ranges from good to unsatisfactory, and this lack of consistency limits the overall quality of learning throughout the school. There are no systematic arrangements to identify gifted and talented students, so that the quality of their learning depends too much on the initiative of individual teachers. Weak assessment procedures limit the value to parents of annual reports, which do not contain sufficiently clear guidance on what students need to do to improve.
51. Arrangements for assessing special educational needs and for annual reviews of these assessments are improving, but a backlog has still to be dealt with. The school properly allocates additional funds to students with statements of special educational need, but does not monitor the teaching they receive closely enough to ensure that needs identified in statements are fully provided for in teaching. This leads to significant gaps in learning. The support these students receive in lessons enables them to participate, and to feel included in the work of the class. It is not, however directed closely enough to underlying problems, such as very weak handwriting, to enable the students to develop independence. Students with English as an additional language are quickly identified, and initial assessment procedures rightly emphasise testing students' understanding. These students receive effective support in classes while they are still in the early stages of learning English, but their later learning is not tracked, and suffers in some subjects from limited understanding of more advanced vocabulary.

## **Sixth form**

### ***Assessment***

52. Most teachers during the inspection were making satisfactory use of formal and informal assessment to match work to students' needs and to suggest areas for improvement. Arrangements were good in biology and geography. However, they needed improvement in English, where there was too little focus on students' weaknesses in writing and in speaking, and in key skills, where time was spent assessing students' needs in the sixth form, when the school already had much of the information it needed from Year 11. The school's system of half-termly interviews on progress had not started at the time of the inspection.

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

53. Since the last inspection, the sixth form has expanded considerably, and the school has made satisfactory improvements in extending its arrangements to provide support and guidance. Students receive good guidance when choosing courses. Sound support is provided through tutorial periods, which also make a contribution to key skills, and the effectiveness of guidance is improved by the generally good relationships between teachers and students. There are good special mentoring arrangements for students causing concern. The school monitors students' use of

time outside lessons, and has a policy of insisting that at least six hours are used for supervised private study. This was partly successful during the inspection, but a minority of students needed further guidance and support to ensure that they used time for independent learning properly. Students with special educational needs receive effective support in the sixth form, and laptop computers are provided where necessary. There are no arrangements to provide specifically for students with English as an additional language, but most were learning well during the inspection.

54. The programme for careers education was due to begin in the half term following the inspection, and it was not possible to judge its overall quality. However, there were several examples of good arrangements to prepare students for their intended careers and for higher education, for example in biology and in the performing arts. On the limited evidence available, provision appears satisfactory.
55. As with the main school, strategies for ensuring high attendance by students in the sixth form are not effective. Attendance during the inspection was noticeably weaker in some courses than others – for example, some students taking the leisure and tourism vocational course had found employment, but had not informed the school.

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

56. Parents had positive views of the school at the time of the last inspection, and most still do. Parents appreciate the school's approachability, its expectations of students, the quality of teaching, and the leadership and management. However, a minority of parents have concerns about aspects of the school's work, including homework, behaviour and special educational needs. The evidence of the inspection confirmed most of the positive views of parents, but also bore out some their concerns.
57. Several parents at the pre-inspection meeting praised rising standards among higher attaining students, particularly in mathematics and the arts. The school provides good regular information on its work through newsletters, prospectus, the governors' annual report and day-to-day communication from pastoral staff. In some cases, the level of support is exceptional, and one parent wrote a detailed letter to inspectors praising the school's long-term co-operation while her child was seriously ill. Support staff maintain close links with parents of students who find school difficult and with those who follow a more work-related curriculum. There are regular meetings with parents to explain key issues in education, such as national tests for 14-year-olds and option choices, and parents strongly support special events, such as the performance evening for music, dance and drama, which attracted an audience of almost 200 parents and family members.
58. On the other hand, some parents of students with statements of special educational need have been rightly concerned that their children have not received the full range of teaching set out in their statements. Inspectors also agreed with a significant minority of parents responding to the questionnaire, who did not believe their children were receiving the right amount of homework. The most recent annual reports to parents give the information required by law, but do not contain enough detail and guidance on standards in subjects to help students to improve their work. This represents some deterioration in the quality of reports since the last inspection. Inspectors did not agree with parents who did not believe there were enough extra curricular activities in the main school.

59. Some parents did not feel that the school worked with them closely enough. Inspectors, however, found that too many parents were not meeting the school half way, and were not providing adequate support for their children's education. Frequently, students' homework planners are not signed, and few parents give direct help to the school. While parents attend performance evenings in large numbers, attendance at other meetings organised by the school is often poor, and the parent teacher association depends on a small core of active members,
60. Sixth form students' views of the school were positive overall. A high proportion felt that they were well taught, had good guidance on their choice of courses, and received good personal support. A significant minority were concerned about provision for careers advice, about the lack of extra-curricular activities, and about the quality of information on their progress. Inspectors agreed that there were too few activities outside lessons, though found that they had been curtailed to help reduce the school's budget deficit. Students were receiving good individual feedback on progress and good advice on careers, but the school's more formal provision for assessment interviews and careers advice was due to begin immediately after the inspection, and it was not possible to make a secure judgement on provision in these areas.

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

61. At the time of the last inspection, the school had serious weaknesses in management, and a very large deficit in its finances. Management has improved, and is now satisfactory overall. It has several good features, which have enabled it to maintain the educational direction of the school in the context of a rapid expansion in the numbers of students, to create an inclusive and welcoming atmosphere, and to improve the overall quality of teaching. On the other hand, the school has yet to develop an effective approach to the broad range of literacy problems among its students, and there are significant weaknesses in middle management, despite recent improvements in organisation. The school has cleared its deficit, but some problems with resources and accommodation which stem from this deficit are still affecting learning.
62. The headteacher provides a strong personal lead, and has generated a strong sense of teamwork among the staff. There is a clear focus on raising standards, and on ensuring satisfactory or better teaching throughout the school. The school had reorganised its leadership group immediately prior to the inspection, and it was functioning well. Assistant headteachers now have clearly defined responsibilities, which are matched well to the needs of the school, and carry them out effectively, particularly in the areas of performance management. These aspects of management have led to the marked reduction in the proportion of unsatisfactory teaching since the last inspection, and are creating a good climate for learning in the school, despite the substantial influx of new students. The school's efforts to improve have, however, recently been set back by a lack of qualified teachers in some subjects.
63. Management in the main school is now good in mathematics and science. However, a temporary arrangement to share the management of English through a group of three teachers at the time of the inspection was not effective, and planning to improve literacy across the school is not focused closely enough on the needs of the students. The school is developing an effective approach to managing its provision for English as an additional language, though this provision has not been able to keep up with the very great expansion in the needs of students. Some subjects, such as geography,

have benefited from the influence of new managers who have had enough time to establish themselves in the school, but other recently appointed managers are still adjusting to their new duties. Management of special educational needs is fully stretched by the need to deal with a backlog of work related to students with statements of special educational need. The school is making some progress towards overcoming this, but was still not ensuring that the provisions of statements were fully met at the time of the inspection. Management of information and communication technology is energetic, but divided between two teachers, whose responsibilities are sometimes in conflict. This is holding back progress in the use of computers.

64. The school development plan identifies the main issues facing the school, and well chosen priorities have been set, with suitable allocation of funds. The headteacher and governors have managed the school's finances prudently since the last inspection. They have cleared the deficit, and have begun to improve resources and accommodation. However, the economies that have had to be made have delayed repairs to buildings, and have led to shortages of resources in the library, and for history, geography and science. Funds for students with statements of special educational need are spent for the purpose for which they are allocated, but the quality of provision which results is not monitored closely enough to ensure that it covers all of the provisions set out in the statements. Funding from the Education Action Zone is used effectively to provide good additional vocational opportunities for older, lower-attaining students, and to strengthen provision for students joining the school from primary schools. Arrangements for applying the principles of best value are satisfactory in the main school.
65. The governors are well organised, contribute effectively to the educational direction of the school, and have helped to raise its profile in the local community. They have a clear idea of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and are effectively involved in setting targets and monitoring standards. The governor for special educational needs is well qualified and has played an appropriate role in recent improvements in arrangements to manage provision. Over recent years, the headteacher and governors have built up strong relationships with local primary schools, and are reinforcing them further by providing additional support for students joining the school at 11.
66. The headteacher and governors have developed an effective system of additional support for students who face disruption in their lives outside school. This is managed well, and enables significant numbers of students to continue with their education and to become involved in the life of the school. Most of these students are in the main school, and they include a high proportion who are looked after by the local authority. On the other hand, in their efforts to build up the sixth form, the headteacher and governors have allowed it to become slightly overstaffed in relation to the main school. This results in some skilled teachers being used to teach very small groups of students in the sixth form, at the expense of larger numbers of students who would benefit from their teaching in the main school.
67. The school has a core of permanent staff who are well qualified to teach their subjects and vocational courses. It has had to appoint teachers without suitable qualifications and experience in geography, religious education and information and communication technology, however, and this is the reason for over half of the unsatisfactory teaching in the school. Teaching is effectively monitored, with detailed feedback, and arrangements for professional development are matched well to teachers' needs, as well as to priorities in the school development plan. Arrangements for performance

management are very effective, and are contributing to improvements in the quality of teaching. The school has recently strengthened its staff by recruiting a substantial number of teaching assistants. They are experienced in working with children, and make an important contribution to the inclusion of all students in lessons. However, the school has not had time to develop a programme of training to enable them to meet the full range of learning difficulties with which they have to deal, and this limits their impact on pupils' progress

68. There is a large, pleasant library, with adequate space. However, there are too few books in most subjects, and much stock needs updating. One computer provides the only access to the Internet: this is not enough for such a large school. The present state of the library is preventing the students from receiving the full benefit of good teaching and the librarian needs more support to ensure full involvement of heads of department in improving it. Resources for learning are adequate in most subjects although the overall provision of resources has suffered from the need to eliminate the budget deficit, and only art, music and drama enjoy good resources. The proportion of computers is below average, but adequate.
69. The school has now begun a programme of steady improvement for its buildings, and accommodation during the inspection was adequate, with good facilities for special educational needs. Displays, for example, of art and of written work in modern languages, ensure that the learning environment is attractive, but the poor decorative condition of some accommodation, particularly in science and physical education, does not promote positive attitudes among students and makes teaching more difficult.

## **Sixth form**

### **Leadership and management**

70. The school is expanding its sixth form to meet the needs of the growing numbers of students in the main school, and is effectively building on strength. For example, advanced work in art and music are benefiting from rising standards at GCSE, including a significant proportion of students with A\* grades. New vocational courses are generally well chosen, and the new advanced course in Spanish gives students a good chance of success. Students receive good guidance on their choice of courses, and over nine tenths of those who answered the questionnaire felt that they were receiving the right provision. On the other hand, the school is maintaining a minority of courses, which have too few students to provide value for money. While most of these small courses are in Year 13, at the time of the inspection there were only two students taking AS level chemistry in Year 12.
71. Day-to-day management of the sixth form is building a good working atmosphere, with good support for students and guidance on work. For example, students are expected to spend six hours of their time outside lessons in supervised private study; this is accepted by the students and is generally effective. Students with special educational needs are given good additional support, including the use of a computer when they need it. However, some students do not make good use of their time outside lessons, and become too relaxed in their manner when using the common room. The school had identified this as an issue at the time of the inspection, but had not yet taken effective action.

## Resources

72. The school is only beginning to develop resources to meet the needs of its expanding sixth form. There were too few computers to meet all students' needs at the time of the inspection, but they were used effectively, and suitable new machines had been ordered. While most subjects have sufficient resources, the library does not provide an adequate basis for independent study.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

73. In order to build on the strengths of the school, and to raise standards, the headteacher and governors should take the following steps.

- (1) Raise standards, particularly in literacy, by:
  - improving the quality of planning for reading and writing throughout the school
  - providing enough time for writing, and insisting that work is properly completed
  - improving marking, and students' use of marking to improve their work
  - developing the skills of teaching assistants to enable them to support students' specific needs  
(Paragraphs 1, 4, 6, 22-23, 32-33, 50, 58, 75-81)
- (2) Reduce further the proportion of unsatisfactory teaching, by:
  - setting a higher pace of work, and a higher level of expectation of students
  - ensuring that all teachers have the professional skills they need for the work they do
  - improving the quality and consistency of marking and homework  
(Paragraphs 3, 12, 19, 62, 67)
- (3) Make middle management more effective, by:
  - improving the management of literacy and the use of computers
  - monitoring provision for students with Statements of Special Educational Need
  - recruiting a head of English  
(Paragraphs 3, 61, 63, 81)
- (4) Improve arrangements for assessing students' work and tracking progress, by:
  - establishing effective assessment in English and in information and communication technology
  - putting in place arrangements to identify gifted and talented students
  - improving the efficiency of assessment for students with special educational needs  
(Paragraphs 50, 51)

- (5) Improve value for money in the sixth form, by:
- evaluating the costeffectiveness of all courses
  - ensuring that all students enrolled on courses have a reasonable chance of success
  - improving the quality of teaching on courses where it is satisfactory rather than good  
(Paragraphs 9, 27, 66)
- (6) Improve arrangements for English as an additional language, by:
- continuing to develop a core of skilled specialist teaching
  - developing the skills of all teachers in promoting effective learning for students with English as an additional language  
(Paragraphs 6, 24, 32)
- (7) Extend its work to improve attendance and punctuality, by:
- improving its analysis of data on poor attendance
  - giving more positive recognition to good attendance and punctuality  
(Paragraphs 15, 49, 55)

#### **Other weaknesses for consideration as part of the school's action plan**

- (1) Develop the library to support learning and literacy throughout the school, by:
- ensuring that all departments are fully involved in the selection of books
  - extending and promoting reading to develop understanding in all subjects
  - consulting students on their reading and use of the library  
(Paragraphs 4, 68, 72)
- (2) Improve the quality of information in annual reports, by:
- providing clear information on standards reached in each subject
  - improving the quality of guidance and targets for improving students' work  
(Paragraph 58)
- (3) Ensure that fire exits from all buildings are clearly marked.  
(Paragraph 48)

#### **Sixth form**

- (1) Improve students' key skills in literacy, by:
- matching the content of key skills lessons more closely to the needs of all students
  - ensuring that teachers in all subjects provide effective reinforcement of literacy skills
  - ensuring that written work is completed to a good standard and is carefully marked



(Paragraphs 10, 28, 38)

- (2) Improve the attendance and workrate of weaker students, by:
- providing better guidance on private study, and improving supervision of it
  - offering incentives for full attendance
  - improving the management of behaviour in some classes  
(Paragraphs 9, 16-17, 53, 71)
- (3) Improve library facilities, and the use of computers to promote learning, by:
- building up suitable collections of books and software for each course and subject
  - providing individual guidance to students on their reading and use of computers
  - improving lesson planning to ensure that full use is made of computers and books  
(Paragraphs 17, 53)
- (4) Improve sporting and other additional activities for sixth formers, by:
- building up a programme of activities that sixth formers will find attractive
  - consulting students and taking their views into account
  - developing further links between students and the community  
(Paragraphs 38, 60)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 - 11	131
	Sixth form	54
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students		38

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
<b>Years 7 - 11</b>							
Number	9	19	47	43	12	1	0
Percentage	7	15	36	33	9	1	0
<b>Sixth form</b>							
Number	3	15	24	10	2	0	0
Percentage	6	29	44	19	4	0	0

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

### Information about the school's students

<b>Students on the school's roll</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students on the school's roll	1041	139
Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals	243	11

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	13	3
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	185	3

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	81

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of students
Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	142
Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	89

## Attendance

### Authorised absence

	%
School data	11.2
National comparative data	7.7

### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	2.6
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	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	133	77	210

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	79	58	60
	Girls	58	39	33
	Total	137	97	93
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	66 (61)	46 (54)	46 (43)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	26 (19)	24 (26)	18 (16)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	35	63	47
	Girls	32	40	22
	Total	67	103	69
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	32 (57)	51 (58)	34 (33)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	19 (14)	15 (21)	13 (14)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

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

Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	70	62	132

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of students achieving the standard specified	Boys	17	54	60
	Girls	18	52	55
	Total	35	106	115
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	School	27 (27)	80 (80)	87 (92)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6 (95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	29
	National	38.4

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those students who achieved all those they studied	School	10
	National	N/a

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	9	15	24

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	7.0	10.4	9.5	0.4	3.0	1.6
National	17.7	18.6	18.2	2.6	2.9	2.7

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

### **Ethnic background of students**

	No of students
Black – Caribbean heritage	3
Black – African heritage	18
Black – other	2
Indian	14
Pakistani	2
Bangladeshi	5
Chinese	11
White	973
Any other minority ethnic group	13

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

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	1	0
Black – African heritage	1	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	73	1
Other minority ethnic groups	2	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 – Y13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	64.14
Number of students per qualified teacher	18.4

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

Total number of education support staff	31
Total aggregate hours worked per week	841.75

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

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	70.73
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	25.6
Key Stage 4	22.4

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### **Financial information**

Financial year	2000-2001
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	£
Total income	3,294,453
Total expenditure	3,230,389
Expenditure per pupil	3,024.71
Balance brought forward from previous year	3,873
Balance carried forward to next year	67,847

### **Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two year	25.24
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	36.38

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	13.18
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	1

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1180
Number of questionnaires returned	133

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	35	55	8	1	2
My child is making good progress in school.	34	49	5	1	11
Behaviour in the school is good.	20	58	13	2	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	10	50	24	6	10
The teaching is good.	18	69	6	2	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	23	49	14	3	11
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	48	45	3	3	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	38	55	5	1	2
The school works closely with parents.	25	46	18	3	8
The school is well led and managed.	31	55	4	2	9
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	29	50	5	2	14
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	23	41	14	4	18

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

### ENGLISH

74. Overall provision in English is **satisfactory**.

#### **Strengths:**

Results at age 14 are above those in comparable schools.

Teachers and teaching assistants ensure that all students feel that their work is important

Texts are well chosen to contribute to students' personal development

#### **Weaknesses:**

Standards at age 16 are well below average, especially in writing and speaking

The school's temporary arrangements to manage English are not working effectively

There are too few books in the library to support effective learning

75. GCSE results in English are well below average, but are in line with those in similar schools. Results in tests for 14-year-olds have been broadly average over the past two years, and have been higher than those in similar schools. This complex pattern reflects the unusual circumstances of the school, including the significant number of pupils who have joined it after the age of 14, and the very low standards that the oldest pupils in the school had reached at 11. Nevertheless a significant proportion of students, particularly boys, do not do as well as they should in English. Students with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language are fully included in all lessons, and their progress is celebrated. However, some of the additional support they receive is not focused closely enough on their learning difficulties, and this limits its contribution to raising standards. Taking account of the exceptionally difficult problems caused by the school's very high turnover of students, current achievement in English is reasonable, but needs to be improved. There has been some improvement in teaching and learning since the last inspection, but more is needed

76. Most 11-year-olds start secondary school with well below average standards. They make steady progress through Years 7 and 8, developing their skills in reading and writing through working with language at word, sentence and text level. For example, students in Year 7 focus on personal writing, building on previous learning to construct a 'pen portrait' of a friend or a member of their family. Students in Years 7 and 8 are making progress in writing, but their spelling, punctuation, use of grammar and their vocabulary are below average. Students in Year 9 make good progress in analysing the texts of stories, plays and poems they have read, exploring the language and style that writers use to create their effects. Independent writing is not so well developed, and students depend too much on teachers' frameworks for writing. Standards in speaking are not high enough. Students listen well and many comment readily on topics studied, eager to share what they know. However they do not have the confidence to take part in sustained discussions or to construct an argument to support their opinions. Higher-attaining students do better, and a substantial proportion of average-attaining students achieve the standard expected nationally by the end of Year 9. The learning of a small but significant minority is seriously interrupted by prolonged absence.



77. Standards in Year 11 are well below average, particularly in writing. Most students are making steady progress in organising their writing, and are learning to use a growing range of grammatical structures and vocabulary. Some higher-attaining students reach above average standards, but the writing of many is underdeveloped for their age, and does not show enough control over detail to enable them to reach good standards at GCSE. Higher-attaining students discuss their work confidently, but showed similar weaknesses in sentence structure and vocabulary when discussing their plans for the future. Standards are better in reading, where students show understanding of themes, plots, ideas and viewpoints in their examination texts. For example, students in Year 11 showed a good understanding of the relationships developing between the characters in Priestley's play 'An Inspector Calls', and the impact of these relationships on the plot. Teaching and learning in Year 10 were satisfactory in lessons, especially in discussion, but analysis of students' work showed that writing was often immature, and that too much was left incomplete.
78. Teaching during the inspection was rarely less than satisfactory, and it was good in just under half of the lessons. Teachers' use of the Key Stage 3 National Strategy for English is beginning to have a good effect on learning in Years 7 to 9. Students learn best when teachers set a lively pace, moving quickly from one learning activity to another and keeping students motivated and focused on the text they are studying. For example, a nice sparkle of humour kept students in Year 8 alert as they developed their descriptive writing through the adventures of the intrepid detective 'Brett Lawless' and his police dog, 'Rusty Barker'. Students respond perceptively when teachers' questions are searching enough to excite their curiosity or arouse their emotions, and they become aware of their own learning when teachers provide the opportunities for evaluation of the lesson. For example a Year 9 class began their lesson on Benjamin Zephaniah's story, 'Face', with a challenging test, struggling to spell words selected from the text, such as 'characteristic'. Some very good character analysis resulted as all students participated in a 'hot seating' exercise, including good evaluation by half the class of the other students' work.
79. Teachers mark younger students' work thoroughly, but there is too much inconsistency in the quality of marking for older students, and in the use of marking to help students improve their work. Some students in Year 11 said that they had to wait a long time before coursework was returned. A significant number of students, including some with English as an additional language, were confused because, although they had targets, they were not sure how well they were progressing towards them. The isolated example of unsatisfactory teaching was caused by poor understanding of the topic of the lesson, which led to students receiving misleading feedback and advice.
80. Computers were not used in lessons seen during the inspection, but there were several word-processed essays and play reviews in Year 11 coursework folders. Extra-curricular activities include spelling workshops and a reading recovery programme, but they are not always well supported by students. There are too few suitable books in the library, either to support learning in English, or to develop reading skills effectively in other subjects.
81. The school has adopted a temporary management system for English, involving joint leadership from three teachers. This is keeping the department on course in the short term, but is not sufficient to enable the school to address the serious problems it faces. Work in literacy in other subjects is poorly coordinated, and the school has no

coherent schemes for future planning to improve students' performance and raise standards. This is the most serious single issue facing the school.

## MATHEMATICS

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

### **Strengths:**

Results in national tests at age 14 and at GCSE are improving

Teaching is well thought out to meet students' needs, and leads to good learning

There are good relationships between teachers and students

Students are interested in their work and want to do well

### **Areas for improvement:**

Standards in lessons and test and examination results are well below average

Co-ordination of numeracy across the school needs to be improved

There is some inconsistency in the quality of marking

83. Most 11-year-olds joining the school have reached very low standards in national tests, and significant numbers of students who join the school at a later stage have special educational needs or speak English as an additional language. This is reflected in below average results in national tests for 14-year-olds and at GCSE. However, results at 14 and a GCSE improved substantially in 2001, and some students achieved high grades. There are no consistent differences in achievement between boys and girls. Most students with English as an additional language learn well, but the progress of some who have arrived recently is held back by lack of understanding of mathematical vocabulary. Most students with special educational needs learn effectively, often in response to good support from teaching assistants. Overall, the level of achievement in the department is good, and standards, particularly in number work, have improved significantly from the very low levels recorded in the last inspection report.
84. Most 14-year-old lower-attaining students have very limited number skills. They are unsure of their tables, although most can add and subtract and use calculators accurately. They have basic graphical skills and can construct bar charts. Other 14-year-old students use the number rules to solve problems and to evaluate areas and volumes. They can calculate the probability of simple events. Higher-attaining students use tree diagrams to find the probabilities of successive events. They have good numeracy skills which they use confidently in problem solving and data handling. By the age of 16 almost all students have basic number skills. They use fractions and decimals appropriately and measure accurately. More capable students find reverse percentages and use standard form. They solve simple algebraic equations and substitute in formulae. On the other hand, students often find it difficult to apply their mathematical skills to solving problems, and to read questions accurately and quickly.
85. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers understand their subject well and this enables them to identify students' difficulties and help them to learn effectively. Good planning, with clear aims, enables students to focus quickly on their work and make the best use of their time. By using resources appropriately, teachers assist students to appreciate new ideas and understand new methods. For example, by making composite shapes with unit cubes, students in Year 8 grasped the concept of volume. They learnt that different shapes can occupy the same volume, which they found by counting cubes. Assisted by good support from a teaching assistant, students with special educational needs also made good progress in this lesson. In other lessons, well-chosen examples and good oral questioning help students to learn new methods. For example, in a Year 10 lesson

involving standard form, higher attaining students discussed their previous understanding of indices. By asking appropriate questions, the teacher helped students to use this knowledge to evaluate complicated mathematical expressions, and this enabled good learning to take place. In most lessons an appropriate balance between class teaching and independent learning enables students to sustain interest and learn effectively. Occasionally, when teachers talk for too long, students are unable to sustain concentration and progress slows. Homework is used satisfactorily to extend classwork. Most teachers mark regularly with helpful comments, although not all work is marked.

86. The department has positive leadership and relationships are good. Staff support each other and are committed to raising standards. The monitoring of teaching and the curriculum is satisfactory. Setting arrangements are good and support learning. There is adequate support for numeracy in other lessons across the school, but some of the benefit of this is lost as the work is not coordinated effectively. Books and resources are sufficient and of good quality.

## SCIENCE

87. The quality of provision in science is **good**. The potential for further improvement is very good.

### Strengths:

Teaching is good or better in all year groups

There is a well-established work ethos

Students' independent study skills are developed well

There are strong, positive relationships between teachers and students

There is good team work within the department.

### Areas for improvement:

Assessment does not focus clearly on standards in the National Curriculum

Marking does not give students guidance on how to improve

Resources, including computers and audiovisual equipment, are poor

The laboratories are in urgent need of redecoration

88. Standards in science are below average at 14 and at GCSE. However, standards are rising, and now represent good achievement in relation to the very low levels of skills of most students when they joined the school at 11. GCSE results have improved significantly since the last inspection, and results in national tests for 14-year-olds were above average in comparison with similar schools in 2001. At the time of the last inspection, achievement in science was unsatisfactory, and there was much unsatisfactory and poor teaching. Improvement overall has been very good, and the quality of teaching and teamwork in science have put the school in a very good position to improve further.
89. Students in Years 7 to 9 gain the confidence to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and skills across a broad range of National Curriculum topics. In Year 7, groups of students proudly performed presentations of what they had learned about acids and alkalis. Year 8 students worked cooperatively in groups to classify a selection of living things, and those in Year 9 expressed their understanding of kinetic theory using scientific vocabulary. More able students are encouraged to become independent learners. For example, in a Year 8 topic on food, some students were guided through a food testing experiment while others worked in cooperative learning groups to pursue their own investigations and to teach each other how to do the tests. All of these activities engaged students well in their work, and led to good learning.

90. Older students are encouraged to take more and more responsibility for their own learning. One Year 10 class, for example, worked on a practical investigation to find out which of a number of metal oxides is the better catalyst. Most groups planned their procedure, recording and evaluation with little or no help from the teacher, and successfully completed the investigation. Analysis of work from students in Year 11 showed that they were progressing at a suitable pace through their GCSE course, although there have not been enough practice exercises to ensure that the students have mastered the complex calculations required for more challenging topics, such as force and motion.
91. Students with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language are supported well and make good progress. The teachers are aware of students' strengths and weaknesses and lessons are planned to match their different abilities. Some classes are supported by patient and skilled teaching assistants, who may circulate in the classroom or assist an individual or small group. Some students or groups are set more or less difficult tasks, designed to ensure that each pupil is able to succeed while being sufficiently challenged to make progress. One student who found writing difficult used a laptop computer to record his results.
92. Teaching and learning are good and often very good. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and a clear understanding of the National Curriculum and GCSE requirements. They have high expectations of students' work and behaviour. They are good humoured and kindly, understand the needs of the students, and adapt their teaching accordingly. Students respond very well to this approach. They remain engaged in lessons and are keen to learn.
93. Teachers set clear learning objectives, and frequently refer back to them to ensure that students have really understood the work. Most lessons have a good mix of oral, written and practical or group work designed to improve or extend students' knowledge understanding or skills. There is a consistent emphasis on developing literacy skills. The use of key words is a feature of all lessons, and helps give students the confidence to use these words in their discussions and writing.
94. Teachers mark students' books regularly and often write encouraging comments, but give them too little guidance on how to improve their work. Teachers do not always insist on high standards of presentation, so that some work is detailed and neat, but some is untidy or unfinished. Assessment tests are carefully marked but there is too little reference to the National Curriculum in grading results, so that the school does not always have a clear idea of the standards students have reached.
95. Science is very well managed, and there is a sense of common purpose among the teachers. Resources and accommodation, however, are in a poor state, and are not contributing to teaching and learning. The head of department is newly appointed, but has identified key priorities, such as the need to develop the use of computers and audio-visual resources, and to replenish and update apparatus for experimental work.

## ART AND DESIGN

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

### **Strengths:**

Good standards at age 16, and good achievement throughout the school

Good teaching, based on strong subject knowledge

Good relationships between staff and students

Good learning and progress

### **Areas for Improvement:**

Lesson planning needs to provide more consistently for students of different abilities

The use of information and communication technology needs to be developed

The range of art from other countries is not extensive enough

97. Standards are broadly average at 14, and above average at 16, both in examination results and in work in the classroom. GCSE results in 2001 included a significant number at A\*, and provided a very good basis for work in the sixth form. The learning of students with special educational needs and of those with English as an additional language is good. Standards throughout the department represent good levels of achievement, with some outstanding achievement among higher-attaining students at 16. There has been good overall improvement in provision since the last inspection.

98. Most 14-year-olds reach good standards in drawing. Higher-attaining students use pencil sensitively to shade areas of tone, describing shape and texture. Students in Year 9 are inspired by the work of established artists such as Magritte, Balla and Picasso to produce their own surreal compositions, futurist paintings and cubist collages. The work of higher-attaining students is very perceptive and skilfully executed. Teachers encourage students to use the specialised language of the subject. This helps understanding, and enables students to express themselves accurately. Most students in Years 10 and 11 can draw very well. High-attaining students during the inspection had produced sensitive tonal drawings of the shady interiors of peppers and shiny surfaces of apples and tomatoes, whilst others handled acrylic paint very well to render the textures and colours inside an artichoke. High-attaining students in Year 11 produce large, well-thought-out compositions inspired by interests such as skateboarding that are informed by the work of futurist artists such as Duchamp, and painted skilfully using acrylic paint.

99. The quality of learning, and the high standards at 16, are the result of consistently good teaching. Teachers are specialists and have good subject knowledge. This is communicated to students by showing them examples of work by other students and by established artists, by confidently demonstrating technical skills, and through the high quality of attention students receive every lesson. At best, this teaching is excellent, and brings accelerated development of practical and analytic skills. Homework tasks are matched to students' abilities in Years 7-9. Classroom activities are sometimes less well planned, but the consistent quality of personal support ensures that learning continues effectively. There is an atmosphere of mutual respect in the art rooms. Students feel valued and teachers feel respected and appreciated.

100. The art and design department has a committed, hardworking and well-led team of teachers. Planning ensures good coverage of the National Curriculum, and makes good use of the work of famous European artists. However, art from cultures outside Europe is not strongly enough represented, and the department as a whole is not

making enough use of information and communication technology. The working environment, both in the art and design department and in the whole school, is enriched by colourful, stimulating and inspiring displays of students' work.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths:

Teaching and learning are excellent in food technology

There is a varied curriculum, with very good opportunities for extra-curricular work

Almost all students enjoy the subject and make good progress

Students have positive attitudes, and learn well when guided firmly

### Areas for improvement

Standards and teaching in some areas of the subject are weak

Co-ordination, monitoring and assessment are not well developed

Assessment does not refer closely enough to standards in the National Curriculum

Students lack skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT

102. Recent GCSE results have been below average for similar schools overall, but very high in home economics. Standards are above average in food technology, and child development, but well below average in graphic products and motor vehicle studies, where standards have been affected by difficulties in recruiting teachers. However, results in home economics are consistently well above those in comparable schools. Standards in Year 9 are above average in food technology, but below average overall because of weaknesses in other areas of the subject. Since the last inspection, the school has expanded the range of its provision and the quality of courses, and has made some improvements to its accommodation. Overall improvement has been satisfactory, despite the school's difficulties.

103. Year 10 students are developing a good understanding of designing recipes for healthy eating, and of the rudiments of nutrition. They prepare dishes for specific groups of people, such as vegetarians, or the very young or elderly. Often their work is linked to the cuisine of other countries— Italy, China and India, for example. The quality of food preparation, hygiene, and presentation is high. Students working on graphic products have not attained the same depth of understanding. Their work is insufficiently related to the design process, and takes too little account of specific commercial applications and constraints.

104. Design is also under-used by students aged 11 to 14 in their work in graphics, textiles and some areas of resistant materials. Design sheets often fail to show a clear path from research, to initial ideas, and to the development and final evaluation of a product. Freehand drawing skills are weak, and many students find it difficult to crystallise and communicate their ideas on paper. Weakness in literacy and numeracy limit many students' understanding of the subject, and there is too much unfinished and poorly presented work.

105. The standard of work in food technology is above average by the end of Year 9. For example, students investigate a wide range of fruits, learn about the advantages of eating fruit and the vitamins various fruits contain, and then use them in drinks, cakes, sweets and meat dishes. They design and prepare these items, and taste and evaluate them as a class activity. Many students are able to tell the class what they have learnt during the lesson, speaking clearly and confidently.

106. The quality of teaching is largely satisfactory or good, and there is some excellent teaching, especially in home economics and food technology. In these lessons teachers communicate their knowledge of the subject well, set achievable targets, with extension work for the more able, and use time and resources effectively. In the best lessons, the pace is brisk, literacy and numeracy are well integrated, and question and answer sessions are used effectively to reinforce learning and to track students' progress. The working atmosphere in these lessons is a source of satisfaction to teachers and students alike, and makes an excellent contribution to personal development.
107. In less successful lessons, teachers' expectations of students' conduct and standards of work are too low, and standards and students' attitudes suffer. Teachers' explanations of mechanisms, freehand drawing, and the presentation of design sheets, do not give students the guidance and preparation they need for practical activities in designing and making. Some students make good use of information communication technology for designing, and to present their work neatly, but they are in a minority.
108. The department is well led. Management has adapted well to changes in staffing, in the curriculum and in the student population. Courses in food technology, home economics, and engineering are extremely well planned and structured to help all students to do their best. There are good development plans, with a clear focus on standards, assessment procedures and the use of computer aided design and manufacture. Provision for extracurricular activities is very good, and activities such as Young Engineers and the 'Shell Challenge', (in which the school was the best in the country) make an excellent contribution to personal development. A visit from the RSA "Food Bus" during the inspection added to the school's own excellent provision for food technology by giving students experience of work in a professional environment.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

109. Overall, the quality of provision in geography is **unsatisfactory**, because of difficulty in recruiting qualified staff.

### **Strengths:**

Teaching by permanent staff is often very good  
 Students learn geography through a good range of activities, including group work  
 All students benefit from appropriate fieldwork experiences  
 Students in most lessons show interest and enthusiasm  
 Numbers choosing the subject at GCSE are increasing.

### **Areas for improvement:**

Teaching by temporary supply teachers is unsatisfactory, and at worst poor  
 Teachers' assessments do not accurately reflect standards in the National Curriculum  
 Work is not well enough matched to the needs of different groups of students.

110. Standards during the inspection were below average at 14 and 16. Results in GCSE examinations in recent years have been below average, but better than those in most similar schools. However, there was a fall in standards at GCSE in 2001. At the time of the last inspection, standards were broadly average at 14, but above average at GCSE, though from a small number of students. The school has made a good effort

to improve standards, but the lack of suitably qualified teachers has led to a slight fall in standards in Year 9.

111. The standards reached in lessons reflect the difficulties that many students experience with writing tasks. More able students, nonetheless, apply themselves with vigour and interest to achieve well. For example, Year 7 students can name the five standard features of a map. Year 8 students work well together in groups to discover what distinctive features give Italy its identity. Students in Year 9 collaborate successfully in groups to classify and grade the impact of earthquakes on places and on the people who live there. Average and less able students also participate well in such activities, though they achieve more limited success with the writing tasks that follow, sometimes failing to complete their work, or to present it neatly. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress when supported by teaching assistants; without support, they struggle with writing and number work.
112. Students in Year 11 during the inspection showed broadly average understanding of how to conduct geographical investigations. For example, they presented the results of an investigation into the changing features of a river and its valley as it moved downstream neatly and attractively, with the aid of information and communication technology. However, while they could describe their results, they were less skilled in explaining them in writing, and there was little evidence during the inspection of students using computers and number work as part of their investigations. Year 10 students in lessons successfully took on the roles of different groups of people with conflicting interests, in a scheme to protect a stretch of coastline. Their discussion showed a good appreciation of other people's values and attitudes, which helped them to begin to clarify and develop their own.
113. The quality of teaching by permanent staff during the inspection was satisfactory or better, and often very good. The teaching by temporary staff was unsatisfactory. The better lessons are planned thoroughly to make good use of time and to ensure that students are actively engaged in their learning. Teachers extend students' thinking through oral work, where their efforts and ideas show more secure understanding than their written work. Special assessment assignments in Years 8 and 9 and GCSE coursework provide opportunities for independent research and for the more able to write at greater length. Teaching is generally adequately matched to the needs of different groups of students, but higher attaining students need to be given more consistently challenging work, and writing and number skills need to be given more emphasis. Homework is built in to most work and follows appropriately from the lesson. It is marked regularly, and includes supportive comments, but is not linked to the National Curriculum in Years 7 to 9. Where teaching is unsatisfactory or poor, students' interest is not engaged, behaviour deteriorates, and the pace of work is far too slow. The amount of this teaching is significant in Years 7 to 9, and it is having a serious impact on the quality of learning and on students' attitudes.
114. The head of department has rectified most of the weaknesses identified in the last inspection, but assessment needs to be brought closer to the level descriptions of the National Curriculum. All aspects of the department's work need to be more regularly monitored and evaluated to address its current weaknesses.



## HISTORY

115. Overall, the quality of provision in history is **satisfactory**.

### **Strengths:**

Teachers have good knowledge of history

### **Areas for improvement:**

Further development of literacy skills to support learning

Students do not have enough opportunities to take an active part in lessons

116. Students' understanding of history is close to national average levels at 14, but the weak expression of their ideas in writing does not reflect their understanding. However, almost all students make some improvement in reading and writing skills through their history work and those taking history almost always achieve a graded result in GCSE, in which standards are broadly average. Achievement is good in relation to students' starting points. Overall, provision since the last inspection has shown satisfactory improvement.

117. Lower-attaining 11-year-olds have very low standards in literacy, and this inhibits their learning. For example, students in a lesson on the Norman Conquest found it difficult to read and record information. Work in Years 8 and 9 shows good improvement, however. For example, lower and middle-attaining students in a Year 8 lesson showed broadly average knowledge of the outbreak of the French Revolution, while similar groups in Year 9 had average understanding of the living conditions of soldiers on the Western Front in World War 1. Higher-attaining students in Year 9 can make detailed notes, and learn to use information from the text book selectively. On the other hand, students have little experience of detailed evaluation of historical evidence, and they are not encouraged to contribute more than short answers in lessons. All students showed excellent concentration, and perseverance with their work. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress and their learning is enhanced by the work of learning support assistants.

118. Students aged 14 to 16 taking history as an option reached broadly average standards during the inspection. Written work in Year 10, together with a sample of Year 11 course work and notebooks, show satisfactory coverage of the examination course, and a positive attitude by students in Year 11 which results in detailed and well-presented coursework on Northern Ireland and in their local study. Year 10 students explored the different attitudes shown to the 'Mountain Men' of the American West in the nineteenth century, and offered sensible opinions on their relationships with Native Americans.

119. Overall, teaching is satisfactory. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen during the inspection, and in a quarter of lessons teaching was very good. The subject knowledge of teachers is very good, and much of the best teaching during the inspection was the work of a temporary supply teacher, who enabled students to improve their use of historical vocabulary significantly, for example, in a Year 9 lesson on 'war fever' in 1914. In discussion with the inspector, Year 11 students noted positively how they responded to the variety of lesson styles used in the department. However, some lessons do not involve students actively enough, and the department does not consistently encourage independent learning.

120. Management of the department is satisfactory, and resources are adequate.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

121. Overall, the quality of provision in information and communication technology is **unsatisfactory**.

### **Strengths:**

There is a good range of course and learning opportunities

There is good provision for the inclusion of all students, including those with special educational needs

Relationships are good and students are eager to learn

### **Areas for improvement:**

Teaching and learning for students aged 11 to 14 are unsatisfactory

There is no provision for gifted and talented students

The organisation of resources is unsatisfactory

The organisation of management responsibilities is unsatisfactory

122. At the time of the last inspection, provision for information and communication technology was satisfactory, but the scope of the subject was narrower than it is under the present National Curriculum, and the school's equipment was barely adequate. The school has improved the range of its courses, and the quality of resources has also improved recently. However, a split in management responsibilities is preventing the development of a clear policy for information and communication technology across the school, and resources are not well organised or accessible to all who need to use them. There is some good teaching, but there is also a significant amount of unsatisfactory teaching for students aged 11 to 14, caused by the need to rely on unqualified and non-specialist teachers. The school is nevertheless well-placed to make the necessary improvements in provision if it can address these weaknesses.

123. Standards at age 14 are below average overall, and were well below average in teachers' assessments in 2001. Girls performed significantly better than boys. The results for the substantial number of students who took the GCSE in information and communication technology last year were well below average, but represented satisfactory achievement in view of the standards reached by these students when they entered the school. Provision for students aged 14 to 16 is now centred on the new GNVQ course in information and communication technology, Part 1. This has been successfully launched, and now all students aged 15 and 16 take the subject. Students are also able to take appropriate competence-based modules in the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN), and many good applications of computing occur in other vocational courses. There are only isolated examples of effective use of computers to promote learning in most other subjects. Students with learning difficulties are well integrated in lessons, often supported by learning assistants, and make satisfactorily progress. There are no arrangements for gifted and talented students.

124. By Year 9, students can operate computers independently, and use word processing and a spreadsheet to organise and present work. In a good Year 9 lesson, for example, students undertook a mini-assignment based on the production of a school play in which they published a poster, analysed income and expenditure, and provided a seating plan. Progress in Year 7 and 8 during the inspection was inconsistent and unsatisfactory overall. In Year 7, for example, students' attempts to produce a design for the front cover of their folders were held up by poor organisation and pace of work,

and some students took as long as 20 minutes to log on to the network. Of two lessons in Year 8, in which students were learning to produce a design which could be printed on a T-shirt, clear explanations and good pace of work led to satisfactory learning in one, while, in the other, students had too little time to complete the work, and pace was too slow. Students in one class had completed a good range of work on graphs in their folder, while the previous work in the other class showed much less work, and of a lower standard.

125. It was not possible to observe teaching in Year 11, but students in Year 10 produced a satisfactory agenda and minutes for a meeting of an organisation as part of the school's new vocational scheme. In the same year, some students were seen producing graphs and charts, and others writing a report on comparative writing styles using word processing. Written English is used extensively in many lessons but more needs to be done to improve learning through the use of key words and through consistent correction of spelling and grammar. The work of students in Year 11 showed satisfactory progress in work on spreadsheets and computer-generated graphs, charts and tables.

126. Teaching during the inspection was unsatisfactory for students aged 11 to 14, but satisfactory overall for students aged 14 to 16. In three out of ten lessons observed the teaching was good. In these lessons, teachers dealt effectively with students of all abilities. They provided clear instructions, good support and guidance, and motivated students through good introductions and effective questions, which extended and consolidated understanding. Where the teaching is unsatisfactory, too little is expected of students, and organisation is inadequate to ensure good learning in small computer suites. The pace in these lessons was too slow, and teachers did not engage and maintain students' interest. There are some arrangements to assess students' work, but they are not linked closely enough to the pattern of progress set out in the National Curriculum, and do not provide sufficiently accurate information on students' skills, especially at the end of Year 9. Teachers use good textbooks in lessons but there are too few suitable books in the library. The use of computers to promote learning in subjects other than ICT is very limited.

127. The co-ordinators for ICT and vocational courses provide strong leadership in their respective areas, but the split in their responsibilities leads to weak overall management, particularly in the organisation and allocation of resources. The ratio of students to terminals is below average and there are too few terminals in many rooms used by large classes. Some faculties find access to computers difficult.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

128. Overall, the quality of provision in modern languages is satisfactory.

### Strengths:

The small numbers of students taking GCSE achieve well above average results

Students enjoy learning languages

There is a significant proportion of good teaching

### Areas for improvement:

The range of opportunities for language learning is limited

Marking is inconsistent

There are too few resources for reading, and too little use of computers

129. GCSE results in both French and Spanish have improved considerably in recent years, and are now well above national average levels. However, fewer than one fifth of students study a language beyond Year 9, and this represents a low level of participation in language learning. The difference between the results of boys and girls does not reflect the national picture: in 2001 boys at this school outperformed girls in French by 14 per cent, whereas girls did better in Spanish by 47 per cent. Standards at age 14 are well below average overall, and are below average in all but the top sets studying French, where students reach average standards. There has been some improvement in standards and teaching since the last inspection, but points for action on reading and on the use of computers in the last report have not been dealt with. Overall, achievement in the subject, and improvement since the last inspection are satisfactory.
130. Students aged 11 to 14 do not hear enough of the spoken language, and reading skills are low. Students copy reasonably accurately, and some in Year 8 show a good grasp of grammatical concepts such as the agreement of adjectives. By Year 9 higher-attaining students can speak and write using the perfect tense in one top set, they described their previous weekend's activities in single sentences, but with the correct choice of auxiliary verb. Students with special educational needs usually make satisfactory progress due to the setting system, good quality classroom support and differentiated worksheets. Those in low sets in Years 8 and 9 who have just transferred from French to Spanish are enthusiastic about studying a new language, though it was too early in their course for any judgement on standards and progress to be a soundly based. Students with English as an additional language are making good progress and are frequently among the highest performers in their classes.
131. In Years 10 and 11 standards are higher, and are well within the expected range in both French and Spanish. Languages are optional, and the students are enthusiastic volunteers, who are taught with energy and rigour. They can write in different registers, such as formal and informal letters, and display a good grasp of the use of tenses other than the present, as in a Year 11 Spanish essay where students gave reasons for not going to a football match.
132. Teaching is nearly always satisfactory and was good in two fifths of the lessons observed during the inspection. Lessons are nearly always well planned and the best lessons are delivered briskly with carefully graded tasks to gradually extend students' understanding. This was particularly noticeable in the Year 10 Spanish class. Resources such as the taperecorder and flash-cards are used appropriately, although no use of the available overhead projectors was observed during the inspection. Teachers engage students well with their work, so that most students, including the lower-attaining students who find the work difficult, become enthusiastic and co-operative language learners. They listen carefully to the taperecorder, the teacher and each other, and students of below average capability in Year 8 paid courteous attention as others described what they were wearing. Students make sensible use of dictionaries when appropriate. There are some good examples of word processing, but otherwise computers are underused. All of the teachers are competent linguists but most are using too much English, which is holding back the development of students' listening and speaking skills. A small minority of French lessons in Years 8 and 9 are conducted at too leisurely a pace, with students insufficiently challenged, leading occasionally to restlessness and unsatisfactory learning. Marking is satisfactory overall, but ranges in quality from excellent to inadequate. The weaker marking needs to be improved.

133. The scope of the curriculum has been limited by recent difficulties in staffing, and the opportunities for language learning in the school are too restricted. Many more students could benefit from continuing their study of a foreign language beyond Year 9. In Years 8 and 9, students who want to learn two languages have to study Spanish in two half-hour lessons outside the main timetable. This does not provide a firm foundation for later GCSE success. Management is energetic; there is a good handbook, and the faculty development plan has relevant priorities. However, the contribution to management of teachers other than the head of faculty is not clearly defined, and the faculty does not yet operate as a cooperative team. Accommodation is very good, and there is a varied display of students' work in the classrooms and the corridor, some of it attractively word-processed. Assessment procedures for students in Years 7 to 9 are good, with centralised records that help the school track progress.

## MUSIC

134. Overall, the quality of provision for music is **good**.

### **Strengths:**

Teachers have a wide range of professional knowledge, skills and understanding

There is very good provision for social and cultural education

There is very good provision of new technology

### **Areas for improvement:**

Better use could be made of assessment

Boys are achieving less than they should be

135. Students join the school with very low standards. By the age of 14, most have made good progress, though standards overall are still below average. Students taking music at GCSE achieve results well above those in similar schools. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good, and this leads to good overall achievement, though boys tend to achieve less than girls. Since the last inspection, there have been good improvements in students' attitudes, in the quality of teaching, and in standards at GCSE.

136. Most 11-year-olds know about musical notes, but a significant minority found it hard to clap a rhythm during their music lessons. Students make good progress through well planned lessons and increasingly difficult exercises in clapping and playing instruments. Teachers create a happy atmosphere through positive discipline and lots of guidance and encouragement. Most twelve-year-olds can name note values and play short phrases accurately, but they are less confident in naming the elements of music. Most fourteen-year-olds know the names of notes on a keyboard, and about half can play chords correctly. In a year 9 lesson, students made good progress in practising Blues chords. This lesson showed a good variety of teaching techniques, adept performing by the teacher, and good management of students. Standards of singing, in unison and in parts, are satisfactory. Teachers know students with special needs well, and they make appropriate progress.

137. GCSE students achieve high standards in performing and composing. There was very good learning in a well-paced singing lesson, where students were encouraged to breathe and enunciate words more effectively. In a listening lesson, students took advantage of resources of high quality, and used fluent technical language to discuss the musical elements in a pop song. Their recordings of compositions showed the influence of earlier music as well as a strong sense of structure and melodic line.

138. The subject leader is an able musician who has very clear aims for the subject. He has swiftly brought about significant improvements to the provision for music in the school and has gathered around him a strong teaching team. The accommodation for music is very good. The department has very good resources and the provision for music technology is a particularly strong feature.
139. The department makes a very good contribution to the social and cultural education of students, with regular concerts and performances which are well attended. High standards are achieved in performing, especially in contemporary and band music. The Belfairs High School Band achieves excellent standards and is a strong feature of school life, with regular exchanges with a high school band in America. In addition there are 'Music Extra', and a rock school and jazz band which are run with the support of local music services at the school. 8% of students learn instruments and half of them are paid for by the school. The department is a hive of activity out of lesson times, and students were often still practising, with their teachers, when inspectors left the school after their evening meetings.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

140. Overall, the quality of provision is **satisfactory**.

### **Strengths:**

The overall quality of teaching and learning is good  
 There is good coverage of the National Curriculum  
 The majority of students have positive attitudes  
 Teachers are very committed to their work

### **Areas for improvement:**

Standards are below average  
 Students in some lessons are not participating actively enough in their work  
 Some extracurricular activities are not well attended by students  
 Teaching and learning are not monitored closely enough

141. Standards are below average throughout the school. However, this represents reasonable achievement in view of students' low standards on entry to the school; standards during the inspection were higher than teachers' assessments. Examination results have been below average for similar schools over recent years, although they were above average in 2000. A minority of students achieve high standards, for example, in athletics, but standards are held back elsewhere, despite good teaching, by the poor attitudes of some students. The standard of students' planning and evaluating skills has significantly improved since the last inspection, and overall progress has been satisfactory.
142. The standard of school football and netball teams is good in Year 7, although the standard of team games is low throughout the school. Students' achievements are generally higher in individual activities, such as badminton, dance and swimming, than in team games. This is because students' lack of basic skills hinders good teamwork. Students, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in knowledge, understanding and skills in lessons. For example, all students know the names of the main muscles of the body. Gains in practical skills are not always reflected in higher standards over time because too few students attend extra curricular activities and training sessions regularly and consistently. A significant minority of boys in Year 9 achieve less than they should because of poor attitudes and behaviour.

143. Standards in Year 10 lessons during the inspection ranged from below average to above average, but were below average overall. Girls have a good variety of survival skills in swimming. Both boys and girls during the inspection had made a good start to GCSE and their knowledge and understanding of theory was broadly average. Girls' practical work, however, is poor and most have not grasped basic footwork, accurate passing or satisfactory use of space in netball. Standards in boys' football are better, and most boys pass the ball accurately and consistently. Higher-attaining boys use space well, and successfully switch the ball from one side of the pitch to the other. Standards in coursework from students in Year 11 were generally well below average, but higher-attaining students reached above average standards.
144. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. Teaching is strengthened by good and, sometimes, excellent lesson planning matched closely to National Curriculum requirements. This has led to greater consistency of learning among girls, improved decision making and increased understanding. The best tasks set are focused not only on the skill to be learnt, but also on having fun. For example, in a swimming lesson seen, a realistic survival circuit was set up to the sounds of water splashing and waves beating, and this motivated girls to achieve well. They worked hard, improved their skills and maintained concentration. The main weaknesses in teaching are lack of consistency across the department and underdeveloped use of assessment. Students lack awareness of their standards of work and of what, as individuals, they can do to improve. The only unsatisfactory teaching seen was largely due to low expectations of students' work and behaviour. Good discipline in most lessons ensures a safe, calm working environment. The attitude, behaviour and standard of dress of most students are good.
145. The department is well led and managed. There is good teamwork among the staff, and teachers work with enthusiasm and determination to raise standards. The new head of department has made some effective changes to lesson planning, schemes of work, and assessment procedures. Priorities for improvement are accurately identified, but teaching and learning are not monitored closely enough to enable the department to identify weaknesses and deal with them. Students are increasingly involved in decisions about their learning, although the quality of their participation in lessons remains a concern. The range of learning and sporting activities outside the classroom is good, but students' participation is not consistent. Some activities during the inspection, such as a dance rehearsal, were well attended, but others were not. The attitudes of some students were preventing them from getting full benefit from the opportunities the school provides. In light of the plans to build a new sports hall, the department is set fair to improve provision.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

146. Overall, the provision for religious education is **unsatisfactory**. It has good features but is hampered by staffing difficulties.

### **Strengths:**

Leadership and management  
Learning environment  
Improving GCSE short course results  
Good provision in the full GCSE course  
Good planning of lessons

### **Areas for Improvement:**

Standards in Years 7, 8 and 9  
Training and support for teachers with overseas qualifications  
Some teaching and learning, particularly in Year 9  
Teaching of basic literacy skills  
Classroom management  
Assessment and marking  
Use of computers and homework

147. Fourteen-year-olds do not reach the standards expected in the Essex Agreed Syllabus and achieve less than they should, even in relation to their limited literacy skills. Sixteen-year-olds reach average standards. Learning and progress are unsatisfactory for students in Years 7 to 9, particularly those with special educational needs, but satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. In 2001, results in GCSE for the ten students entered were broadly average, but good in relation to their grades in other subjects. Standards in the GCSE short course in 2001 were good, and showed very good improvement from results in 2000. Boys do less well than girls. Standards at age 16 have improved since the last inspection, but standards at 14 during this inspection suffered from a high turnover of unqualified staff.

148. Students aged 11 to 14 have only superficial knowledge and understanding of the three religions studied (Christianity, Islam and Buddhism). Few can demonstrate what religions have in common and how and why they differ. During the inspection, lower attaining students in Year 9 could recall one of the four stages by which a Muslim chooses a marriage partner, and higher attaining students could remember more. However, students' understanding lacks depth, and many students make unsatisfactory progress because work is not matched to their needs. While key words and phrases, posted in classrooms, are well used, the range and quality of students' writing is very limited, and does not contribute to their literacy skills.

149. Standards at 16 show some recovery, and are broadly average. Lower attaining students are fully involved in all activities. They are usually well supported by their classmates, although their writing remains weak. Some students use specialised language appropriately, but there is a marked lack of understanding by lower attaining students. In the main, students express their own views clearly on issues such as abortion, but cannot give other viewpoints. Students often forget material learned in previous lessons. In written work, teachers' comments show awareness of this underachievement, but have little impact on it. As in the work of younger students, there is too little development in students' basic literacy skills.



150. Teaching is satisfactory or good when taught by qualified, specialist staff. However, one-half of the teaching for students aged 11 to 14 during the inspection was taught by unqualified teachers who did not have the skills they need to teach the subject, and this was unsatisfactory. In the better lessons, good classroom management, good relationships and stimulating resources are strong features. Activities such as role play, seen in the courtroom debate on religion and politics in Year 10, and the Muslim 'visitor' (the teacher playing the part) are particularly effective. Specialist teachers have a good knowledge of the subject, plan effectively and sustain a good pace of work.
151. Where the teaching is unsatisfactory, too little is expected of students. Teachers do not manage unsatisfactory behaviour effectively, particularly in Year 9, and are too ready to allow the pace of the lessons to drop. Work is not always matched to the needs of the students, particularly those with special educational needs, who are rarely allocated support from teaching assistants in religious education lessons. In two-thirds of Year 9 lessons during the inspection, behaviour and attitudes were unsatisfactory or poor, and almost no learning took place.
152. Throughout the school, most students do not listen well enough, either to the teacher or to one another. Procedures for assessment and recording progress are under developed, although a pilot assessment has begun in Year 7. There is inadequate marking in most classes, with little attention paid to basic rules of grammar and punctuation. There is too little use of computers in teaching and learning, and homework is not regularly set.
153. Management is contributing to rising standards at GCSE, where courses are well matched to students' needs. The departmental development plan for 2000 and 2001 shows clear vision, including closer links with the local Muslim community. Religious education makes some contribution to personal development, for example through opportunities for meditation in Year 9, and through the appropriate use of songs such as 'Angels' in Year 7. Given the commitment to raising standards, the positive ethos and the energetic leadership of the head of department, the capacity for improvement is good if the department can be suitably staffed.

## DRAMA

Overall, the quality of provision is **very good**. No significant areas for improvement were identified.

### Strengths:

Standards are above average

Teaching is very good, and at best excellent

Students are enthusiastic and work hard

The subject makes a major contribution to students' personal development

154. Results at GCSE are above average, and well above those in similar schools. As a result of these successes, drama is popular, and the option course has attracted nearly 120 students in the current Years 10 and 11.
155. Standards reached in most lessons observed were **outstanding**. Students understand the vocabulary of drama, and their practical work gives them insight into the principles underlying dramatic conventions. Students employ a range of drama techniques to

enhance their communication skills. They get their message across through committed work on creating characters, which stems from concentrated effort and sensitive co-operation with others.

156. Teaching of drama skills is very good overall, and learning in two of the seven lessons seen was excellent. Students' learning is enriched by a heightened perception of the emotions that influence their own behaviour and that of others. This develops their spiritual and moral awareness which they reflect in class improvisations and public performance.
157. Leadership and management are excellent, and there is a very strong sense of teamwork. Schemes of work are planned carefully to ensure steady progression through the development of personal and emotional skills as well as drama skills for performance. Students' work is thoroughly assessed, and the results used to plan subsequent work.
158. The range of learning opportunities outside lessons, and the contribution of drama to personal development, are excellent. Theatre in Education companies come into school to work with students in their own settings. Sixth form students take responsibility for directing Year 7 students in a range of drama activities, thus developing the learning of both year groups. Computers are used for a wide range of technical purposes as well as word processing. All students can take part in large scale productions at Christmas and at the end of the summer term. Students have many opportunities to see professional performances, through visits to London and to local theatres.

## VOCATIONAL COURSES

159. Business education was inspected, and the GNVQ engineering course was sampled. Standards are below average, but achievement is satisfactory in view of the standards reached by most students at the start of their course. In 2001, well over half of the students taking these courses passed their examinations, some with high grades. Many students who did not complete the whole course were successful in parts of it. Girls perform better than boys. Students with special educational needs are well integrated in lessons and receive special attention and help from teachers. Their learning is satisfactory. Much progress has been made since the last inspection, and the range of courses has been extended well to match the changing needs of the students.

### Business Education

160. The overall quality of provision is **satisfactory**.

#### **Strengths:**

The quality of teaching  
Support and guidance given to students  
Relationships

#### **Areas for improvement:**

Standards  
Accommodation  
Distribution of computer terminals

161. The standard of learning in the lessons observed was good. Students cover a good range of topics, many of them practical, such as interviewing and being interviewed. Written work is of a satisfactory standard, addressed mainly to a technical audience, but suffers from weaknesses in spelling and grammar. Students apply numbers successfully by using quantities, costs and graphs. In the majority of the folders, roughly half of the text was prepared using word processing, but students were not using the capacity of the computer to help them write accurately. There were some missed opportunities to apply computing to the work elsewhere.
162. Teaching during the inspection was good. Teachers selected topics well to engage students and require them to investigate technical points, such as the construction of a job specification. They used a good range of teaching strategies, many of them practical, and used questions well to check the extent of students' understanding and to add points they may have missed. The working atmosphere in classes was good, and students were encouraged effectively to cooperate in practical work.
163. The subject is effectively managed, and teachers work well as a team. However, accommodation is cramped, there are too few resources for learning, and there is not always sufficient access to computers.

## **Engineering**

164. The GNVQ engineering course is well suited to students' needs. In 2001, almost nine tenths of students passed Unit 1, and all students passed Unit 3. High standards of workmanship are also achieved. For example, students following the course make a useful clamp, using a wide range of skills in a production process that involves injection moulding, casting, and working accurately with hand and power tools. Students appreciate the importance of careful marking out, of measuring and of a planned approach to the task. Their understanding of the properties of steel, aluminium and plastics, are successfully developed through direct observation, and working with different materials.

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

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

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

***GCE AS level courses***

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-B		% gaining grades A-E		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and Design	4	25	18	75	80	1.8	2.1
Biology	1	0	6	0	53	0	1
Religious Studies	3	0	19	67	76	1	1.96

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

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-B		% gaining grades A-E		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and Design	3	33	45	100	66	6.7	6.4
Communication Studies	2	100	30	100	93	8.0	5.4
English Literature	11	9	36	64	96	3.1	5.4
History	5	0	34	20	89	0.4	5.4
Music	2	100	35	100	93	8.0	5.7
Social Studies	5	20	35	80	88	3.2	5.3
Religious Studies	5	0	35	80	91	3.6	5.6
Sociology	3	0	37	0	88	0	5.5
Sports/PE studies	5	20	25	80	91	4.8	5.0

***Intermediate vocational qualifications***

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Business	1	0	N/a	0	N/a	0	10.8

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

### MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

166. Mathematics and biology were inspected, and chemistry and psychology were sampled. The teaching of application of number as a key skill for students taking vocational courses was also inspected as part of mathematics. There is a high pass rate in biology, but standards at AS level in the other subjects in 2001 were poor and teaching groups in Year 13 are sometimes reduced to one student. They are too small to offer value for money. Since the last inspection, there has been an excellent improvement in provision for biology, but provision for other subjects has shown some decline.

#### Mathematics

167. Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is **unsatisfactory**.

#### Strengths:

There are very good relationships between students and teachers.

#### Areas for improvement:

A-level results are well below average.

Teaching groups are too small

Some students start the course with too little mathematical knowledge to succeed

Students are unable to choose their modules

168. The inspection covered the one Alevel mathematics course offered by the school. Students take three modules of pure mathematics, two of statistics and one of decision mathematics. There is no opportunity for students to take mechanics.

169. The number of students taking the Alevel examination is low and has declined in the last two years. For example, in 2000, no candidate took the examination and in 2001 only two candidates took it, both of whom obtained an E grade. Some students start the course but do not continue and take the examination. Although many students enter the course with well below average standards, these results do not indicate satisfactory achievement.

170. The standard of A-level work seen in lessons and in students' folders is well below average. Some students are still unsure of basic GCSE algebra and trigonometry. This hinders their progress when they are introduced to a new topic. For example, in a Year 12 lesson some students found it difficult to subtract negative numbers, and this limited their progress when finding equations of straight lines. In another lesson, Year 13 statistics students were unable to substitute a new variable in order to read values from a regression line. This prevented them from using their graphs effectively. Despite this, students work hard and try to succeed. Many make satisfactory progress from a low starting point. Students following vocational courses reach broadly average standards in numeracy, and use basic statistics and percentages confidently. There is no difference in the attainment of boys, girls or minority ethnic students in the sixth form.

171. Teaching is satisfactory. Teachers plan their lessons well and at the right level to promote learning. By explaining appropriate questions on the board, teachers help students to understand new topics and the methods of solving problems. However,

teachers do not always ensure that students use the most effective methods, and this sometimes limits their progress. For example, in a Year 12 lesson some students attempted to plot points when finding gradients. This proved confusing, and less effective than a simple subtraction of coordinates. Teachers enjoy very good relationships with their students, who respond well to suggestions for improvement. This assists learning and ensures a good pace to most lessons. Helpful marking enables students to correct errors and make further progress.

172. The day-to-day management of mathematics in the sixth form is good, and teachers co-operate well. However, strategic management is not ensuring that courses provide good value for money, or that students are given the guidance they need to succeed.

## Biology

173. Overall, the quality of provision in biology is **excellent**.

### Strengths:

Teaching is excellent, and very well adapted to the needs of the students  
There is a high pass rate at AS level, at grades appropriate to students' capabilities  
Teachers make very good use of available resources  
Students are interested in the subject and work very hard.

### Areas for improvement:

None identified.

174. The pass rate in AS biology in 2001 was broadly average, with five out of six candidates gaining D and E grades. This represented appropriate achievement in view of the standards these students had reached at GCSE.

175. In Year 13, students studying complex biochemical control in the body had prepared presentations and delivered them to their classmates. They confidently answered questions from their audience, illustrating the good quality of their learning and the good range of their knowledge and understanding. The Year 12 students analysed soil samples they had collected from a fieldwork expedition. They fed their data electronically onto a common database, so that comparisons of the soils could be made. As the data was being collated the students were developing hypotheses without prompting, and much was achieved in one hour. Other students were doing their own research on current issues such as foot and mouth disease, anthrax and HIV, using science journals and the Internet amongst their sources. They explained their newly gained knowledge with great confidence.

176. The overall standard of teaching and learning is excellent, and offers students a very well thought-out balance of challenge and support. Teachers have extensive knowledge of biology, and plan lessons carefully, with clear learning aims. They provide clear explanations, anticipating any misunderstandings that the students might experience. The teachers encourage the students to take responsibility for their own learning, but guide them carefully to ensure that they succeed. They provide a good range of learning activities in each lesson, and constantly encourage students to think of the implications of practical work, rather than the process of carrying it out. Work is marked well, and students are given good advice on ways of improving it.

177. Leadership and management of the subject are very effective, with a clear focus on enabling students to reach the highest standards of which they are capable. Students in Year 13 during the inspection wished to obtain entry qualifications for Higher Education, and were well placed to do so.

## Chemistry

178. There are only two students studying chemistry in Year 12, and one in Year 13. These numbers are too low to constitute viable teaching groups. Students taking AS level during the inspection were appropriately placed on the course, with good GCSE grades, but no students passed AS level in 2001.

179. The quality of Year 12 teaching in Chemistry during the inspection ranged from satisfactory to very good, and was good overall. The students were being introduced to challenging concepts and showed that they were beginning to grasp them. They were learning well, and were reaching adequate standards for this early stage of their course. However, it was not possible to observe chemistry teaching in Year 13 during the inspection as the only student taking the course was absent. Overall, provision is unsatisfactory.

## Psychology

180. Only one student completed the AS level course in 2001, from five who began it. The teaching group comprises one student in Year 13. There was no evidence of unsatisfactory teaching, but this is too small a group to offer satisfactory value for money.

## ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

181. Design and technology product design was inspected at AS and A level. The course covers elements of engineering and manufacture.

182. Overall, the quality of provision is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths:

Students enjoy the subject and benefit from links with local industry  
Teaching is good, and teachers are enthusiastic about raising standards  
Students have access to a wide range of resources

### Areas for improvement:

The delivery of the subject, to promote interest and improve standards  
Targets for productivity and attendance from students  
Presentation, freehand drawing, and the standard of work in design sheets

183. Standards in the design and technology product design course during the inspection were below average, but most students taking the course in recent years have achieved a pass grade, and some have achieved good grades. Overall achievement is satisfactory, but numbers taking the course are low. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

184. Current work in Years 12, and 13 involves the study and realisation of prototype solutions to designing and making activities linked to manufacturing. Students

develop good ideas for useful products, including a domestic door opening device for the disabled, and a tap control to dispense a measured amount of water. Development sketches and initial modelling for these projects, by Year 13 students, show satisfactory knowledge of how mechanical and electrical movements can be combined to achieve controlled events. Students relate their work to similar commercial applications, for example, by studying and comparing electrically and mechanically operated car engine fuel pumps. Students' freehand exploded diagrams of these pumps show below average drawing skills, but they have some appreciation of component assembly, and the advantages and disadvantages of each type of pump. Design development drawings are generally not well presented, and some are not complete. Written work, often constrained by weak literary skills, is limited, and some design proposals and evaluations lack depth of understanding of the subject. However, learning through discovery, and experimentation in practical work, are generally good. Students are developing a worthwhile knowledge of the properties of materials and processes of making and assembling components to meet specific needs. The two Year 12 students have made a promising start to the course.

185. Courses involve a wide range of contexts, materials and processes, and the analysis of test results. Students develop the confidence to modify and improve their own work, and study the design of commercial products, considering efficiency, function and fitness for purpose. However, their communication, visual, and spatial skills are insufficiently developed. Their understanding of aesthetics, and their ability to bring critical factors to bear on the evaluation of outcomes, are weak. Information communication technology, including computer aided design, is used, but has not significantly improved productivity or overall presentation. Students are keen to learn, take their work seriously, and form good working relationships with their teachers, visitors and local agents. There is, however, a lack of commitment to achieving the highest possible standards, reflected in the poor attendance of some students.
186. Teaching and learning are good because teachers have good knowledge of the subject, and motivate students with interesting practical tasks. Teachers know the students well, and are willing to provide individual tuition and arrange liaison with local industry. Teaching does, however, lack rigour at times, for example, in the setting of targets and deadlines, and in the presentation of examination requirements and assessment criteria. Students would benefit from further guidance on design principles, freehand drawing, the presentation of design sheets, and study skills.
187. Subject management is satisfactory. Development plans to improve standards, course delivery, and the profile of the subject to attract greater numbers are good. There are very good opportunities for learning outside the classroom. Overall, the strengths and weaknesses in provision are similar to those at the time of the last inspection.

## **BUSINESS**

188. Business education was inspected. This is an advanced vocational course, offered in Years 12 and 13. Intermediate and foundation level vocational courses were samples. Almost one third of sixth form students takes a business studies course.



## Business Education

189. Overall, the quality of provision in business education is **satisfactory**.

### **Strengths:**

Teaching is good and students learn well in lessons

There is a good range of courses, attracted students

Students with English as an additional language achieve well

### **Areas for improvement:**

Standards are well below average

Accommodation and access to computers are barely adequate

Some students have a poor attendance record

190. Standards on the new advanced vocational courses are well below average, but reasonable in view of the standards students had reached when they entered the sixth form. Half of the students passed both of the company business environment and business finance examinations in 2001 but some students did not complete their portfolios of work on time. Examination of five Year 13 portfolios showed a below average standard, but one that was again broadly in line with these students' standards on entry to the sixth form. Standards on foundation and intermediate vocational courses during the inspection were also well below average, but the pass rate in 2001 was good, and standards represent reasonable progress from students' starting points. Girls perform better than boys. There are very few students with special educational needs on courses but students with English as an additional language work hard and progress well. There was no sixth form work in this subject at the time of the last inspection.

191. Learning during the inspection was satisfactory overall, and good in the time students spent in lessons. In two good Year 12 lessons, students were observed learning about company and stakeholder pensions and cash flow forecasting. In a very good lesson for the same year, students were reaching good standards in business planning. In a good Year 13 lesson, some students were completing their portfolios, started last year, for the advanced vocational award by working on finance and marketing units and others were working on the marketing unit. This work was consistent with the standards of the course. On the other hand, a number of students are regularly absent from lessons, and the standard of their work naturally suffers from this.

192. The overall standard of teaching in lessons during the inspection was good, and very good in two fifths of lessons. All teachers have detailed knowledge of the subject, plan lessons well and motivate students by their enthusiasm. Teachers consistently explain the work well, involve students by skilful questioning, and use good textbooks and other teaching material. Teachers have good relationships and very good class control. However, they need a better strategy for dealing with class groups in small rooms when all students need to use computers.

193. The subject is well managed, and there is a strong sense of teamwork from colleagues who share the manager's commitment to improve. Learning resources, though, are barely adequate and there are too few rooms of an appropriate size which contain computer terminals. There was no provision for business education in the sixth form at the time of the last inspection.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

194. A new AS level computing course for students in Y12 was inspected. The use of ICT was also sampled in the context of vocational courses in business, health and social care, and leisure and tourism. Students were observed using ICT as part of their work in a range of subjects, including design and technology, English, geography, history, music and sciences. The subject was not available in the sixth form at the time of the last inspection.

195. The quality of the provision is **satisfactory**.

### **Strengths:**

A developing range of good courses

Support and guidance to students

Relationships and the working atmosphere

### **Areas for improvement:**

Use of ICT in non-vocational courses

Training of teachers to use computing in other subjects

Strategic use and organisation of resources

196. The AS level course is of good quality, and is attracting substantial numbers of students. Roughly half are well qualified for the course, and were reaching above average standards in the early stages of their work in response to excellent teaching. The standards reached at GCSE by students in the second group had been affected by poor teaching, and they had much ground to make up. Standards in this group were well below average during the inspection, but learning was satisfactory, and they were appropriately placed on the course. Overall, standards in the early stages of the AS course were a little below average, but reasonable in view of students' knowledge and understanding of the subject at the outset. The students taking the Key Skills course in 2001 failed to achieve graded results. The course has been comprehensively revised, and standards during the inspection were satisfactory.

197. The quality of learning and teaching at AS level ranges from satisfactory to excellent, and is good overall. Students were observed learning how to achieve good grades in examinations, apply spreadsheets and write a specification for a program. The choice of material and computer applications for students to study was well matched to their learning needs, with good use of advanced applications for higher attaining students. Students' work is carefully assessed, and they are given good individual guidance and feedback. Teachers have good overall knowledge and understanding of the subject, and create a good learning atmosphere.

198. The standard of teaching is satisfactory and at times good in vocational courses. All who teach these courses have very secure knowledge, good relationships with students and plan lessons well. They provide clear instructions, good support and guidance, and motivate students through good introductions and by asking relevant questions. In a Year 12 lesson, students taking the advanced vocational course in business were using word processing well to present their work on marketing and finances, and were using the Internet appropriately to research companies. In a Year 12 key skills lesson, students taking the intermediate vocational course in leisure and tourism were preparing documents using word processing, and presenting information on computer-generated graphs and charts to a satisfactory standard. Such provision helps many students to use computers independently. There is some good use of ICT

to analyse samples in biology, but there is too little use of ICT in most subjects in the sixth form, and many teachers require further training if they are to use it effectively.

199. The ICT co-ordinator and the co-ordinator for vocational courses provide strong leadership. The new courses, including the key skills course, are well designed, and firmly based on national guidance. However, action to improve the quality of provision has been hindered by shortages of equipment and of suitably qualified teachers. The school has taken steps to address this, for example by recruiting graduates with business experience, but there has nevertheless been a delay in making the new key skills course available to all students. There are insufficient terminals in many rooms for the large classes which use them, particularly in business, and some faculties find access to computers difficult. The determination with which teachers and students were approaching their work during the inspection, however, puts them in a good position to overcome these difficulties.

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

200. The AS course in physical education was inspected, and the intermediate course on leisure and tourism was sampled.

### **Physical education**

201. Overall, the quality of provision is **satisfactory**.

#### **Strengths:**

Standards are improving, and are in line with national averages at AS level

Teaching and learning are good

There is good guidance to students starting the course

#### **Areas for improvement:**

There is too little provision for sport in the curriculum

Provision for extracurricular activities is unsatisfactory

202. Standards in the sixth form are average. All students currently following examination courses are meeting course requirements. This summer's AS examination results were in line with national averages, and A-level results have improved year-on-year. There were no A-level examination results this year as no candidates were entered. There were no examination courses in the subject at the time of the last inspection, but the school was making good provision for extracurricular activities.

203. Students in Year 12 during the inspection had made a good start to their AS course. They had established good working patterns, such as reading around the theory of classical and operant conditioning, in preparation for the lesson. Most A-level students have acquired the higher level skills of debate, argument and hypothesis that they need to succeed in the course. This represents significant achievement for students who began with moderate GCSE grades.

204. Overall, teaching is good. Teachers systematically reinforce and extend students' knowledge and understanding with a good variety of techniques and resources, helping them to distil, extract and present information effectively. The teaching of A level students is rigorous, imaginative and enthusiastic. Students' presentations, on topics such as 'Sporting Governing Bodies', showed high levels of maturity, insight and critical analysis.

205. Management is in transition, since the former head of physical education is now head of the sixth form, but it remains good. Lack of timetabled curriculum sporting and extra-curricular opportunities undermines students' levels of fitness, and students' concerns at this were shared by the inspection team.

### **Leisure and Tourism**

206. Leisure and tourism is offered as an intermediate vocational course, and provision is satisfactory. The course is well matched to the needs of the student. Their current standard is below average, mainly due to high numbers of students with special educational needs. Attitudes to work were good in one lesson, but poor in the other, and attendance in one lesson was unsatisfactory, as a significant number of students had left to take up employment without informing the school.

207. Teaching shows good understanding of the requirements of the course. For example, students are shown clearly how to obtain a particular grade of pass by establishing links between local leisure and tourism organisations. The quality of learning is better when information communication technology is used as the teaching medium rather than reading and writing.

208. The organisation and management of the area are strong, and the department's documents give good direction and purpose to the teaching. Lack of information communication facilities, and of a suitably large working space, hinder learning.

### **HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**

209. No subject was fully inspected. The advanced vocational course in health and social care was sampled. No provision was made in this area at the time of the last inspection.

### **Health and Social Care**

210. This new course is well matched to the needs of students taking it. It is very effectively planned, and offers students challenging work at a level they can manage. Teaching is good or very good, and provides good coverage that enabled students during the inspection to learn well and achieve average standards for the early stages of their course. Students worked consistently at their coursework, and had completed a good range of work in their first half term. There are good arrangements for fieldwork in local hospitals.

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

211. Performing arts was inspected at AS level, and art and music were sampled. At the time of the last inspection, provision for drama, now included in performing arts, was unsatisfactory, and no music was offered in the sixth form. Provision for art was good. Overall, provision has shown good improvement since the last inspection.

## Performing arts

212. Overall, the quality of provision in performing arts is **very good**.

### **Strengths:**

Consistently high quality of teaching

High standards of learning

### **Areas for improvement:**

To establish a syllabus that is closer to the needs of the students

To improve the quality of accommodation for dance

213. In recent years students have achieved 100 per cent ~~A~~ grades in this subject, but there are no national comparisons possible. Five lessons were seen. In lessons, standards are broadly average for the course, and dance and drama students show particular ability in experimenting with movement and speech. Students with special needs make good progress.

214. The standard of learning is very good as students know at all times what is expected of them and lessons are very well paced and planned. Standards of teaching are high and frequently excellent. In a Year 12 lesson on character building, the rate of learning was excellent as students developed ways of communicating thought and feeling without using words. After a wholeclass discussion, periods of practice were alternated with periods of reflection on the drama process so that lesson aims were always in mind. In another lesson, Year 13 students made very good progress in a dance piece about interrogation. Again lesson aims were frequently revised through practice, performance, direct teaching and demonstration, and video presentation of the work in hand.

215. Attitudes in lessons are excellent and students are totally committed to their work. In one lesson a minor accident occurred, and the teacher and students were able immediately to analyse the cause and learn from it so that the lesson continued uninterrupted. Students value the quality of teaching and the support that is offered to them. They also know what grades they are achieving and respect each other's work.

216. The subject co-ordinator has recently joined the school, and is sensitive to the needs of the students. Good use is made of assessment as students are given target grades on entry to the course and are given regular progress reports. Resources and accommodation are used well and generally adequate, although surfaces for dance are barely adequate. There is a wide range of opportunities for students to extend their learning through performances in school and in the community. A well attended Showcase during the inspection included technical support from performing arts students, and a Year 12 drama group performed a powerful piece entitled 'Big Brother'.

## Art

219. Overall provision for art is good.

### Strengths:

- Good teaching with individual attention of high quality
- Teachers know the subject very well
- Students have excellent attitudes

### Areas for Improvement:

- Arrangements to assess and track progress need to be more systematic
- Some students are not able to attend all of the lessons for their courses
- There is too little use of information and communication technology.

220. Standards at AS and Alevel in 2000 and 2001 represented satisfactory achievement, although the numbers of students taking the courses were too small to allow national comparisons to be made. Numbers taking art this year have increased ~~to~~ <sup>fold</sup>, following the outstanding results at GCSE in 2001, and around a quarter of the sixth form now study art. Standards during the inspection were above average, and high targets had been set for future examinations.

221. All students in Year 12 can draw well, with good control of tone, and use their sketchbooks continuously to develop their skills. The quality of some drawings of flowers is outstanding. Those studying graphics developed good designs for posters following a trip to Kew Gardens during the inspection, and supported their work well with photographs they had taken. Fine art students developed compositions in a variety of media, inspired initially by observational drawings of musical instruments. These included some very good oil paintings of portraits and landscapes. Students have open access to art rooms and a separate sixth form studio that they use in their free time. They use these facilities regularly and responsibly.

222. Teaching and learning are good. The strength of the teaching lies in the high quality of individual attention received by students each lesson. This is closely focused on progress, and involves continuous, informal assessment which enables teaching to be closely directed to students' needs. Teachers help students to plan their work well, and encourage them to experiment with colours and media. Relationships and attitudes are excellent, and most students studying art are in the same registration group, tutored by an art teacher. This fosters a sense of group identity, and ensures that each day begins with a clear focus on learning. However, the pace of work in some lessons could be improved, and arrangements for assessment, monitoring and evaluating progress are too informal to cope with the recent increase in numbers and courses.

223. The department is committed to building on its success at GCSE and to improving standards. Schemes of work accurately reflect the subject requirements and set the stage for good teaching. Students have an opportunity to use the computer and scanner in the department, but only one did so during the inspection, partly because some teachers did not have the skills needed to use the equipment properly. Examination courses are well chosen and meet students' needs well. There are good opportunities for learning outside the classroom, including visits to places of interest and life-drawing classes.

## Music

224. At A and AS level, recent results have been broadly average. Class sizes in the past have been small, but increasing numbers are opting to take up music courses. AS Music Technology is a new course and has attracted a good number of students.
225. The overall quality of teaching and learning are good. Teachers are well informed, set challenging tasks, and provide extensive additional support and teaching to students outside normal teaching hours. Students discuss their work using appropriate technical language and make good progress in evaluating and refining their work. For example, in one lesson, students taking AS music improved the standard of their performance by increasingly difficult sightreading and performing tasks. Students with special needs make good progress.
226. The students are eager to learn and display very positive attitudes. They work very well independently and in groups and take full advantage of the facilities on offer to improve their work in their own time. Students value the opportunities given to them in extra curricular activities and take part with intent enthusiasm. Accommodation and resources for music are very good.

## HUMANITIES

227. Geography was inspected, and history and religious education were sampled. Lessons were observed in each subject. Recent results have been below average in geography and religious education, but satisfactory in view of students' standards at GCSE. Results have been very low in history, and satisfactory provision during the inspection was the result of outstanding work by a temporary supply teacher. Teaching groups are small, and too small in A-level history, which has only one student. At the time of the last inspection, students were achieving low standards in history, but good standards in geography. The school's present provision is, overall, of similar quality.

## GEOGRAPHY

228. Overall, the quality of provision is good.

### Strengths:

Effective teaching by enthusiastic staff  
Well-organised lessons address the needs of all students  
Challenging tasks which reflect high expectations from the teacher  
Well-motivated students with good attitudes

### Areas for improvement:

Inadequate resources  
Insufficient attention to writing skills  
Assessment procedures

229. A total of 13 students study at GCE A and AS level in two groups. There has been no A-level entry since 1999, but the last inspection report noted good standards in the subject in relation to students' capabilities. Present provision is similar in quality to that during the last inspection.

230. Learning is good, and buildseffectively on students' knowledge and understanding from GCSE. Students are keen to learn, and their motivation is sustained by the vigour and enthusiasm of teachers, who encourage them to take an active part in lessons. As a result, most students contribute spontaneously and confidently to discussion and share ideas well. In a Year 12 lesson on valley formations, students worked co-operatively to investigate the geological features of the Grand Canyon. They developed skills in reading, selecting and planning information from the Internet, and tested their understanding with other students. Teaching in a Year 13 lesson on birth control policies in China skilfully integrated a mixture of activities to develop understanding of key issues, practice in answering examination questions, and critical analysis when students were assessing each other's work. On the other hand, students' writing skills are not well developed, particular in Year 12, where they begin the course with inadequate literacy skills for advanced work. Students organise coursework information clearly but lack skills in analysing and evaluating data.
231. Teaching is good overall, and at times very good. Lessons have clear and realistic objectives and logical progression, and work is matched to the range of capabilities in the class. They include a mixture of challenging tasks that involve most key skills, and teachers find time to support individual students. Teachers use the schools limited resources effectively to support learning. In a human geography lesson, photocopied material was used well to achieve good understanding of the nature of China's population problems, and in physical geography the teacher and students made good use of the Internet in their investigation of changeable weather patterns. There are good fieldwork visits to Switzerland and the Peak District. Teachers generally help students to reinforce learning well, but occasionally spend too much time going over the ground that has been covered in a lesson. Questioning techniques are good, and most effective when directed to individuals and followed up with secondary enquiries. Lessons proceed at a brisk and businesslike pace, without neglecting the needs of lower-attaining students, but more could be done to encourage some students to talk to each other. There are good relationships, especially in Year 12, and a culture of mutual support and respect. All lessons have clearly defined tasks for homework and for the use of private study time.
232. Both teachers are in their first appointments and have good skills for their work. They share the teaching of human and physical geography according to their specialist interests, and are keen to develop professional skills. The subject leader sets a good example in the day-to-day management of courses, and there is a good working partnership, in which ideas and good practice are shared. These have included measures to improve lesson planning, and double marking of some written work to establish consistency. The head of department has led a school in-service training activity on cooperative learning. Schemes of work are adequate, but assessment and analysis of achievement over time need to be improved. There are too few good books in the department and in the main library, and teachers have to rely too heavily on photocopied extracts as a result.

## History

233. Standards during the inspection were below average, but reasonable in view of the standards students had reached at GCSE. This was due to outstanding work by a temporary supply teacher. Standards in the longer term are very low and unsatisfactory. The second year A level course does not provide value for money.



234. Few students have been entered for Alevel examinations in recent years, and results in 2000 were very low. No students were entered in 2001. ASlevel results in 2001 were poor, and the second year of the Alevel course has only two students. Students in Year 12, however, have achieved suitable grades at GCSE, and have begun AS level well. The satisfactory provision during the inspection does not detract from the importance of these longerterm weaknesses.
235. Learning in Year 12 was good in two lessons observed, and very good in a third. Students are confident in research tasks, which included an exploration of aspects of Bismarck's foreign policy in their study of late nineteenth century Germany. They showed good knowledge of Bismarck's overall aim, and were helped by the structure and pace of the lesson set by the teacher. This built upon prior knowledge and allowed time for research and reflection. Students responded very well to the challenge of writing a timed essay on the ideas of Malthus, and demonstrated a satisfactory level of understanding of the changes in the population of Britain at an early stage of the course. All students have wellordered notes and wellorganised files which reflect satisfactory coverage of the initial topics by the teacher. Only one pupil in Year 13 attended. This student was reaching broadly average standards in work on German and British history and was well taught.
236. Teaching was good in threefifths of lessons observed, and very good in the remainder. The students were supported by the very good subject knowledge of the teachers, and their very good planning. A temporary supply teacher was particularly effective in enabling students to understand their recent learning in the context of longer-term trends in British history and in the preparation of examination essays. Students in Year 12 expressed confidence inthe way that teachers have managed their intellectual progression from GCSE.
237. The new advanced courses have been satisfactorily introduced. Students receive good feedback on their work, but the overall strategy for assessment is not clear, and there are too few books and other resources for learning. As in geography, teachers make good use of photocopied extracts from single texts but there is currently no provision in the school library for independent study and no promotion of wider reading, for exampe through periodicals or recommended internet sites.

### **Religious education**

238. Religious education is a legal requirement for all students in sixth forms. Currently, only 12 students taking AS and A2 level receive this entitlement, as outlined in the Essex Agreed Syllabus. Where it is provided, the quality of religious education is good. Teachers are well qualified, and have sufficient time to teach the examination courses.
239. Three students took AS level in 2001. One gained a B grade the others D grades. This represented satisfactory achievement. In lessons seen, and in analysis of students' written work, standards are below average, but similar to those in comparable schools. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers know the students well, and students show respect for the teacher and for one another. A variety of stimulating activities, such as a team minquiz on Aristotle, produced a very good response from students. Students' acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding is good. They arevery willing to learn, and sustain interest and concentration well. Students use the Internet effectively, and have good independent learning skills,

which they used during the inspection to prepare speeches for and against euthanasia.

240. The department is effectively managed, and the subject is increasingly popular with students. Resources, particularly in terms of suitably challenging books, are inadequate.

## **ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION**

241. English was inspected, and the new AS level course in Spanish was sampled. Results in English overall are reasonable in view of the limited skills of students on entry, and students in Spanish have made a good start to their A level course. At the time of the last inspection, standards in English in the sixth form were well below average, and there was no provision for modern languages. Overall, the present provision represents satisfactory improvement, but further improvement is needed in English.

### **English**

242. Overall, provision in English is **satisfactory**.

#### **Strengths:**

Teaching develops students' knowledge and understanding of literature very well  
The subject contributes well to personal as well as to academic development  
There are good relationships between teachers and students.

#### **Areas for improvement:**

A head of department is urgently needed to take a clear lead in raising standards  
Teachers need to require greater precision and accuracy in speaking and in writing  
Marking needs to be more rigorous, and to provide more guidance on improvement  
Schemes of work are needed, particularly for the early stages of AS level

243. Results in GCE A-level English literature have been well below average in recent years, and there were no candidates in 2001. In the first A level examinations taken this summer, four students out of seven achieved pass grades. This is well below average, but standards among students starting their AS course in Year 12 were better. Overall achievement is satisfactory in view of the standards reached at GCSE, but is held back by weaknesses in writing which are not fully addressed in teaching.

244. In Year 13, the students' responses in lessons show good recall of the important features of the texts studied, although their contributions are often tentative and lack fluency. Students do not have a sufficiently wide experience of literature or a sufficiently secure grasp of literary terminology to give them confidence in class discussions. Their essays show a developing understanding of writers' main ideas and an emerging capacity to offer independent judgements, making use of references to texts to illustrate their points. They respond personally to literature, for example in essays on Philip Larkin's poetry. However, students' writing often has too many spelling and grammatical errors, and sensitive insights are spoiled by an over colloquial, clumsy style.

245. Many Year 12 students are still coming to terms with the increased challenge of AS level, but nevertheless achievement is good for this stage in the course. Students of all abilities respond well in class, freely contributing to lively discussions. In a lesson on 'The Handmaid's Tale', students were able to explore ideas from Kate Millet's writing, relating them to some of the themes in the novel. They were helped to do this by the teacher's probing questions and clear explanations. The writing of some students with good GCSE results shows a willingness to expand ideas in detail and sound potential for developing independence of thought.
246. Teaching in lessons during the inspection was good and often very good. It was based on good knowledge and understanding of the subject, which teachers use well to extend students' experience of literature by choosing interesting texts and asking carefully phrased questions. This engages students well with their work, and helps them to clarify ideas. In the most successful lessons, teachers used imaginative methods to help students understand more difficult aspects of literature. In one Year 13 lesson, for example, the task of selecting from a shopping basket items that might have been bought by William Wordsworth helped students to consolidate their knowledge of Romantic ideals. In another very successful lesson, Year 12 students learned the need to pay close attention to the meaning of a text by working with directors from the local theatre on extracts from 'Twelfth Night'. On the other hand, teachers are not rigorous enough when commenting on style and accuracy in both oral and written work. This limits progress in writing, and students' chances in written examinations. Marking does not provide enough guidance on what students need to do to improve their work.
247. Most students develop sound research skills, making good use of the local library and the Internet. There is good access to the Internet within the sixth form centre, but a lack of areas for quiet study. Students appreciate the individual support they are given by their teachers and by their tutors. Their learning is enhanced by good relations within the sixth form, by the students' own determination to do better, and by their mature capacity to reflect on their feelings and experiences. Students value English as a foundation for lifelong learning and for the part it plays in their own personal development.
248. In order for students to gain the full benefit of the strengths in provision, management and co-ordination need to be improved, and the department needs to develop a clearer focus on enabling students to meet the demands of advanced work. There has been no professional development to help teachers prepare for the new AS and A-level courses, and very little monitoring and evaluation of teaching and provision have taken place. Teachers share ideas well, but there has been too little long term curriculum planning to ensure that students' needs are addressed systematically. A head of department needs to be appointed to address these issues.

## Spanish

249. The group of six students studying Spanish to AS level are reaching broadly average standards for the early stage of their course. They are fluent and confident when speaking in pairs, and their written work demonstrates appropriate progress from the standard of GCSE, for example through increasingly complex sentences in their writing. They are encouraged to write at length and to extend their linguistic range, as in an essay entitled *Mi primera cita* (My first date), where one student amusingly described a disastrous encounter. Lessons are conducted almost entirely in Spanish,

with the teacher, a native speaker, providing an appropriate range of varied resources and establishing a highly productive learning atmosphere through rigorous and challenging questions. The students are enthusiastic and diligent and noted the new linguistic points with alacrity in the lesson observed during the inspection. Students in the common room were observed taking a thorough and conscientious approach to preparation. This is good provision, and is putting the students in a good position to succeed.