

# INSPECTION REPORT

## CHANCELLOR'S SCHOOL

Hatfield

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117591

Headteacher: Mr P Wormleighton

Reporting inspector: Richard Hancock  
2715

Dates of inspection: 21 – 25 January 2002

Inspection number: 194047

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	11 – 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address	Pine Grove Brookmans Park Hatfield Herts
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr G Shiells
Date of previous inspection:	21/04/1997

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2715	Richard Hancock	Registered inspector	English	What sort of school is it? The school's results and achievements How well are the pupils taught? How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to the pupils? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
			Special educational needs	
9748	Cliff Hayes	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
14871	Beryl Buteux	Team inspector	English as an additional language	
			English	
6044	Roger Perkins	Team inspector	Mathematics	
1249	Joseph Edge	Team inspector	Science	
2183	Peter Thompson	Team inspector	Equal opportunities	
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## **REPORT CONTENTS**

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	7 - 14
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Students' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
 <b>ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM</b>	
 <b>PART B: COMMENTARY</b>	
<b>HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?</b>	15 - 18
The school's results and students' achievements	
Students' attitudes, values and personal development	
<b>HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?</b>	18 - 19
<b>HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO STUDENTS?</b>	19 - 22
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?</b>	22 - 23
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?</b>	23
<b>HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?</b>	24 - 27
<b>WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?</b>	27 - 28
 <b>PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS</b>	29 - 33
 <b>PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4</b>	34 - 59
 <b>PART E: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM</b>	60 - 72

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Originally built in 1964 to serve the immediate area and neighbouring villages, Chancellor's is an established school in attractive surroundings, midway between the towns of Hatfield and Potters Bar. It has been over-subscribed for six years. There are 1006 students, making the school slightly larger than most secondary schools. Of these students, 146 are in the Sixth Form, double the number of two years ago. The proportion of students on the register of special educational needs is below the national average, as is the proportion with a statement of special educational need. Students come from a variety of backgrounds but the percentage of pupils eligible for a free school meal is well below average. Just over five per cent of students speak English as an additional language, higher than in most schools but none are at an early stage of language acquisition. The overall attainment of students on entry is above average and Key Stage 2 test results are high. Recently receiving an award for continued improvement in examination results, the school was also awarded *Investor in People* status in 2001. Its aims for the future are to continue to improve achievement, to upgrade accommodation further and to place the school at the heart of the community by applying for specialist school status.

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

Chancellor's is a good and improving school. The quality of teaching is good in the main school and in the Sixth Form it is very good. Students have very positive attitudes and behave well. The overall standard of their work is above average. They are well supported and cared for. Leadership is good and the school is well managed. It gives satisfactory value for money.

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

- Attainment is well above average in national tests at Key Stage 3.
- Attainment of five or more A\* - C grades in GCSE examinations is well above average.
- Promotes very positive attitudes.
- Encourages and sustains good behaviour.
- Provides good quality teaching.
- Develops good relationships throughout the school.

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

- Students' overall levels of achievement, especially at Key Stage 4.
- The strategy to promote, sustain and monitor progress towards higher standards.
- Degree of challenge in some lessons.
- The use of information and communication technology (ICT) in all learning.
- The use of assessment to help students to achieve more.
- Curriculum provision for religious education, spirituality, and cultural diversity.

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

Last inspected in 1997, the school has made good progress since that time. Teaching has improved and attainment is higher. The issues for the school to address have been largely resolved. Accommodation has improved, communication is better, and reports for parents on students' progress are more detailed. The school is safer. It has still to address some

aspects of assessment, ICT is not used nearly enough in learning, and provision for religious education is still unsatisfactory at Key Stage 4.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	B	B	B	D
A-levels/AS-levels	D	D	n/a	

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

In 2001, the proportion of students achieving five or more grades at A\*-C was well above the national average and represents a strongly improved performance. This performance is average in comparison with similar schools. However, when the students' average points score is compared with that of students in schools achieving a similar score at Key Stage 3 in 1999, achievement is below average. When compared with similar schools, it is also below average. Performance in all subjects, apart from combined science, was either in line with the national average or above. Highest achieving subjects were drama and French. Achievement was least good in science and German. The proportion of students achieving grades A\*-C in English was slightly above the national average compared with all schools and in comparison with similar schools. In mathematics it was well above the national average. Science results were above national averages but were not as good as most other subjects. Performance in drama, design and technology, French, geography, history, physical education and sociology was well above national averages.

In 2001, National Curriculum test results in English, mathematics and science were well above the national average, as they were in 2000. Results in the core subjects were also well above average when compared with those of similar schools. The trend of improvement is above the national trend. On the basis of assessments made by teachers, students did well in ICT, history, and design and technology and least well in music, physical education and art. There is some good overall achievement, especially in drama, mathematics, French, physical education, sociology and ICT but some students are capable of reaching higher levels of achievement, especially in art, German and science. Higher-attaining students can achieve more. Students with special educational needs are doing well and those for whom English is an additional language are achieving at appropriate levels. Standards of literacy and numeracy are above average.



## STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Students are keen to learn and work hard
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. When in class or moving about the school, students behave very well
Personal development and relationships	Very good. The quality of the positive relationships between all members of the school's community is the bedrock upon which many of the school's achievements are built
Attendance	Very good. High attendance is one of the major factors accounting for the school's success in national tests and examinations

Students display very positive attitudes to learning. They are punctual, do not waste time when moving from class to class and work well. They contribute vigorously to class discussions and respond eagerly to questions. Students are orderly, polite and helpful to adults and considerate of each other and respect property and equipment. The number of permanent exclusions has been reduced although fixed-term exclusions have risen. No incidents of oppressive behaviour were observed. Very good relationships exist between staff and students and this contributes strongly to students' learning. Students respond well when opportunities are given for them to take responsibility and to show initiative.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 - 9	Year 10	Years 12 -13
Quality of teaching	Good	Good	Very good

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

It was not possible to observe Year 11 lessons because students were on examination practice. Observation of lessons in Year 13 were also restricted because some students were taking modular tests.

In the main school, teaching is good or better in three out of four lessons although it is less good in Year 8. Strengths are expert subject knowledge, the ability to motivate, to plan, and to set high levels of challenge. Teaching in English and mathematics is good. In science it is satisfactory overall but some lessons lack challenge. Teaching is good in most other subjects. Homework is used well. Assessment is not fully effective and some students are unsure of their levels of achievement or what to do to improve. Literacy and numeracy are well taught. Some lessons have insufficient challenge and the majority of students mark time. In a few lessons teaching is unsatisfactory when objectives are not clear, the pace of work is too slow and the majority of students do not learn enough. At Key Stage 3, teaching helps students to develop powers of concentration and observation, to understand more about the use of language and to acquire the skills of computing. They develop a wide range of practical skills and learn about creative processes. Skills are being effectively consolidated at Key Stage 4 but many students are capable of reaching higher standards at this key stage. Learning about the vocational aspects of life is an undeveloped area, apart from work in business studies.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. The curriculum has breadth and balance and good additional features, such as drama and personal, social and health education (PSHE). ICT is not widely used in all subjects, time for religious education is limited and vocational courses at Key Stage 4 are undeveloped
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Students' learning needs are carefully and accurately identified. Communications with parents are good. Students are well taught when they get extra support and their overall progress in the school is good.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory. These students are well integrated into the life of the school.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Provision for the moral and cultural aspects is good although the lack of emphasis on cultural diversity is a weakness. Provision for the social aspects of development is satisfactory. Provision for the spiritual aspects is inadequate.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. Procedures for ensuring the protection of students are thorough. There is an effective system for mentoring students at Key Stage 4.

There is an active parent-teacher association. Parents are consulted on a wide range of issues and the school enjoys strong parental support. Literacy and numeracy needs are well addressed. Extra-curricular activities are varied and extensive. Students with special educational needs are well integrated and well supported. The limited use of ICT restricts learning in most subjects at Key Stage 3. The requirements of the Agreed Syllabus for teaching religious education are not met at Key Stage 4. Arrangements for the health and safety of students and their general welfare are very effective.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and known. Duties are carried out diligently and very capably. Communication is good. Team work ensures that the key staff pull in the same direction.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. The school complies with most statutory requirements. The governing body befriends the school, evaluates its progress and provides a clear sense of direction for its future development.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. Examination and test data are regularly analysed and interpreted. Performance management systems are well embedded in the school.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. There are shortages in some subjects and provision for the use of ICT to develop learning in subjects is inadequate.

Staff are well qualified and appropriately matched to the work they do. Administrative staff are of good calibre. All support staff are playing an important part in helping the school to run well as a cohesive community. There are shortages of support staff in science and design and technology. The headteacher and other senior staff, together with the governing

body, provide the school with a clear sense of direction but the school does not have in place a strong driving strategy to ensure that all students achieve their potential from the time they arrive at the school through to the end of Key Stage 4. The school has a sound understanding of the principles of best value.

#### **PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the good behaviour of the students</li> <li>• the range of activities outside lessons</li> <li>• that the school expects students to work hard and to give of their best</li> <li>• that the school is well led and managed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• there was no area of the school which a significant number of parents would like to see improved</li> </ul>

The inspection team agrees with parents that students are well behaved, that they can enjoy a wide range of extra-curricular activities, that the school expects students to work hard and give of their best and that the school is well led and managed.

**INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM**

The Sixth Form has doubled in size in two years and there are now 146 students on roll. The main academic qualification for entry is five GCSE examination grades at A\*-C. Most of the students have transferred to the Sixth Form having been taught in the main school, and the staying on rate within the qualification requirements is high. Approximately half of the Year 11 cohort normally stay on into the Sixth Form. Some students, a much smaller number, have enrolled from other schools. Students come from a variety of social and economic backgrounds but are relatively advantaged. There are considerably more boys than girls on the roll. There are few students with special educational needs and few for whom English is an additional language. The school offers a very wide range of courses which can be studied to AS and A level and just one vocational course in business studies. There is no key skills course. As well as wide-ranging general studies courses, there are supplementary courses in PSHE, and students have an opportunity to study some elements of philosophy and religious belief. They also have the opportunity to take part in activities in physical education. Girls have been under-represented on some recent courses in subjects such as mathematics and ICT. The school keeps its course provision under constant review and is prepared to work with partner institutions to respond to the wider needs of students.

**HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS**

There is a good ethos in the Sixth Form. The majority of students are mature and articulate young people who form good relationships. Whilst many achieve well in their work, overall levels are not as high as they need to be and there are considerable variations in the success rates on different courses. Teaching is mostly of high quality and students are learning good habits of independent study but students need more scope to use ICT. Generally, they are given good guidance by their subject teachers. Their overall progress is monitored but this needs to be more regular and detailed. The Sixth Form is expanding rapidly and its development is being well managed. Good use is being made of resources and given the expanding numbers of students, good attendance and excellent rates of retention on its wide range of courses, the Sixth Form is proving to be cost-effective.

**Strengths**

- Very good teaching.
- Good leadership.
- Strong positive attitudes and very good attendance rates.
- Very good relationships.
- Retention rates on courses.

**What could be improved**

- The overall attainment levels of students.
- The monitoring of progress.
- The development of ICT in learning.

*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.*

Sixth Form provision has improved since the last inspection. The roll is much greater, the number of courses on offer has been increased and the school has been very successful in retaining students on courses and in preparing prudent budgets.

## 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	Overall, provision is satisfactory. GCE AS-level results are above average, teachers have a very secure knowledge and understanding of the subject and students are very positive, especially about the individual help provided.
Biology	Overall, provision is satisfactory. Results are improving, more students are being recruited and more students are being retained on courses. In some lessons the quality of teaching is excellent but it is also inconsistent so students' learning is not always as thorough as it needs to be.
Design and technology	Overall, provision is satisfactory. The quality of teaching is good and students learn well. Relationships are a strength. Attainment is below average at AS and A-level. The lack of provision for ICT is a weak feature.
Business	Overall, provision is good. Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic and establish good relationships with students who have very positive attitudes to the subject. Results are good. Limited use is made of ICT. Accommodation is a weak feature.
ICT	Overall, provision is satisfactory. Teaching methods are effective and learning is well managed. Students are keen and motivated. They are encouraged to look at the social, moral, legal and ethical implications of the use of ICT. The numbers taking courses are not as high as they need to be. Resources are limited and so restrict the use of ICT in other subjects.
Physical education	Overall, provision is good. The recent introduction of examination courses has been a good feature. Teaching is good and enthusiastic, and students have positive attitudes to the subject. ICT is little used to develop learning further.
History	Overall, provision is very good. Teachers are very knowledgeable about their subject and very enthusiastic. Strong productive relationships between teachers and students help to produce A-level results which are consistently good and often very good. Teaching strategies are not broad and students' independent learning skills are not well developed.
English	Overall, provision is good. Results on A-level courses are improving and students' achievements overall are getting better. Teachers have good subject knowledge and this helps students to read more deeply into their texts. They are developing good habits of independent study. Assessment systems to track students' prior learning and monitor individual progress are not fully developed and more evaluation of students' reading is required to ensure breadth of study.
French	Overall, provision is very good. Teaching is of high quality. There are high expectations of students. They would benefit from more guidance on how to raise standards.

In other work sampled students were achieving good standards in art. Their drawing and use of colour shows sensitivity. They are mature and independent. Good standards were also observed in drama and in AS lessons students are developing interesting studies of character but there is a need for a more depth to be added to their work. Students in Year 13 have particularly good scope for independent learning. Overall, the subject provides very good opportunities for students of all ability levels to achieve creditable grades. Inclusion rates are high and no student is refused entry to drama or theatre arts courses because they have not studied the subject at GCSE examination level. Standards in sociology are above average and students benefit greatly from the knowledge and enthusiasm of the teaching they receive. Three A-level subjects, biology, chemistry and physics, have been offered by the school for many years. Occasionally, GCSE science has been provided to meet the needs of individual Sixth Form students. Physics provision regularly includes the AS alternative. Chemistry was sampled. Results were unsatisfactory three to four years ago but results for the two most recent years have been better. Even so, too many students completed their two years of study with grades below E. Student numbers fell year by year for three years. Current work is satisfactory and the numbers taking and completing chemistry courses are now satisfactory. Results in physics have been consistently in line with national averages in recent years. Recruitment and retention for physics have been satisfactory over several years, and remain so.

### 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>• The approachability of teachers</li> <li>• The clearly set out printed information about courses</li> <li>• Induction into the Sixth Form</li> <li>• The quality of the teaching</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Careers advice</li> <li>• Range of extra-curricular activities</li> <li>• Feedback on their progress</li> <li>• Their treatment as responsible adults</li> </ul>

The school has been working on its programmes for careers advice, and students in Year 12 have not yet have benefited from the revised programme. Nonetheless, some 70 per cent of students in Year 13 were also critical of this provision. The inspection team considered that careers advice is satisfactory but that many students are, understandably, looking for advice which is more extensive and ongoing. Just over half of all students felt that the extra-curricular provision was unsatisfactory but the inspection team considered it to be sufficiently varied as to be satisfactory, although not rich. Students receive feedback on their work as can be seen in comments on their essays and other extended work. In some subjects such as English and French this needs to be more detailed but overall provision is satisfactory. In view of the disappointing examination results in 2001, it would be helpful to future students if the monitoring of overall progress were closer and more detailed. The inspection team also considered that the school is striking an appropriate balance between the close supervision of students and scope for them to become independent. The inspection team also considered all the positive aspects identified by students to be very good.

### 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. In the GCSE examinations in 2001, the percentage of students achieving five or more grades at A\*-C was well above the national average. The percentage with five or more grades at A\*-G was above the national average and with one at grades A\*-G was well above the national average. The students' average total points score was above average. This represents an improving performance which is borne out by the upward trend in the school's GCSE examination results. The school exceeded its target for five grades A\*-C, fell just short of its target for one or more grades at A\* - G but met its target for students' average points score. When these results are looked at on the basis of prior attainment, the students' average points score is below average and when comparisons are made with similar schools they are also below average. These comparisons indicate that students could achieve more.
2. All students entered for English language in the GCSE examination achieved a grade in 2001 and the proportion achieving grades A\*-C was slightly above national averages, results which were also above average when compared with those of similar schools. Trends indicate that students are maintaining a steady rate of progress but results could be better by the end of Year 11, given the good levels of students' attainment on entry to the school and their achievement in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3. Results in English literature were in line with national averages or just slightly below but similar to results in 2000. Girls achieve higher results than boys in English but the performance of boys is improving. In mathematics, the percentage of students achieving grades at A\*-C in 2001 was well above the national average and results are improving year on year. These results are also well above average when compared with those of similar schools. Mathematics results were significantly better than those of most other subjects. All students achieved a grade. Science results in 2001 were above national averages although they were only average when compared with similar schools and the results were not as strong as the overall picture across all subjects.
3. Performance in all subjects, apart from combined science, was either in line with the national average for that subject or exceeded it. The highest achieving subjects were drama and French, with achievement being less good in science and German. Boys' results were well above the national average and girls' results were above the national average.
4. In 2001, students' test results at Key Stage 3 in English, mathematics and science were well above the national average, as they were in 2000. When these results are compared with those of similar schools, they are also well above average. For Level 6 or above mathematics results were especially good, but English and science results also showed improvement from 2000. The trend of improvement is above the national level. When these results are compared with those of similar schools, performance at Level 5 in all core subjects is well above average. Performance at Level 6, or above, was high in mathematics and was well above average in English and science. In terms of average points scored, performance was well above average in all core subjects. There were no significant gaps between the achievements of boys and girls. On the basis of teachers' assessments, students did especially well in ICT, history, and design and technology and least well in music, physical education and art.

5. There is evidence of some good overall achievement in the school, especially in drama, mathematics, French, physical education, sociology and ICT. There are also instances of individual students excelling in English and design and technology, their examination performance being amongst the highest nationally. But there are clear indications that students are capable of reaching higher levels of achievement, a situation which the school itself has recognised and which features as a priority in its development plan. Examination results need to be higher in English and English literature, given the attainment of students when they enter the school and their results at the end of Key Stage 3. Although students make progress in art, German and science, their examination results should more consistently match the higher results of other subjects. Boys do not achieve the very highest levels in French. In subjects as a whole, higher attaining students need to achieve more. Students with special educational needs are doing well and are mostly making good progress in all their subjects. Students for whom English is an additional language perform no differently from other groups of students and benefit from the school policy to set targets for every student, irrespective of the ethnic groups they represent.

### **Sixth Form**

6. In 2001, students' A-level results were below national averages and an analysis of the results shows that students as a whole did not make sufficient progress on their courses. This was a disappointing outcome. In 2000, results were better and students made more progress. The school has already identified this area of attainment as of concern and is taking steps to improve it.
7. Standards on A-level courses are average in English and improving, especially in terms of students' critical analysis of texts. In mathematics, AS level results are above average but A-level results are below average. The current AS results augur well for improved A-level performance in 2002. Inspection evidence shows that by the end of Year 13, overall attainment in mathematics is around the national average. Results in chemistry were unsatisfactory until two years ago but results for the past two years have been better. Even so, too many students completed their two years of study with grades below E. Current work is satisfactory, as were the results obtained by the first cohort taking the re-organised AS course. Results in physics have been consistently in line with national averages in recent years and results in biology are improving.
8. Standards in recent AS and A-level examinations in history have been very good and well above national standards. History is one of the best performing Sixth Form subjects in the school although numbers on courses tend to be low and the subject tends to attract the more able students. Standards of written work and levels of understanding are very high. Although some individual students did well, overall A-level results in geography were below the national average. Standards in religious education are in line with national expectations. All students on the non-examination general studies course, which has a strong philosophical and ethical base, are able to understand complex issues and to respond with their own opinions, doubts and questions.
9. Standards in ICT are satisfactory overall. Last year, the examination results for the A-level in computer studies were well below the national average but were a slight improvement on the results in the previous year. On the new AS course four out of ten students obtained passes at the higher grades in 2001, a result which is above the national average. Standards of work in design and technology are average although at A-level in product design the proportion of students gaining the higher A-B grades over the period 1999-2001 was well below average, with not all students passing the subject in 2001. In the same period, the proportion of students entered for food technology and



gaining the higher grades A-B varied from above to well below average with few students passing the subject in 2001. Standards in business education are good. In 2001, results in the GNVQ course at intermediate level were above the national average. Some of the work of the most able students is of a very high standard.

10. Standards in French are above average in both Year 12 and Year 13. Although standards and achievement are variable, some students attain very well and have the capacity to attain high grades.
11. In drama, students achieve well in the AS level and A-level examinations. Standards at A level in art and design are above average, and work shows maturity and sensitivity. Students' levels of musical ability are also above average. Familiar with several styles of music, they perform to a high standard although they are not as confident with the more theoretical aspects of the examination syllabus. Standards in sociology are above average. Although the four students studying physical education in Year 13 succeeded in gaining good grades at A/S level last year, they studied the subject off-site. In addition to the four students who are now taking A2 in the school and producing work of a high standard, students following the AS course are also achieving well.

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

12. Students at Chancellor's display very positive attitudes to learning. They come to school on time, move purposefully between lessons and show enthusiasm in class. They contribute vigorously to class discussions and respond eagerly to questions. Behaviour is very good in lessons, whilst around the school students are orderly, polite and helpful to adults and considerate of each other. As well as showing respect to each other, the majority of students respect property and equipment. No graffiti and little litter were seen throughout the inspection. Since the previous inspection, the number of permanent exclusions has been reduced and there have been none in the past year and a half. However, fixed term exclusions, split evenly between 11 - 14 and 15 - 16 year-olds, have risen, to a level inconsistent with the very high standards of behaviour seen during the inspection. No incidents of bullying, racism or other oppressive behaviour were noticed and students did not consider any of these to be a concern. Students with special educational needs also show good attitudes and behaviour. Very good relationships exist between staff and students and among students and this contributes strongly to students' learning.
13. Students respond well when opportunities are given for them to take responsibility and to show initiative. They themselves value such opportunities, especially in practical subjects.
14. Overall, they are given good scope to undertake independent study, to exercise choice and to take responsibility for their own actions. Relationships between students and staff are very good and this sets a good tone for learning and personal development. Attendance is very good, being considerably above the national average. Punctuality, to school and to lessons, is good. These are major factors in the success that students enjoy because they make the most of the time available.

### **Sixth form**

15. Attitudes and behaviour are similarly very good in the Sixth Form, except that there have been no exclusions at all in the past year and a half. Extremely good relationships exist between staff and students. There is evidence of a slightly uneasy social relationship between students in Years 12 and 13. Students show considerable

aptitude for independent learning and take on much responsibility through School Council, as assistant librarians, as prefects, as hosts at parent evenings and as 'buddies' working with and mentoring eleven to twelve-year-olds. They carry out these roles and responsibilities very effectively. Although instances were observed of individual students confidently searching for information, such as course provision at university level, the limited use of ICT and the absence of a key skills programme means that students do not have great scope for developing the skills for lifelong learning,

## **HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?**

It was not possible to observe Year 11 lessons because students were on examination practice and observations of Year 13 lessons were restricted because some students were taking modular tests.

16. The quality of teaching is good or better in virtually three out of every four lessons, from Year 7 through to Year 10 although it is less good in Year 8. It has four strengths. Firstly, teachers have expert knowledge of their subjects. This enables students to learn confidently on a wide canvas, whether they are building up knowledge and understanding of the classical background to English, discussing the need for data protection in ICT, maintaining complex rhythmical passages in a performance of Indonesian music, or exploring their personal experience of temptation in religious education. Secondly, teachers have the skill to communicate enthusiasm and interest in their subjects which engages students' attention and helps them learn effectively. Thirdly, they manage time well so lessons proceed at a fast pace, from the initial identification of clear learning objectives through the introduction of good learning activities and leading to an effective culmination of what has been learned. Little time has to be wasted on admonishing students because their behaviour is so good. Finally, in such lessons the majority of students are faced with good levels of challenge.
17. In the most successful lessons, homework is also well used to reinforce learning or to set up new lines of thinking. Progress in lessons is well supported by the regular marking of students' work, often with encouraging comments, together with guidance to students on how they might improve their standard. This positive use of assessment is not found in all subjects and some students are not sure of their levels of achievement or what they have to do to improve them.
18. The quality of teaching in English and mathematics is good, and in science, although there are some well taught lessons, it is satisfactory overall. The development of both literacy and numeracy is well taught by learning support teachers and learning support assistants. In lessons in other subjects attention to students' literacy needs in particular, is more random, for instance some teachers diligently mark spelling errors, but this is not consistent practice in all subjects.
19. Lessons where teaching is satisfactory are properly planned, learning is well organised and objectives made clear but levels of challenge are insufficient to motivate students to ensure they give of their very best. In such lessons the majority of students mark time. In a few lessons teaching is unsatisfactory when objectives are not clear and when the pace of the lesson is too slow and students do not learn enough.
20. At Key Stage 3, teaching is helping students to develop powers of concentration, to improve skills of observation, especially in lessons in art and science, to understand more about the use of their own language and to learn the basics of at least one other language. They are acquiring the skills of computing although opportunities for them to use these skills to learning in other subjects is limited. In drama, students are learning about the part that movement can play in dramatic representation and in design and

technology they are understanding the design process and acquiring the necessary skills to help them make a wide range of artefacts. In religious education, students are being helped to learn more about a wide range of faiths. They are learning more about creative processes in art and music and about fitness in physical education. These skills are being effectively consolidated at Key Stage 4.

21. Since the last inspection, the school has introduced a systematic programme to improve the quality of teaching. This has resulted in the observation of many lessons and feedback to teachers on the strengths of their work and the identification of areas for further development. Regular meetings between members of the senior management team and heads of department often centre on the quality of learning. The school development plan has also highlighted improvements to the learning process throughout the school as one of its priorities. This focus has resulted in considerable improvements to the quality of teaching in the school so that it is now good or better in virtually three-quarters of all lessons with considerably less unsatisfactory teaching.

### **Sixth Form**

22. Teaching in the Sixth Form is very good. The main strength is subject knowledge. Teachers also have great enthusiasm for their specialisms and a keen desire to communicate this to students. In their use of methodology they strike a good balance between transmitting knowledge, often at a high level, and providing scope for students to develop independent study habits so that they can research their own information and develop their own ideas.

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

23. The breadth of the curriculum is satisfactory. At Key Stage 3 the full range of National Curriculum subjects is enriched by a drama course and lessons in PSHE. Virtually all students have access to French in Year 7 and to both French and German in Years 8 and 9. Appropriate provision is also made for lessons in religious education so that the requirements of the local Agreed Syllabus can be met. Provision for field work in geography and history is good at both key stages. Statutory requirements are met in design and technology although weaknesses occur in the delivery of the programmes of study for Years 7-9. ICT is used in a number of subjects to add further breadth to learning, a good illustration being the word-processed civil war leaflets designed by a Year 8 history class. However, there are factors which prevent the use of ICT from being fully effective in all subjects. The lack of computers in science means that students are not provided with the basic access to be sure that all have sufficient opportunity to apply their capability as required by the National Curriculum. Consequently, progress in the application of ICT skills is unsatisfactory. The use of ICT in design and technology, history, physical education and modern foreign languages is similarly limited.
24. At Key Stage 4, students are offered an appropriate range of subjects for further study as well as the subjects of English, mathematics and science. The course in business studies introduced at Key Stage 4 not only extends the range of the curriculum but provides the basis for further progression in the Sixth Form. It has a strong and effective vocational bias, seen to very good effect in a Year 10 lesson when students were developing a questionnaire on computers to seek information about people's shopping habits and preferences for either mobile phones or holidays. There are no further vocational courses, and the work-related aspect of curriculum provision is limited at this key stage. Careers guidance is satisfactory and is supported by work

experience for all students in Year 10. The time allocated to religious education in Year 11 is insufficient and means that the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus cannot be met.

25. For the most part, there is a satisfactory degree of balance in the curriculum. At Key Stage 3, all subjects are taught for appropriate amounts of time. The limited amount of time for teaching religious education at Key Stage 4 means that the subject is not playing a large enough part in students' learning. The vocational aspects of learning are also limited which means that students' knowledge and understanding of the world of work are largely limited to their work experience.
26. There is some unevenness in the way in which departments interpret the curriculum. In English there is considerable breadth and scope with a strong emphasis on the development of literacy, but in art lessons there is more limited emphasis on the systematic planned development of students' knowledge and understanding.
27. The school is addressing literacy issues well. Placing strong emphasis on ensuring that all students have full access to the whole curriculum, it works effectively to ensure that no-one is disadvantaged because of their weak literacy skills. Students' learning needs are identified effectively at an early stage, helped by some good liaison work with the primary schools. Students are then either withdrawn from classes for extra support work on their learning needs or are supported in class. Both approaches work well because the school identifies the needs accurately and provides strong support to meet them. Wider literacy issues are also being addressed effectively in the curriculum largely through the reinforcement of key words, and other strategies for helping students to gain access to learning although teachers' approach to the marking of errors in students' written work is not consistent. Teachers have been greatly helped by the school's own staff development in this area which has produced some excellent literacy resources. These are being put to good use by teachers and students alike. Work on numeracy is also developing well but this initiative has some way to go before it is fully established as a successful strategy in the school. In particular, the use in lessons of the plenary session to summarise learning has still to be developed. Students who are learning English as an additional language are making satisfactory progress but this could be strengthened if the curriculum took more account of their very diverse needs. Extension work for higher-attainers has still to be developed.
28. The curriculum is further enhanced by the provision of extra-curricular activities. Ambitious drama and musical productions provide great scope for all students to develop and present their skills and to share in the strong social atmosphere that they generate. In music the level of extra-curricular activity has increased since the last inspection and now nearly 150 pupils take part in instrumental and vocal tuition in school. Activities are more limited on the modern foreign languages front and little is done to improve the further understanding of aspects of European culture. There is a wide range of team and sporting events within the school and in competition with other schools. Other extra-curricular activities include chess and computer clubs and the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme. There are numerous visits to theatres, museums, art galleries and residential field centres.
29. The curriculum offers some minor restraints which affect access to some subjects. Modern languages and design technology are, as the school states, set against one another so that a few pupils are disapplied. However, in practice, this means that there is some lack of flexibility. One Year 10 student interviewed said that she is taking two languages and cannot take textiles as she wishes.

30. The school's provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is good overall. The ethos of the school is characterised by very good relationships between students, and between students and staff. This ethos is a key factor in the success of the school. It creates a learning environment in which all students can flourish, respect others and be respected. It enables many of the aims of the school to be fulfilled, in particular, the provision of a 'caring and harmonious school'.
31. The school has made some efforts to improve planning for students' spiritual development since the last inspection. It has identified termly assembly themes and provided support material for staff. Principles for assembly are clearly set out and include giving opportunity for prayer or reflection. It has implemented a programme which, for the current Year 7 students, includes some follow-up to assembly in tutor time. The assemblies observed during the inspection included students' own presentations and there was recognition of achievement in some. However, opportunities were lost to reinforce the message on the theme of creation and in none of the assemblies seen during the inspection week was there any attempt to include reflection. Assemblies were good community occasions but did not constitute an act of collective worship. Despite recent developments, the school is still not meeting the statutory requirement to hold a daily act of collective worship.
32. Some subjects make a contribution to the spiritual development of students in their curriculum. This is particularly true in religious education, English, drama and music. The visit to the battlefields of the First World War inspired some very reflective written expressions of feelings, emotions and questioning from students. Generally, across the curriculum there is insufficient planning for the spiritual dimension. This is a result of there being no shared understanding or policy relating to this aspect of students' development. This was also the case at the last inspection.
33. The moral development of students is good. They can distinguish right from wrong and have a high degree of self-discipline. They treat others with respect. The school provides a framework for this development through its policies and procedures and from the example set by staff in their dealings with students on a class and a one-to-one basis. The students support charitable causes very generously. Within the curriculum, there are some opportunities for students to consider ethical issues. For example, in the Sixth Form, lessons in ICT require students to investigate the use and misuse of computers. In religious education, Year 10 students consider the moral principles underpinning punishment, including the death penalty, and in Year 7 personal, social and health education lessons, students reflect on their responses to environmental issues.
34. The harmonious nature of school life is an indication of the good social development of students. Students are co-operative and they work successfully together, for example in physical education, where team, paired and group work are essential components of the lessons. The Sixth Form students take on significant responsibilities within school, both in a supervisory and social capacity and in the 'buddy' system established to support new entrants to the school. Form and sports captain roles give opportunities for students to become more involved in the life of the school.
35. The personal, social and health programme has a clear structure and is taught by a team of experienced teachers. It is well resourced and the teaching was very good in the lessons observed. The sex education policy is good and students spoke highly of the help and information they had been given. There are good links with external agencies, such as the police, the British Heart Foundation, the child support agency as well as the school nurse. Particularly good features of the programme include the visit of a drama group to complement the sex education programme and the 'insight into

industry' role-play activity day for Year 9. Planning for drugs education is sound and includes the Leah Betts video. The extent and range of the drugs programme are not as varied as sex education but the school has a new policy to build the programme further. The co-ordination of the programme is managed by a member of the senior management team and there are annual evaluations of the programme. In practice, the quality of delivery of the programme is not monitored rigorously. An overview is published but teachers are only aware of their part of the programme and schemes of work exist only if individual teachers prepare them.

36. The cultural development of students is good overall and very good in some respects. Extra-curricular activities are well supported and a strength of the school. Students have very good opportunities to increase their cultural awareness. The school helps students appreciate cultural diversity through assembly themes, religious education, music and English, but needs to promote this aspect of the curriculum more actively.

### **Sixth Form**

37. The Sixth Form curriculum is satisfactory. Its major strength is the range and number of courses available for students to study at AS and A-level. There is good progression from the Key Stage 4 to the Sixth Form in this respect. For instance, a good range of courses in the area of the arts gives scope to students who wish to study the disciplines of art, drama and music. The curriculum is further enhanced by the wide-ranging general studies course. The use of ICT is limited. No key skills programme is offered. The scope for vocational study is limited but all Year 12 students undertake work experience and some are involved with the Young Enterprise Companies in conjunction with experienced managers from local industries. The curriculum is further enhanced by provision for physical education and a satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities.

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

38. Arrangements for the health and safety of students, and for their welfare, are very effective. Several instances were seen of administrative staff caring very sensitively for students who were ill. The school still has not provided a medical room, a point noted in the previous inspection report, but it has plans to do so. Health and safety was a major issue at the time of the previous inspection but these concerns have been resolved. Child protection arrangements are satisfactory.
39. The induction of new students is a particular strength of the school. Everything is done to ensure that new students settle quickly and happily to their new environment. The governing body's staff and pupil development committee takes an active interest in students' personal development and works in harness with the school to promote a high standard of care.
40. The school has very good systems and practices for monitoring and promoting good attendance and behaviour and for the avoidance of oppressive behaviour. The most effective of these are the examples set by staff and their very good classroom management. Assessment practices have improved considerably since the previous inspection, when assessment was identified as a key issue. There is now considerable data generated on student attainment and predicted future performance and a common assessment policy has been developed. The monitoring of individual performance, the provision of appropriate support and guidance, including marking, and the use of assessment data to enhance lesson planning, are all primarily the responsibility of subject departments and their quality, whilst satisfactory overall, varies between subjects. Monitoring is often regular but not continuous. The school is aware that further improvements can be made to the assessment system. Support and guidance

for students with special educational needs is good and enables them to make good progress.

41. Procedures for supporting students' personal development are good. There are effective routines, which involve parents at an appropriate stage, to ensure that concerns are addressed quickly. External agencies, such as the Education Welfare Service and an outreach service provide added support if necessary. These agencies contribute substantially to ensuring a high degree of educational inclusion prevails at Chancellor's. Support for personal problems is readily available from the pastoral staff, as well as by a school nurse, who offers a drop-in counselling service.

### **Sixth Form**

42. Staff work hard to provide an environment wherein students want to come to school and learn and in this aim they are very successful. The exceptionally high attendance level and the remarkably low number of students who do not complete their Sixth Form courses, bear testimony to this success.
43. Procedures for the formal assessment and monitoring of academic progress work well and a good level of information is available to students. Within this system, the diagnosis of individual learning needs is good and, as with the main school, the level of on-going monitoring, support and advice is satisfactory.
44. Students felt that careers guidance was less effective than they would like, but inspectors found that the majority of students in Year 12 were shortly due to receive an interview, and that students would have had a careers interview in Year 11 as well as an interview on entry to the Sixth Form. In view of this, the overall provision is satisfactory but it is clear that students in both Year 12 and Year 13 are expecting more by way of ongoing guidance in terms of career opportunities.

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

45. Parents are very supportive of the school, and there is a good and effective partnership. The opinions expressed by parents were very largely positive and inspectors agree with these views. Links are good; parents are involved as appropriate where concerns exist and they also receive letters commending students for particularly good performance or effort. There are three formal points of contact each year and the school is open to parental questions or concerns. The student planners are an effective additional means of communication and are regularly signed by parents, which encourages teachers to make comments which keep parents well informed.
46. Other general information is very good, in particular the annual progress reports, which were an issue at the time of the previous inspection. These are now greatly improved and provide very comprehensive data on performance measured against national standards and target grades for the future. Within this very good picture, there is one area needing attention. Sometimes teachers make a good diagnosis of areas needing improvement and identify what needs to be done without helpful advice as to how to accomplish the required improvement or specific targets against which to measure the improvement. The school has a Report Working Party which is continually seeking ways to improve reports still further.
47. The impact upon the school of parents' involvement is satisfactory and they contribute well to its success. This is especially true of the school's Parent Association, which annually raises considerable funds for the school's use.

## HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

48. The school has a set of appropriate aims which are well set out in the school prospectus and the staff handbook. The plans and proposals for meeting the aims are found in the school's clear and comprehensive school development plan and are underpinned by the pledges in its charter. The school has had considerable success in meeting its aims, especially in terms of fostering academic success and in creating a caring and harmonious community but has some way to go before it can be said to be developing the full intellectual potential of each pupil and the spiritual understanding of its students. Nonetheless, the aims are relevant and challenging. The headteacher provides good leadership as do all members of staff in senior positions in the school. They have earned the respect of students and parents alike. The school is harmonious and there is a strong sense of people working together for the good of the whole community.
49. The school is well managed. The responsibilities of the headteacher and senior management team are clear. Each member has a set of duties and carries them out diligently whilst working very effectively as a team for the good of the school. Heads of school, heads of year and heads of department are also clear as to their roles and responsibilities and exercise them well showing considerable industry and capability. The school has a satisfactory equal opportunities policy which aims to raise students' awareness of an increasingly diverse society but in the school as a whole there is only limited evidence of the raising of awareness of the issues involved in living in modern multi-cultural Britain today. There is no policy for gifted and talented students. Some subjects offer the scope for gifted and talented students to develop in line with their abilities but this is an undeveloped area of the school.
50. The school development plan focuses appropriately on key priorities, particularly the need to raise students' academic achievement still further. It embraces the whole school. Responsibilities of personnel and cost implications are both clear. The plan includes success criteria but some of these are generalised and would benefit from being more detailed. In turn this would help the monitoring process have a stronger focus. This especially applies to the departmental aspects of the plan. The school's approach to the development of literacy has been very successful. Not a major need in this school, literacy development has benefited from the strong emphasis on students' individual needs, matching them with effective support and providing good professional development for teachers with the production of very useful resource booklets for teacher and students alike to use. Numeracy development in the form of the *Catch up* strategy is also being well managed.
51. The school has taken some important strides towards effective self-evaluation through its positive approach to performance management. All teaching staff have been involved and it has led to a new emphasis being placed on the progress made by students as well as the leadership and management needed to promote it, but it has been especially effective in identifying and then meeting the professional needs of teachers. Newly qualified teachers are well supported. All staff new to the school have an effective programme of induction. The monitoring of teaching is consistent and fair and is proving effective in keeping all staff aware of their strengths and areas for further development. Staff are being provided with useful data about students' predicted grades and the progress they are expected to make. This is proving helpful in providing guidance to teachers as to how their students should perform but is not in itself a strong mechanism for ensuring that the school has a powerful drive to raise standards.



52. The governing body provides good support for the school. It has a good understanding of its strengths and areas for development. It has a thorough working knowledge of recent developments, such as performance management, and their importance in the process of self-evaluation. It has a clear strategic vision for the school and the will to help it achieve further success. It exercises responsibility in financial matters and is prudent without being unambitious. The governing body has done well to help the school improve aspects of accommodation and in particular to create new facilities such as those for performing arts which are being put to such good use. Aware of the importance of training and keeping up to date, the members of the governing body have a wide range of skills and experience and are dedicated to putting them to good use for the school to which they are fully committed. There are still some statutory duties that need attending to.
53. Learning support for students with special educational needs is well led and managed. Strong leadership ensures that it plays a major and respected part in the life of the school. Driven by the firm principle that all students need access to all that the school offers, it identifies students' learning needs clearly and early. It then matches resources to needs efficiently. Whilst there is no doubting its overall success in helping students to make good progress, the learning support department is not monitoring the provision for students in class when they do not get extra support. It needs to do this, because it is at this point that the needs of student are not always well served. Given the diverse needs of students it would also be helpful to the department if it was able to track students' progress over time so that it could show the extent of the overall progress it makes in meeting students' needs.
54. The school is aware that it has a significant number of students for whom English is an additional language. For the most part these students were seen to be making satisfactory progress but the school is not closely monitoring this. The school needs to show that adequate provision is being made to ensure that these students' diverse needs are fully met and that their progress over time is no less than that of other students.
55. There is a very good induction programme for newly qualified teachers and other teaching staff new to the school. The school has received *Investor in People* accreditation with a good assessment. The requirements of this award ensure that all staff receive appropriate training and development. The level of qualified teaching staff is satisfactory but some departments, such as design and technology and ICT, suffer from shortages of appropriate technical support staff.
56. Accommodation has improved significantly since the previous inspection. In particular the new performing arts area and the new gymnasium that were opened in 1999 are making a significant difference in the provision for drama, dance, music and physical education. A library and class adaptation programme were also successfully completed the following year. The school recognises that there are several areas still in need of improvement and renovation. In particular, accommodation for design technology is cramped and insufficient. Teachers have to teach outside specialist areas, carrying equipment with them. The art rooms are poorly maintained and are in need of redecoration. An appropriate maintenance and minor works programme, for the current financial year and beyond, has been produced to tackle some of these deficiencies.
57. The library is a very good and well-used learning resource centre with a valuable range of fiction and non-fiction books as well as computers, which are used well for research and word processing. It is a hive of industry in the lunch-time with students waiting to use it. The school library is a good resource for developing and enhancing students'

skills in literacy. English lessons for students in Years 7, 8 and 9 are allocated weekly. Induction programmes introduce students to the Dewey classification system. This is reinforced by the Student Librarian Scheme which provides opportunities for students in all year groups to have 'hands on' experience at making maximum use of library facilities. The library is well stocked with word processors which provide opportunities to develop study skills, as the librarians assist students in on-line searches for information when researching topics. Students make good progress using the interactive learning programmes available on the CD-ROM '*Accelerated Reader*'. These encourage students to read selected books and then compete in the quizzes on the texts read. Every year students are invited to take part in *Readathon* to raise money for charity, and their interest in literature is encouraged further by the visits of well known authors.

58. Whilst computer resources are good for discrete ICT teaching, students in the main school have too limited provision and access to computers when studying National Curriculum subjects. Some progress has been made in improving resources for those areas identified in the last report. Religious education, however, still lacks text books suitable for the full ability range. The design and technology department has very limited ICT provision and as a result this subject is well behind in delivering CAD/CAM as part of its programmes of study. Science lacks ICT provision as well as essential resources such as ray boxes and bunsen burners.
59. The lack of adequate computer facilities is restricting the use of ICT in most subjects. The three computer rooms are almost fully booked by specialist lessons in ICT and business studies and percentage utilisation is well above 90%. This has two consequences. Firstly, very few applications of ICT can take place across the curriculum, which means that many subjects are not meeting their statutory requirements to use ICT. Secondly, the only way some classes can use computer rooms is by moving lessons in ICT out into other classrooms, a practice that is not always advisable for ICT courses.
60. The school's arrangements for dealing with finance are satisfactory. Auditors' recommendation for improvement are few and when made are followed up. Proper records are maintained and appropriate procedures are in place. Grants are used for their intended purpose but there is no detailed follow-up of earmarked expenditure to ensure that the school is getting value for money from investments. There is an appropriate understanding of the principles of 'best value' in the school. Given that the attainment of students on entry is above average and that most of them sustain this level and that the quality of the teaching is good, but that expenditure on students is higher than for most similar schools, the school is giving satisfactory value for money.
61. Leadership and management have been strengthened since the last inspection. In particular, academic standards are higher and in 2001 the school enjoyed its best test and GCSE results in its history. Communications in the school are now good, and most of the other key issues have been effectively dealt with. The school has the will and the capability to improve further.

## **Sixth Form**

62. Leadership is good because there is a well-articulated vision of future development, supported by a clear sighted way in which priorities are to be addressed. As the school expects the Sixth Form to advance the thinking of the overall school development plan there is no separate Post-16 development plan. However, the significance of this rapidly growing area of the school would warrant one to ensure that the priorities are

known by all interested parties, including the students, and that progress towards meeting them is carefully monitored.

63. The Sixth Form is well managed. Routines are firmly established and the principles for ensuring that the Sixth Form functions as a community are supported by effective practices. Although recruitment to courses is sometimes disappointing, for instance the 2001 mathematics group recruited few girls and yet mathematics is one of the most successful subjects in the school, the school does very well to retain such a high percentage of students on its courses. In view of the disappointing results in 2001, the present monitoring arrangements need strengthening to ensure that close ongoing attention is paid to the progress of students on all courses.
64. A good balance is struck between supporting students and nurturing situations which provide a growing sense of independence. The ethos of the Sixth Form is very much one that grows from the main school and is based on healthy relationships. A strong feature is the way in which Sixth Form students are giving back to the school service in the form of support to younger students, as in the paired reading initiative in Year 7. The governing body takes a close interest in ensuring that the Sixth Form is financially self-supporting. Given this fact, and that the school has an entry policy to the Sixth Form which is intended to encourage a broad range of students to study further, that retention rates are high, and that it normally meets with a measure of success in helping students to achieve at mostly appropriate levels and to mature as young adults, the Sixth Form is cost effective.
65. The library provision for the Sixth Form is good, with up-to-date texts suitable for all courses. A good range of books is provided supplying information about a selection of career options. Students have access to computers in the library and their study base but not in specialist subject areas. Whilst 'control' is experienced through computer software within discrete ICT in the main school, students taking AS and A-level technology do not have access to a vinyl cutter, lathe or milling machine which can operated by computer, thus limiting their achievement and progress.

#### **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

66. In order to help the school to improve further, the headteacher, staff and governing body now need to ensure that:
  - (1) There is sufficient challenge in the learning of all students to help them achieve at the highest possible levels, especially at Key Stage 4.  
(Paragraphs 1, 2, 4, 5, 69, 70, 73, 95, 96, 98, 142)
  - (2) Assessment is effectively used to identify the attainment of students and to provide clear feed-back on what they have to do to reach higher levels of achievement.  
(Paragraphs 40, 75, 78, 97, 105, 123, 124, 138, 142, 170)
  - (3) A powerful strategy is devised to motivate students to achieve at the highest levels throughout the school, supported by a rigorous programme of monitoring to track their progress.  
(Paragraphs 1, 5, 40, 46, 51)

- (4) The curriculum is strengthened by:
- the inclusion of more ICT in the learning of all subjects;  
(Paragraphs 93, 98, 116, 133, 139, 169)
  - more emphasis on the spiritual aspects of experience;  
(Paragraphs 31, 32, 171)
  - developing more awareness of cultural diversity;  
(Paragraphs 36 and 171)
  - fulfilling the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus for religious education at Key Stage 4;  
(Paragraph 171)
  - holding a daily act of collective worship.  
(Paragraph 31)

### **Sixth Form**

- (1) The overall attainment of students on A/S and A-level courses is raised and maintained at the highest possible level through:
- recruiting sufficient numbers of students, both boys and girls, who have the capability to succeed at these levels;  
(Paragraphs 6, 7)
  - closer monitoring of each student's progress.  
(Paragraphs 6, 43, 44)
- (2) All students have greater access to ICT to develop their learning.  
(Paragraphs 37, 189, 194, 201, 211, 216)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 10	123
	Sixth form	49
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		76

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
<b>Years 7 – 10</b>							
Number	5	24	62	29	3	0	0
Percentage	4	20	50	24	2	0	0
<b>Sixth form</b>							
Number	2	14	25	8	0	0	0
Percentage	4	29	52	15	0	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	861	146
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	51	

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Y7– Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	21	
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	112	

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	45

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	7
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	17

## Attendance

### Authorised absence

	%
School data	93.4
National comparative data	90.9

### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.6
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 pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	73	99	172

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	60	62	59
	Girls	96	88	86
	Total	156	150	145
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	91 (85)	88 (84)	85 (75)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	56 (36)	68 (60)	50 (45)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	60	66	54
	Girls	93	94	83
	Total	153	160	137
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	89 (89)	95 (82)	80 (80)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	44 (40)	64 (58)	40 (45)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	87	90	177

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	51	81	85
	Girls	59	86	91
	Total	110	167	176
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	62 (58)	94 (97)	99 (98)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	42.2 (42)
	National	39.9 (38.4)

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

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	29	13	42

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	12.9	17.8	14.7	1.3	4.0	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.

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	13
	National	[ ]

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	3
Black – African heritage	4
Black – other	2
Indian	11
Pakistani	3
Bangladeshi	2
Chinese	6
White	951
Any other minority ethnic group	1

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

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	25	3
Other minority ethnic groups		

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

### ***Teachers and classes***

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	61.44
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	14.02

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

Total number of education support staff	22
Total aggregate hours worked per week	363

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

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	74.0
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	26.59
Key Stage 4	21.08

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2000-2001
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	£
Total income	2997441
Total expenditure	2996494
Expenditure per pupil	2725
Balance brought forward from previous year	83843
Balance carried forward to next year	84790

### ***Recruitment of teachers***

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	8.2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	12.4

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	1.4

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*



## **Results of the survey of parents and carers**

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	1006
Number of questionnaires returned	130

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	43	51	5	0	1
My child is making good progress in school.	40	55	4	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	36	61	2	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	24	60	13	2	1
The teaching is good.	31	65	4	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	24	60	13	2	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	66	28	4	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	63	36	1	1	0
The school works closely with parents.	40	47	11	1	1
The school is well led and managed.	48	51	0	0	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	45	52	0	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	40	57	3	0	1

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

### **ENGLISH**

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

#### **Strengths**

- Results in National Curriculum tests are well above average.
- Students learn well as a result of good teaching.
- Teachers establish good relationships which encourages students' learning.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- More challenge needed for higher attaining students.
- More tasks to match the needs of lower attaining students so that they achieve more.

68. Standards in English are well above average at the end of Year 9 and better than those achieved by students in similar schools. Students' results in the National Curriculum tests in 2001 show an improvement on the 2000 test results. Standards are in line with those achieved by the same group of students in mathematics and are better than results in science. Trends over time show that students' performance in English at the end of Key Stage 3 is improving at a better rate than the national trend with a sharp rise from 2000 to 2001.

69. All students entered for English language in the GCSE examination achieved grades in 2001. About three-fifths achieved grades A\*-C which is slightly above national averages and the results were also above average when compared with those of similar schools. Trends over time indicate that students are maintaining a steady rate of progress but results need to be better by the end of Year 11, given the good levels of students' attainment on entry to the school in Year 7 and their results at the end of Key Stage 3. Results in English literature were in line with national averages or just slightly below but similar to results in 2000. Although girls achieve higher results than boys in English, the performance of boys is improving.

70. Standards seen during the inspection confirmed that standards are above average. Students with special educational needs are supported well by teachers and by teaching assistants and as a result they make good progress overall. Students for whom English is an additional language make satisfactory progress. Boys contribute well to discussions, expressing their ideas and opinions freely on the texts they are studying, but are not always as skilful as girls at carrying their ideas through to competent pieces of writing in order to consolidate their learning.

71. The attainment of most students on entry is above national expectations. They progress steadily during Years 7 and 8 to achieve much higher results than those expected nationally for their age group by the end of Year 9. Students in Years 7 and 8 improve their skills in reading and writing, and practise research skills for accessing and recording facts and information. Students use dictionaries confidently to improve spelling, their handwriting is neat and legible, punctuation accurate and written work is well presented. Students write effectively to persuade, inform and to explain. They study a range of different texts to develop their understanding of style, which helps their writing to develop. Some good examples of writing were observed in an ICT lesson in

Year 9 when students reviewed poems that struck an emotional chord, leading them to explain the fundamental issues explored by the poets.

72. Students in Years 7 and 8 listen well and comment readily on the topics they are studying, and are eager to share what they know. However, they do not have the confidence to take part in sustained discussions requiring them to structure an argument in support of their opinions. Students in Year 9 do better as they prepare more formal speeches on a range of topics as various as 'Constraints on teenagers' to 'Universal issues of freedom from oppression'. In a Year 9 lesson students practised the skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking as they reflected on the way that language is used in a speech celebrating the endeavours of the crew of the Challenger Seven Space Shuttle. Students were able to interpret the complex language of the text to understand that in their endeavours these men 'Slipped the surly bonds of earth to touch the face of God'.
73. During Years 7 and 8 the majority of students make good progress but some are marking time and others need to catch up, because they entered Year 7 with standards lower than those expected nationally. The English department monitors all students regularly and rigorously and provides useful units of work for those under-achieving, but higher attaining students are not always challenged by the work. Students in GCSE examinations achieve standards above those expected nationally and were above average in comparison with the achievements of students in similar schools. Their writing grows in maturity. For example, scripts for prepared speeches incorporate rhetorical questions into the structure showing an awareness of the need to capture the attention of their audiences. Students explore a range of poetry, plays, novels and non-fiction writing. Standards reached by higher attaining students indicate very good use of language, fluently written to express points of view coherently. Average attainers write competently responding with empathy to texts studied. Lower attaining students have difficulty in sustaining the flow of writing but their work shows appreciation of literary topics, although their written response is stilted. Lower attainers research their topics but cannot always express their understanding coherently in a sustained piece of writing.
74. In all lessons students work together well, are eager to learn, set about tasks willingly and, without exception, were courteous to their teachers and respectful of each others' views and opinions. As a result, students at all levels of attainment enjoyed a sense of fulfilment in their achievements.
75. Overall, teaching is good and most students learn well, and progress according to their prior attainment. Teachers praise generously and correct gently. Good relationships are established which encourage students to make their best efforts to achieve well. Students learn best when teachers set a lively pace, moving quickly from one learning activity to another, keeping students motivated and focused on the text they are studying. They respond perceptively when teachers' questions are searching enough to excite their curiosity or arouse their emotions and they become aware of their own learning. For example, in a Year 7 class students explored an article about the illegal smuggling of endangered species of animals. Good questioning techniques kept all the students alert as they 'teased out' the methods used to bring the animals into this country. Students analysed the persuasive language used to incite the readers to protest about the cruelty to animals and birds. Despite the serious topic the teacher made finding out 'fun' and a challenge. Students learn best when teachers' marking gives guidance on where the weaknesses lie and ways in which the work can be improved. Mostly, teachers' comments are helpful, but inconsistencies in the quality of detailed marking causes some students to get less help than others.

76. Teachers support the learning of pupils with special educational needs by drawing them into discussions and checking that they understand directions given for tasks set. The learning of students on more advanced stages of the special educational needs register is supported by teaching assistants working alongside teachers. Teachers are very sensitive to students' learning needs and plan their lessons carefully so that most students learn well. A good example was seen with a class of lower attaining students studying the opening scenes of 'Romeo and Juliet'. They were required to define the differences between 'courtly' love and 'real' love by exploring Romeo's behaviour when 'acting' in love and later his genuine love for Juliet. One boy shouted out excitedly, 'Miss, he swapped his sword for a flower'. Despite having seven students on advanced stages of SEN in the class the teacher introduced the literary term 'oxymoron' to explain how the language used reflects Romeo's confusion. Students met the challenge well because they were excited and proud to discover examples in the text quoting 'feather of lead', 'bright smoke', 'cold fire', 'sick health', 'still-waking sleep'. Learning flourished and self-esteem rose.
77. There are no clearly planned structures to support the language learning of students who speak English as an additional language but there are no learners at the early stages of language acquisition at present.
78. Overall curricular provision is good. The programmes of study reflect the demands of tasks set for tests at the end of Year 9. Older students follow courses of work geared to successful outcomes in the GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11. However, this does limit the breadth of the curriculum and the range of reading does not offer sufficient challenge to the higher attaining students. All groups of students are set targets for achievement which are reviewed regularly and students' progress is monitored. Assessment procedures provide records of students' achievements but from these it is difficult to compare the rates of progress of different groups of students in relation to each other.
79. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is sustained through the study of well-chosen literature and non-fiction material. Students are encouraged to explore the feelings and emotions of the writers and of the effects on others of the actions taken by the characters portrayed. Extra-curricular activities with booster groups and supported learning strengthen the achievement of borderline candidates in both Year 9 and Year 11, although these were not observed during the inspection. Students take an active part in annual 'Youth Speaks' competitions winning top places for several years.
80. The head of department provides clear educational direction for a team of teachers who are all committed to accelerating progress and raising standards. Good progress has been made since the last inspection but there are some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching overall. These could best be resolved by further monitoring of teachers' performance and the sharing of some of the good practice seen during this inspection.
81. The quality of students' literacy skills is good overall. Speaking, listening, reading and writing are developed well in English lessons. The school has developed its own support system for literacy across the curriculum through in-service courses for teachers and resource booklets based on the framework of the Key Stage 3 National Literacy Strategy. In practice students use their literacy skills well to enhance their learning in a variety of subjects, including design and technology, modern foreign languages, physical education, music, mathematics and geography. For example, in a Year 9 geography lesson students gave a very good presentation on oil pollution as the cause of acid rain. In religious education, students wrote about the journey of life

leading to some reflective conclusions about the effects of death on family members. Students use ICT skills to consolidate their grammar in French lessons. In other areas, students' literacy skills are satisfactory for the needs of the subject. Some good development of literacy skills was observed with a small group of students with special educational needs withdrawn from lessons for intensive work to support their learning. Standards of speaking and listening are satisfactory overall, although some subjects offer limited opportunities for developing these skills fully, and there are some missed opportunities, for example in some more teacher-directed science lessons. There are, however, many subjects where discussion and debate are encouraged. For example in design and technology lessons students discuss television programmes about food, and design their own posters advertising SMART foods. Provision is good in English lessons but standards of speaking skills are not yet good enough across all curriculum subjects. Students' skills in argument, sustained discussion and presentation of ideas, opinions and concepts are under-developed overall. However, attention to the understanding and use of technical vocabulary related to specific subjects is generally good. Writing skills are used to good effect to record information in well-structured forms for history, mathematics and for coursework supporting their studies in physical education on the GCSE examination course.

## MATHEMATICS

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

### Strengths

- Attainment at both key stages is well above the national average.
- Attitudes are very positive and behaviour is very good.
- Teaching and learning are good at both key stages.
- Teachers have a commitment to high achievement for all students.

### Areas for improvement

- The use of plenary sessions as part of the National Numeracy Strategy is patchy.
- ICT is not used enough.
- The department lacks a common system for assessing students' work.

83. Attainment on entry is well above the national average. Students make good progress in the school because the quality of teaching is good. By the end of Year 11 students continue to work at levels well above the national average. Those with special educational needs make good headway with all students achieving at least grade F in the 2001 GCSE examinations.

84. In 2001, attainment in national tests at the end of Year 9 was well above the national average and also much better than that of students in similar schools. Results have improved every year since 1997. Students achieve better results in mathematics than in English or science. The percentage of students achieving grades A\*-C in 2001 was well above the national average. Results are improving year on year, and in 2001 all students achieved a grade. Results were significantly better than for most other subjects. These very good results are the consequence of teachers having high expectations of all students.

85. Overall attainment by the end of Year 9 is well above the national average. More able students are confident in their mathematical knowledge and understanding. They can change the subject of a formula, determine interior and exterior angles of polygons, use trigonometric functions to solve right-angled triangles and consider correlation by finding the line of 'best fit' on a scatter-graph. Middle ability students convert fractions,

decimals and percentages accurately and complete geometric constructions using ruler and compasses. They are less secure in collecting like terms in algebra. Lower ability students use written methods of calculation successfully and have sound mental skills. They understand the concept of symmetry but make errors in calculating areas of triangles.

86. By the end of Year 10, attainment is well above the national average. More able students use column vectors with aplomb to complete work on transformation geometry. They skilfully sketch graphs and complete a table of values to draw these more accurately. Middle ability students confidently make use of isometric graph paper to represent three-dimensional shapes. They determine volumes of the solids they draw. Lower ability students calculate accurately using fractions and percentages and find lines of symmetry for various shapes. In their GCSE coursework more able and middle ability Year 11 students use and apply mathematics very effectively in investigating gradients of curves. The more able students use algebraic methods elegantly to generalise their results while middle ability students are persistent in producing valid tables of results and explaining their conclusions.
87. Students' attitudes to work and their behaviour are very good in nearly all lessons. They show considerable respect for their teachers, attempt class-work tasks conscientiously and are fully involved in class discussions. Relationships between students themselves and between teachers and students are very good so that students make the most of what teachers have to offer and achieve well.
88. Teaching and learning are good at both key stages. Teachers have very secure knowledge and understanding of mathematics and are enthusiastic about it. This is transmitted to the students, enabling them, not only to make steady progress in their grasp of mathematics, but, to enjoy the subject too. Teaching of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy is well established, encouraging students to use the correct terminology and complete calculations accurately. Teachers consistently emphasise the precise meaning of key mathematical terms such as 'prime', 'random' and 'intercept', so that students begin to use them properly. For example, in a very good Year 7 *Springboard* session on perimeter the teacher made sure students remembered and understood the names and properties of various shapes. The students wrote down such word as 'parallelogram', and 'quadrilateral' and produced appropriate definitions in their own words. Teachers use a variety of effective 'starter' activities, based on the National Numeracy Strategy, to improve students' mental agility and confidence. On the other hand, the use of ICT, in the context of computers and graphic calculators, is under-developed so that students have too little opportunity to appreciate its potential.
89. Teachers plan lessons thoroughly and have high expectations of what students know, understand and can do, setting tasks appropriate to their needs so that students achieve well. Teaching methods are generally effective with particularly good involvement of students through questions and discussion. In the best lessons a skilfully organised plenary session draws together ideas and enhances students' understanding of what has taken place. For example, adroit questioning of Year 10 students elicited the main features they had learnt about straight line graphs so that, at the end of the lesson, the students themselves were able to derive the general equation  $y=mx+c$ . In some other lessons opportunities for a full plenary session are missed. Most lessons move at a brisk pace so that students are fully engaged and interested in the topic. In some other cases students spend too long on routine text book or work-sheet examples so that there is little time to review the work covered at the end of the lesson.

90. Teachers help students with special educational needs to make good progress. Support assistants are fully involved and both they and teachers are aware of individual students' needs. For example, in a very successful Year 7 lesson on probability the teacher made a point of positively involving a student with special educational needs in the class discussion thereby ensuring that the student kept pace with, and felt part of, the class as a whole. A support assistant and a sixth former were also on hand to give further individual help.
91. Teachers set homework regularly and systematically. They mark students' work conscientiously and in the best examples give detailed comments to help students make further progress. Teachers have an individual approach to grading students' work and marking could be improved by following a common procedure.
92. Students use numeracy effectively in other subjects. In science, they calculate accurately and are able to construct and interpret various graphs. In geography, students understand and use co-ordinates in map-work and construct climate graphs. Their work on population models, based on birth and death rates, is of a high standard. In design and technology, students estimate and weigh accurately, complete graphs correctly and have good spatial awareness. The department is at an early stage in producing a policy for numeracy across the curriculum but a Key Stage 3 strategy group is in place and a whole staff training session is planned soon.
93. The department is managed effectively and shares a commitment to high achievement for all students. There has been good progress overall since the previous inspection, especially in raising students' attainment in national tests and GCSE examinations. Teachers give freely of their time to provide a very good range of extra-curricular activities. There are good opportunities for gifted and talented students through the UK Mathematics Challenge competition and local master-classes. The introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy is proceeding apace with a co-ordinator appointed to oversee it. Students' work in mathematics is displayed to good effect in classrooms in the department. Resources such as an overhead projector display of a calculator keyboard and multi-link cubes to make three-dimensional shapes are available and used well by teachers. There is no provision in the department for computers or graphical calculators so that scope for students to use ICT routinely in their work in mathematics is severely limited.

## SCIENCE

94. Overall, the quality of provision in science is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- Improvements since the last inspection.
- Diversity of the curriculum for students in Years 10 and 11.
- Aspects of leadership.

### Areas for improvement

- Degree of challenge and inspiration offered to students in Years 7, 8 and 9.
- Improved standards so that they more nearly match the standards in most other subjects.
- The development of ICT.

95. Standards of attainment are above average by the end of Year 9 and by the end of Year 11 are average. The standards in science for Year 11 are less good than the overall standards in other subjects. The results for the National Curriculum tests in 2001 were

above national averages. The results for boys and girls were close, with attainment of boys just above that of girls. At the time of the previous inspection girls under-attained compared to boys. Overall results attained by the end of Year 9 have improved steadily, and are somewhat better than the rate of improvement nationally since the time of the previous inspection. Nonetheless, there is still a weakness in the achievement of students during Years 7, 8 and 9 because on entry students' Key Stage 2 results are high.

96. Results in the GCSE examination in 2001 were above national averages. Even so, the science results overall were not as strong as the overall picture for other subjects. Achievement is not as great as it should be. In Years 10 and 11 students have four very different routes to reach a GCSE qualification. A few low-attaining students are entered for both single award GCSE and Certificate of Educational Achievement. Their results are good in terms of their previous limited attainment. Most students make a choice between either single or double award GCSE. Results in single award GCSE examination in 2001 were disappointing because the proportion achieving a grade at A-C was low, although the average points of these students was just below the national average. Over time, the proportion achieving grades A-C in single award GCSE has fallen steadily. Results in double award GCSE are satisfactory. For example, the proportion of students achieving a pass at grades A-C in 2001 was above the national average. This was also the case in 2000 and 1999. Finally, about one in ten students in Years 10 and 11 take three separate triple sciences in the GCSE examination - physics, biology, and chemistry. Their results have been consistently good as is to be expected from their previous attainment levels at the end of Year 9, which were above average. For example, 98 per cent achieved grades A-C in 2001, with a majority attaining grade B.
97. Although at best the teaching is very good, in Years 7-10 it is satisfactory overall. An example of a very good lesson involved a Year 7 class where groups of students were required to define what body features an imaginary animal would need to adapt in order to survive in a prescribed environment. This challenging assignment was placed in a learning context where the teacher set tight deadlines and insisted on detailed thinking. The students used technical terms and previous knowledge very well, so building on previous learning. The level of interrogation of each group by the class, and the teacher, was probing and thoughtful. Everyone, including a group of low-attaining students, thought hard about their science in this lesson. Such levels of challenge did not characterise all the lessons, and teachers often set work which is not at a high enough level. In these situations students concentrate and take interest, work at a good pace, and make a good effort but they lack the inspiration learners feel when teaching is very good and provides the challenge they require. Other lessons were more pedestrian, or were less well planned so that the work set proved too easy for some students. Teaching in Years 7, 8 and 9 has some common strengths, even when the work is too straightforward. These are clear planning, effective management of behaviour and attitude, and the use of regular homework which is enforced and then marked. The only other significant weakness is that the quality of assessment of progress varies from unsatisfactory to good. This omission by some teachers underpins the key weakness in the lack of challenge. Teaching in Year 10 is satisfactory. The strengths mentioned for Years 7, 8 and 9 still apply. Also teachers are planning effectively to meet the needs of their narrowly defined ability sets. The work they provide meets these needs well. The weakness in Year 10 is that a significant proportion of students lack interest and concentration, and their progress is slow. For example, they guess rather than think, and remember little, even when teachers are very helpful, patient and clear. In contrast, the high-attaining students, studying triple science GCSE after school because they are keen, make substantial progress and commit themselves willingly to extra sessions.



98. Other factors have a bearing on progress. Key systems are well organised. Assessment is regular and good records are kept. Valid targets are set for students' progress. Levels of preparation are good as schemes of work and packs of resources are ready for use by teachers, although it is not completely clear which resource pack is designed to address which aspect of learning. Students' targets are not interpreted ambitiously by all teachers. Nonetheless, the standards reached by students by the end of Year 9 are higher now than they were. The stability of leadership, just being established at the time of the previous inspection, has continued with significant successes. The inconsistent quality of teaching, in Years 7 and 9, has not been fully addressed although the initial steps, such as segregation of boys and girls in separate teaching groups, have still to be evaluated. Some progress has been made improving resources but there are still weaknesses in the lack of equipment for ICT. Students are not provided with the basic access to be sure all have sufficient opportunity to apply their information and communication technology capability in science, as required by the National Curriculum and some course requirements. Consequently, progress in ICT skills is unsatisfactory, for students both in the main school and in the Sixth Form. Overall improvement since the last inspection has been good. There has been a steady improvement in standards, from well below national averages for students in Year 11, standards which are above average. Standards by Year 9 are also higher now than they were. The stability of leadership, just being established at the time of the previous inspection, has continued with significant successes.

## ART AND DESIGN

99. Overall, the quality of provision in art and design is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- The quality of individual tuition in lessons.
- Relationships within the department.
- The working atmosphere in studios.

### Areas for improvement

- The teaching of basic art skills at Key Stage 3.
- The need for benchmark grading at Key Stage 3.
- The quality of information in departmental documentation.

100. At the end of Year 9, the overall standard of work is average and in line with the National Curriculum tests results which are at the level of national expectations. Students are able to work effectively on large-scale compositions, working in pairs or groups and using mixed media, for example collage. They paint expressively. Their standard of drawing is well developed as a means of conveying ideas in their notebooks, but is less effective in terms of observation and recording. In a similar way, colour is used vividly and boldly but students' knowledge and understanding of the way in which colour functions in art and design are limited.

101. Students are introduced to art-historical material and incorporate it in their work. This is an effective way of linking creative work with complementary studies but the attempt to link art history in a cross-curricular way with the study of history in the broader school curriculum is limited. Students experience very little work using computers in art and there is little evidence of computer-aided design.

102. Progress through the stage to Year 9 is satisfactory. Students develop knowledge, skills and understanding across a range of creative activities in two and three dimensions. The curriculum is broad and includes drawing and painting, printmaking,

pattern design and stencilling. Three-dimensional work includes modelling with clay and the production of fired and glazed ceramics. In all these areas students achieve average standards. The nature of the subject provides for success at a wide range of levels, and students with special needs achieve comparatively well and make good progress. For the same reasons, talented and gifted students make good progress.

103. In Year 11, students again display work mainly at an average level. Results in GCSE examinations have been consistently near or above the national average in recent years. At this stage students show a capacity for independent working and are able to pursue projects in a self-directed way. Standards of drawing vary from student to student but many students draw with vigour, and sketchbooks contain good examples of exploratory drawings in the development of ideas. In some cases, however, drawing skills lag behind expressive ambition and limit the impact of a piece of work. As at the earlier stage, students use art history effectively as a source of ideas in projects and show a developed interest in the evaluation of art. Students use information technology in their research but a wider application of computer design is prevented by the limitation of information technology resources.
104. Achievement by the end of Year 11 is satisfactory. Students follow a GCSE course which allows for continuing experience in chosen areas from the earlier stage, and their progress is characterised by serious endeavour and commitment. Since the last inspection, attainment has remained generally the same as Year 9, and similar to Year 10. Higher-attaining students continue to make independent judgements in their learning and there is still a good working atmosphere in lessons.
105. The quality of teaching overall is satisfactory, and is sometimes good. It is invariably good in the sixth form. The strengths of the teaching include good preparation, in particular the preparation of materials, the efficient conduct of lessons, the good pace of lessons and the sensitive ongoing one-to-one tuition. Work is assessed regularly in line with whole-school policy and parents reported to in accordance with requirements. Assessment procedures from Years 7 to 9 are in need of definition on a school basis, as distinct from the general criteria set out in the National Curriculum, and benchmark grading on entry is lacking.
106. A comparative weakness in some of the teaching is the lack of clear learning objectives. This is a feature of lessons from Year 7 through to Year 9 where work is often imaginative but shows limited evidence of gains in terms of knowledge, skills and understanding. A consequence of this is the limitation of creative attainment due to lack of technique.
107. The management of the department is effective and good relationships exist between staff. The quality of display is good and acts as a stimulus to learning. Documentation, however, is in need of development. Schemes of work exist in outline but do not provide sufficient clarity in terms of overall policy. There is no clear strategy to raise attainment still higher. Policies for literacy and numeracy are also in need of further development. Accommodation is good but the maintenance of the studios is unsatisfactory as floors are not cleaned regularly and sinks are in a neglected state. These factors tend to mar the otherwise pleasant working atmosphere generated by the good behaviour of the students and the quality of the relationships established between students and teachers.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- The quality of teaching and learning.
- Very good attitudes, behaviour and relationships.
- Very good homework provision.
- Good progress from Year 7 to Year 11.

### Areas for improvement

- Specialist accommodation, resources and staffing structure.
- Provision for ICT and CAD/CAM delivery.
- Consistency of marking and literacy development.
- Provision for higher attainers and the gifted and talented.

109. Standards of work seen during the inspection were above average by the end of Year 9 and Year 11. These standards are the result of teaching that is good or better in nine out of ten lessons in Years 7-9 and teaching that is always good or better in Year 10. Students' attitudes, behaviour and relationships with teachers and with one another are very good in all year groups and form an effective basis for learning. Students make good progress in Years 7-9 and also in Year 10, in most aspects of the subject, although too few opportunities currently exist for systems and control and structures in Years 7-9 and CAD/CAM in all year groups.

110. In 2001, by the end of Year 9, students' overall level of attainment based on teachers' assessments is above average and almost all achieve suitable levels and a minority achieve more. Inspection findings confirm these results. In practical lessons in Year 9, where students prepared and baked a celebration cake or designed and made artefacts as varied as plant holders and corner shelf units, their attainment was above average. Above-average levels of knowledge and understanding were evident in an evaluation session where students judged the merits of cakes produced by different methods. One girl in this session raised issues that the teacher acknowledged would have been appropriate for a GCSE examination course. Currently, there are no opportunities planned for such gifted and talented students to progress more rapidly than their peers. The oral skills of students are above average but their standard of presentation, handwriting and spelling is more varied. Teachers aim for equality of opportunity but girls are more confident and work more efficiently in food lessons, whereas boys are braver than girls in using the forge and handling hot metal. Lower-attainers and students with special educational needs are usually well supported by the teacher. Lack of access to computers limits the standard of presentation and quality of research for those students who do not have access to computers at home.

111. By the end of Year 11, standards are generally above average. In food technology students show good awareness of changes in the way food is produced and the range of choices available, as they critically evaluate Bolognese products as part of their study of recipe modification. Computer resources such as the use of a *PowerPoint* presentation might have raised attainment further but, instead, students crowded round one small poster in order to learn about *Smart* foods. If their attitudes and behaviour had not been so good, the lack of appropriate resources would have slowed progress. In textiles, students attain very well when they work in teams to identify the quality criteria important at all stages in the design and manufacture of a costume for a production. The teacher's recent experience of industrial practices introduced a rigour

and clarity to this session that helped students achieve very well and make excellent progress. In a graphics products lesson, students' expectations were raised as they watched a video of the work of the model maker, Paul Spooner. Raised awareness led to modifications of students' own designs for a car that incorporated cams and levers. This resulted in very good achievement.

112. Over the period 1999-2001, the proportion of students achieving grades A\*-C in the GCSE examination varied from slightly below to well above average whilst those gaining grades A\*-G were close to the national average. In 2001, students' performance was above average and significantly above what they achieved in their other school subjects, with one student in food technology gaining one of the five highest marks in the country. Girls performed better than boys although in 2001 boys performed above boys' national averages. Data indicates that boys are underachieving at this level.
113. On entry, the extent of students' knowledge, understanding and skills is limited but they learn quickly because they are determined to do so and are well taught. In the best Year 7 lesson, excellent teaching resulted in excellent learning because the teacher not only understood the quality criteria aimed for but recognised the particular needs of the students. They in turn listened carefully, investing their work with high levels of thought and energy. In another Year 7 lesson, the teacher challenged the pupils well and they learned quickly how to organise themselves and to use a variety of processes in order to produce coleslaw. All students achieved well in producing an edible and visually acceptable food product in a set time but they clearly had a number of problems to resolve in handling tools properly and in managing their time better.
114. In Year 7, students regularly consult lists of technical words in their literacy books. Their spelling, however, is still inconsistent and is not helped by the variations in marking across the department. Whilst good literacy practice exists, it is not yet consistent in all lessons. Good numeracy skills, on the other hand, are developed in all aspects of technology.
115. In a Year 8 textiles lesson, all students coped well with using sewing machines because they had two teachers helping them, but higher-attaining students were not provided with greater challenge to extend their learning further, and, as a result, they got through their work more quickly and more accurately than others but achieved less than they would have done if there had been more challenge. Where a learning assistant is present, students with a statement of special educational need are well supported but, where they are not, progress slows and achievement is less than at other times. This occurred in a Year 10 food lesson where a student with poor social but well-developed literacy skills received support for only one out of three lessons.
116. The leadership and management of the subject are good. Good work has been done in tracking students and in improving the quality of reports to parents but the accommodation and resources are still as poor as they were at the time of the last inspection. Insufficient skilled technical help is available in wood and metal workshops. The department lacks access to computers and training for computer-aided design and computer-aided manufacture [CAD/CAM]. Chisels are blunt and saws unsharpened. Statutory requirements are met although some weaknesses occur in the delivery of the programmes of study for Years 7-9. Some staff members who use machinery do not have current competency certificates.

## GEOGRAPHY

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

### Strengths

- Very good results in the GCSE examination.
- Quality of teaching, especially teachers' subject knowledge.
- Relationships which promote discussion in depth and motivate students.
- Good support for literacy and numeracy underpinning the development of geographical skills.

### Areas for improvement

- ICT
- Assessment from Years 7 - 9 so that students know their levels of achievement and what they have to do to raise standards further.

118. By the end of Year 9, attainment is above average. Results in the GCSE examination in 2001 show that the number students attaining grades A\*-C was well above the national averages, although the numbers achieving grades A\* and A were below national levels. During the inspection the attainment of students in Year 9 was above average, and achievement across the first three years in the school is satisfactory, since on entry the students' attainment is also above average. By the end of Year 9, the vast majority have all the skills and subject knowledge expected of pupils at this age. Those who have special educational needs make satisfactory progress because teachers know their specific needs and meet them by helping them understand the meanings of words and clarifying tasks. No student is allowed to feel left out because of learning difficulties or levels of language competence.

119. All students know the basic ways of using geographical 'tools' such as maps and graphs. For example, students can identify from graphs which countries are well or less economically developed. By referring to climate statistics they know how to describe climates of the world. From a study of plate tectonics the majority of students understand how continents change over the period of a vast time scale, and how mountains are built. In longer pieces of work, their ready empathy with conservation is underpinned by a study of the use and abuse of fossil fuels and renewable energy in the United Kingdom and the world.

120. The attainment of students in Years 10 and 11 is well above average and many students reach the highest grades in GCSE examinations. The subject is popular and the numbers of students who choose to study geography at the age of fourteen is among the highest of the non-compulsory subjects. Achievement is very good, with improvement in standards during Years 10 and 11 starting from an already good level. Students deal with detail and concepts with confidence and are able, for instance, to identify the processes taking place in the dynamics of plate movements in the earth's crust. They use correct terminology. Course work is mature and shows that students have a wide range of skills so that they can, for instance, measure the flow of the River Lea and collate and evaluate data when studying urban land use in Hatfield. The current rate of progress matches the results that the school has gained in external examinations. There is a very good recruitment for the subject in Year 12 for A-level examinations.

121. Teachers support the development of students' literacy skills by encouraging reading aloud in class, and expecting other students to listen attentively. Note writing and

description are the main forms of writing, but some longer and more empathetic examples were seen. Teachers are rigorous in ensuring that correct vocabulary is used and understood in the physical, human and economic aspects of the subject. Numeracy is strongly represented in the form of making graphs, such as those for climate, as well as interrogating population pyramids to determine whether a country is more or less economically developed. ICT is not well developed. Although some is used, for instance, word processing in project work, there is scope for wider use, for example in presentation of statistical information using spreadsheets. Many students use their home PCs for schoolwork but this cannot be systematically planned for because access to computer suites is difficult.

122. Throughout all years, students are motivated to work systematically and hard at the work set for them by the teachers. Their participation in question and answer sessions is brisk and keen. The vast majority of work is of high quality. In Years 10 and 11 personal responsibility develops rapidly as a result of the amount of course work undertaken. In Years 7 to 9 this aspect develops too slowly. Because of the overall good behaviour little teaching time is lost in asserting control.
123. Teaching is never less than satisfactory and is often good or very good at both key stages, but is at its best in Year 10. Subject knowledge is good and this allows wide examples to be used, for instance in the presentation of volcanic eruptions. As a result, the students know a wide range of locations from Etna to Krakatoa, and describe differences in the shapes of volcanoes because of their composition. There is strong emphasis on learning basic geographical skills, such as data presentation, field sketching and interpreting photographs as evidence. Class management is rarely a problem, as good relationships and use of humour ensure that classes are helped to stay focused. Learning is made enjoyable without compromising challenge and high standards. Assessment is regular and frequent, and its use has led to rising attainment. However, no mention is made of National Curriculum attainment levels in marking, which is made up largely of ticks and encouraging comments and this does not give the students, especially in the first three years, awareness of how they might help themselves to improve in specific ways to move up to the next level. Thus, though students do attain well, they do not have the opportunity to make their own plans to progress.
124. Geography is a strong subject in the school. The department has made good progress in raising standards since the last inspection by the use of target setting and high expectations in Years 10 and 11. The use of ICT has not developed significantly and there is room for improvement in personal development through target setting especially in Years 7, 8, and 9.

## HISTORY

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

### Strengths

- The extent of teachers' knowledge in the subject and their enthusiasm for it.
- Good departmental leadership and management.
- A comprehensive programme of field work activities.
- Quality of relationships in the classroom.

### Areas for improvement

- Develop the range of teaching strategies.
- More use of ICT in learning and more opportunities for students to learn independently.
- Increase the recruitment for courses in Year 10.

126. Attainment at the end of Year 9 is above average. This is confirmed by classroom observations and the inspection of students' work over time. In the 2001 GCSE examination, attainment was above average with a significant number of students reaching the highest grades. Since the last inspection the department has achieved a remarkable consistency in the high percentage of students achieving these grades.

127. Students make satisfactory progress in their first three years in the school, including those who are gifted and those with learning difficulties. They develop a wide range of historical skills, including the interpretation of appropriate historical evidence and data, the analysis of difficult historical issues and the understanding of chronology. They are able to use a wide range of learning materials including thematic worksheets, pictorial evidence, timelines, word searches, videos, library sources and a comprehensive range of primary and secondary source material. The handling of different forms of historical data is secure and students are able to work individually and in pairs to develop their understanding of history. Students are given opportunities to handle historical material, to interpret and to use this to develop their historical understanding. In Year 7, students are able to identify the different services owed to the Lord of the Manor using 'extracts from the manorial court'. Students' historical understanding is extended in Year 8 through their study of a seventeenth century engraving of the Civil War. The learning is strongly reinforced by reference to the recent visit of Colonel Thomas and his presentation on the English Civil War, including a demonstration of cannon fire. By Year 9, students are enthusiastically and accurately researching into the complex causes that led to the rise of the Nazi party in Germany.

128. Classes in Years 7 and 8 are of mixed abilities and, although all students are able to make progress, the worksheets they use do not always offer a sufficient range of task for the full range of capability. Those with greater learning needs find many of the tasks too challenging for them to make the same progress as others in the classes. In Year 9 these students made better progress when the material, pace and support were appropriate for their needs. Overall, students make satisfactory progress in relation to their prior attainment.

129. Students continue to make at least satisfactory progress throughout Year 10 as they build upon the foundation of skills and knowledge acquired in the earlier years. By the end of Year 10, students have developed a good understanding of the development of 'Medicine through Time', including surgery in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Teachers place more emphasis on the development of extended writing skills, on students making their own notes often from visual materials and the interpretation and

use of primary and secondary source material. In the Year 10 classes, students are encouraged to make oral contributions and to discuss complex issues such as the implications of carrying out replacement heart operations. Thorough examination preparation is built into the comprehensive scheme of work, including a visit to 'The Doctor Show' in Potters Bar. The students have a good knowledge of their own progress through the self-assessment sheets, which also include targets for improving performance.

130. Teaching is good overall. Lessons are well planned and well structured. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and are enthusiastic about their subject, which they are able to share with the students. Teachers, however, use a relatively narrow range of strategies to develop the students' learning. Most lessons begin with a question and answer session where the teacher is able to prompt and support good student learning. The activities that follow tend to be teacher led with some students playing little active part in the lesson. The most commonly used student skill is listening. Where there are written tasks, students work mostly on their own. Little group work or extended student discussion was observed. However, some effective Year 9 research work was observed using the library resources and a Year 8 class used ICT well to develop a Civil War pamphlet.
131. The atmosphere in classes is purposeful and ordered and students are able to work successfully to develop historical skills. Historical ideas are clearly and thoroughly explained and developed and there is good evidence of teachers using their knowledge, enthusiasm and teaching skills to develop pupils' understanding at all levels of competence. Teachers challenge pupils to raise their standards and these high expectations are rewarded with student commitment and achievement. Standards of behaviour are very good. The strong relationships observed in the department underpin learning and the acquisition of skills. Good interpersonal relationships are one of the strengths of the history department. Good examples of students listening carefully to each other were observed and co-operation amongst students in all years was high.
132. The management of the department is good. The head of the department gives very clear leadership and has a sound knowledge of how the department can build upon its existing strengths. There is a good staffing match in experience, expertise and qualification. Homework is set regularly and marking supports progress, learning and achievement. Teachers' comments are supportive and encouraging, particularly in the lower years, and then become more diagnostic in Years 10 and 11. Students have a good knowledge of their own learning and are able to produce work of a high quality.
133. The specialist classrooms support an effective learning environment with attractive displays of historical material and students' work. Capitation is satisfactory and the department is well stocked with worksheets, videos and textbooks. At present there is limited access to ICT, which impedes the development of the planned ICT activities, contained in the scheme of work. The department has developed a very good range of fieldwork visits, in particular to Mountfitchet village and a residential visit to the battlefields of Belgium and to the Somme. In addition, further local activities have been developed which actively support the students' learning and progress. Since the last inspection the department has maintained its high standards. The new head of department has introduced a departmental assessment system to improve its record keeping, and a departmental resource base has been established. A larger number of students are choosing to study history in Year 10. Teachers are planning to develop their ICT skills and increase the range of historical materials, particularly CD ROMs, within the department.



## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

134. Overall, the quality of provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- Teachers' knowledge of the subject, good use of course material and lesson planning.
- Help and guidance given to students, especially those with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language.
- Teachers' shared commitment to improvement.

### Areas for improvement

- ICT resources for other subjects.
- The application of computing in learning generally, especially in Years 10 and 11.
- The assessment of core skills and the attainment in the core skills.

135. Standards are well above average in the specialist courses and good overall. The standards on entry to the school vary widely but are well below standards in English, mathematics and science. By the time students reach the end of Year 9, standards are well above the national average with nearly nine out of ten students attaining the expected national standard. This is a good achievement. About one third of the students choose to study on the GCSE examination course and reach standards which are well above the national average. Last year two-thirds of students obtained the higher A\*-C grades; this is a satisfactory achievement for this group of students. Boys and girls achieve equally. All students take an internally devised core skills course in Year 10 but their further attainment is not assessed and attainment in the core skills lessons observed during the inspection was unsatisfactory. One quarter of students who take the GCSE in business studies apply computing extensively to business applications; they make good progress in ICT during this course. Other applications of computing take place in design and technology, French and history lessons, and other subjects including English, geography, mathematics and science set homework which requires the use of ICT - these areas of work are generally underdeveloped and unsatisfactory. However, a high proportion of pupils do become independent users of ICT, at the end of Year 11. The standards attained by students with special needs and English as an additional language are commensurate with their prior attainment. The work done by the best students is of the highest standard.

136. The overall quality of learning in Years 7 to 9 is good. Students learn to make good use of word processors, databases, spreadsheets, desktop publishing and the internet through a good series of small assignments. The good assignments in the core skills course are based on the application of ICT to real-life situations - the extension to a sports facility, the school's tuck shop, and fund-raising events being some of the examples. The theory and computer programs required for each assignment are well learnt before students proceed to the practical work. Assignments normally require students to undertake appropriate research to learn about the background to each application. During the inspection, two good Year 7 lessons were seen in which students developed a questionnaire to find out what sport facilities fellow students would like as data for a lottery bid for finance. Work seen from Year 8 showed that students had applied databases well to a variety of surveys on travel arrangements, warm clothing, radio programmes, and the price of houses. In one satisfactory lesson in Year 9, students were observed learning about local and wide area networks, and in another good lesson students learned about the data which may be held on them and their families and developed their awareness of the need for data protection. Because

of a lack of capacity in the main computer rooms there were few lessons in other subjects; however, a good Year 8 lesson in history was seen in which students were designing a leaflet on the civil war using word processing well.

137. The overall quality of learning in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. All students continue the core skills course for one further year. During the inspection students were seen in a successful Year 10 lesson developing a flow diagram for assessing the answers to a quiz using *Microsoft Logicator*. In the GCSE examination course students undertake interesting pieces of course work on databases, spreadsheets, desktop publishing and web page design. Year 10 course work showed that students had applied databases satisfactorily to an interesting range of applications - converting paper records to computer based systems for a game emporium, game web shop and veterinary clinic. One piece of course work produced by a special needs student showed that good progress had been made in relation to his prior attainment. In a satisfactory Year 10 theory lesson, students were observed learning well about Microsoft Publisher, digital cameras, formats for magazines, frames, graphics and text links.
138. The quality of teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. As a result students' attitudes are always positive. All teachers have secure knowledge of the subject, use good course materials and plan lessons well. In the best lessons teachers introduce new topics thoroughly and maintain a good pace. The relationships with students are always good and teachers give students individual help and advice in lessons when needed: as a result the behaviour and commitment of students are always good. Some lessons are less well taught when appropriate resources are not available in theory lessons and teachers over-estimate students' prior understanding of topics, particularly in the earlier years. Students with special needs and English as an additional language are integrated well in lessons. Teachers know who these students are and give them extra help and advice in lessons when it is necessary. In a good Year 7 lesson, a statemented student with language problems was observed receiving effective help and guidance from a Sixth Form student and was making satisfactory progress. Assessment of students' work in the core skills course needs refinement to ensure that the attainment of students is accurately judged and reported in terms of National Curriculum levels of attainment. There is no assessment of ICT attainment in other subjects.
139. The department is emerging from a difficult period but it is now led by two experienced, part-time teachers who were appointed joint heads of department 16 months ago. They work well together and have some clearly defined responsibilities for courses: they share responsibility well for finance, the computer club, the network and liaison with the departmental technician. This arrangement is effective and the department has made considerable progress since their appointment. New and good schemes of work have been introduced for the core skills course and liaison with other departments has begun to extend the application of computing to other subjects. They are ably supported by two other specialist teachers. All teachers share commitment to improve. The school has a modern network of IBM and Research Machine workstations housed in very good accommodation. This facility is heavily utilised by the specialist courses in ICT and there is little spare capacity for other subjects to use it for lessons. If work in specialist courses and other subjects is to continue to develop, more facilities will be needed. The ratio of workstations to students is well below the national average and lower than it was at the time of the last inspection. Attainment at the end of Years 9 and 11 and students' attitudes have improved since the last inspection but the curriculum time remains low.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

140. Overall, the quality of provision in modern languages is **good**.

### Strengths

- Teachers' fluency in languages.
- Good lesson planning and classroom management.
- The very good behaviour and positive attitudes of students.

### Areas for improvement

- More challenge for students.
- More rigorous and systematic monitoring and evaluation.
- The development of assessment, including feedback to students on how to improve.

141. The attainment of students by the end of Year 9 is above average. In the work seen during the inspection, students were attaining standards that are above expected levels and this represents good achievement. By the middle of Year 11, standards in both French and German are slightly above national expectations. Attainment in the GCSE examination in 2001 was significantly above the national average in French. This was in the context of improving results across the whole school, and French results were very good when compared with those in other subjects. Overall, girls outperformed boys in the higher grades in French but boys were ahead in German. No boy obtained an A\* in either language.

142. The quality of teaching is largely good and never less than satisfactory. In most cases, teachers display total fluency, some being native or near native speakers. They know their students and are well organised. One teacher enabled a Year 9 middle-ability group to achieve very good outcomes by careful explanation of a quite complex listening exercise. She repeated some extracts from the tape and, by good use of praise, ensured students' continued concentration and commitment. Weaknesses relate mainly to teachers making greater use of English than is necessary, not providing enough challenge for students, particularly the more able, and not giving them enough opportunities to extend and enhance their learning. Effective setting and good lesson planning ensure that the small numbers of pupils with special needs or who have English as an additional language are well catered for and achieve at appropriate levels. Through sound teaching, students of all abilities achieve well. They are able to build on prior learning and develop new knowledge and skills. In a Year 8 French lesson, students were able to link taped statements to a range of leisure activities and achieved good results. All students, however, would benefit considerably from individualised targets, which would help them to understand how to improve both their linguistic and their other key skills.

143. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Previous staffing difficulties have been largely overcome. As yet development planning is neither extensive nor rigorous enough because it does not focus directly on the setting of specific and measurable improvement targets for all teachers and students. Sound progress has been made in introducing more up-to-date and appropriate course books but teachers also continue to make very good use of a wide range of other materials. In particular, they draw upon a wealth of clear and attractive worksheets which they have produced themselves. There is evidence of teamwork, of agreement on teaching methods and of a growing commitment to continuous improvement. One teacher has created a bank of excellent ICT resources to teach and practise French grammar. Unfortunately, these very well-structured and attractive materials are not being fully exploited through lack of access

to ICT facilities and few opportunities for training of other colleagues in their use. There is a need to integrate ICT much more prominently into modern languages teaching at all key stages. The subject needs to take full advantage of the potential of ICT to motivate students, reinforce learning and provide greater challenge and stimulus. The use of video, CD ROMs and the Internet is largely underdeveloped at present, particularly in comparison with other similar schools. There are no computers in languages rooms and no connections to the school's network.

144. Standards in modern languages have improved since the last inspection, though more strongly in French than in German. Attainment is now above average and students' achievement is good. Teaching is good. Management and efficiency, previously requiring some improvement, are now satisfactory. The behaviour and attitudes of students are good. Overall the department is a successful one which now needs to build on recent improvements in order to ensure further rises in standards for students of all abilities.

## MUSIC

145. Overall, the quality of provision in music is **good**.

### Strengths

- Quality of teaching, especially knowledge of subject and enthusiasm for it.
- Quality of relationships between staff and students.
- Students' enjoyment of the subject and their eagerness to learn.
- Range of musical opportunities which enhance students' personal development.

### Areas for improvement

- Levels of challenge for the more able musicians.
- The monitoring of the quality of instrumental tuition.
- Access to suitable ICT resources for A and AS students.

146. Attainment by the end of Year 9 is above average. In the GCSE examination in 2001 the proportion of pupils achieving the higher A\* - C grades was below average but in 1999 and 2000 results were above average. All candidates entered for GCSE examinations over the last three years have achieved grades A\*- G which is above the national average.

147. There are no significant variations in the standards attained by boys and girls and students from different ethnic groups. In Years 7 to 9, students know how to select and manipulate sounds and combine them within their pieces. The majority work well collaboratively in small groups when using electronic keyboards. They understand the basic elements of music such as tempo, pitch and dynamics and successfully incorporate them into their compositions. In Year 7, students sing enthusiastically with good tone and clear diction.

148. In Year 9 students create and perform with rhythmical accuracy. They understand graphic and simple musical notation. Higher-attaining students choose sounds with sensitivity and an awareness of balance and shape. In one Year 9 lesson, two girls carefully structured their piece and created complex syncopated rhythms and melodies in a ragtime style. They performed it to the rest of the class, who listened with interest.

149. There is some variation in students' previous musical knowledge when they enter the school. However, in relation to their abilities, students' achievement is satisfactory. Students with special educational needs make good progress but provision for the

musically talented is less successful. Contributions to literacy and numeracy skills are effective, with some imaginative word and number games exploring rhythm and musical vocabulary. Attainment in instrumental lessons is generally satisfactory.

150. In Year 10 the majority of students are reaching standards in line with expectations. Their practical skills are of a higher standard than their theoretical knowledge. Students tend not to use technical vocabulary when writing about music. They work collaboratively when performing in small groups or with whole class activities. They can follow notation and understand how to notate their own music. The more able demonstrate musical skill by accurately maintaining complex rhythmical passages within the group, as was demonstrated in a class performance of Indonesian music in the style of a Gamelan. Students enjoy music lessons and work well in small groups. Some Year 11 students are reaching high standards in performing and composing. They compose well-structured and coherent pieces. Higher-attaining students know the key components of melody and harmony and how to apply them to their compositions. They can utilise sequencer software to store and refine their pieces. One boy composed a piece of 'Garage' style music using computer software, then added vocals and performed and recorded the finished piece.
151. The level of musical ability within the Sixth Form is above average. Students can identify musical devices such as suspensions, cadences, sequences, and chromaticism and incorporate them into their compositions. They are familiar with several styles of music and can recognise them aurally. They perform to a high standard on their chosen instruments, as was demonstrated in a Year 13 lesson when the students gave performances of pieces for their forthcoming recital. They are not as confident with the more theoretical aspects of the examination syllabus. Learning is hindered by insufficient access to high quality music technology equipment and software.
152. Students learn well because the teaching is good and on occasions very good. Teachers are skilled, enthusiastic musicians, and have excellent knowledge of their subject, which they effectively pass on to students. Literacy, numeracy and listening skills are taught well. There is an active response to challenge and creativity with close links between fun and hard work. Excellent relationships mean that lessons focus fully on learning in a pleasant atmosphere with students feeling comfortable enough to contribute appropriate suggestions. All students are enthusiastic and highly motivated about the music they study and perform, are supportive of each other and work productively at a good pace.
153. Planning is generally good and ensures that the full range of abilities is catered for. Where teaching is very good, learning outcomes are clear and appropriate. Lessons have good openings with shared aims and end with a plenary to reinforce learning. Effective whole class question and answer sessions are incorporated to assist the recall of information from the previous lesson. In one Year 8 lesson imaginative use of rhythmic flash cards assisted learning well. Homework is used effectively to develop the students' writing and research skills and enhance the curriculum. The management of students is excellent in all lessons. The quality and effectiveness of assessment is generally satisfactory but needs clarifying to ensure that students are fully aware of its meaning. The quality of instrumental tuition is generally satisfactory and on occasions good. Teachers from the county music service plan for and assess students' progress well. This results in effective learning because students are aware of exactly how much progress they are making.
154. There has been good progress since the last inspection. Standards remain high and the quality of teaching has improved. Accommodation is now significantly better with a purpose-built performing arts block containing drama studios, a main music room, a

recording studio and several practice rooms. Unfortunately, the practice rooms are not sound-proof and this hinders learning during instrumental lessons. Resources have improved with a large number of new electronic keyboards. However, ICT resources are not sufficient to deliver the new requirements of the A-level syllabus. Access to extra-curricular activities and instrumental lessons has increased, with nearly 150 students partaking of instrumental and vocal tuition in school. The quality of instrumental tuition is not monitored.

155. The department is well organised and managed so that provision is effective for all students. It is very well led by a capable and enthusiastic musician who has made a very good start in moving the department forward. A very experienced teacher supports him well. They work easily together and have a clear, shared vision for the future of the subject. Schemes of work are developing well and include opportunities for pupils to use ICT and explore music from other cultures. Large numbers of students choose to be involved in the wide menu of high quality musical extra-curricular activities. This results in a valuable contribution to the ethos of the school.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- Very good GCSE examination results.
- Very good attitudes shown by the students.
- Positive relationships in all lessons.
- Very good range of extra-curricular provision.

### Areas for improvement

- Use of assessment data to offer more challenge to higher-attaining students.
- Develop the use of ICT and increase its use with GCSE examination classes.
- Attend to the problems with the girls' showers.

157. Attainment by the end of Year 9 is above average and remains similar to the picture described at the time of the previous inspection. Students perform well in a range of activities including football, netball, basketball, gymnastics and dance. In 2001, 80 per cent of students entered for the GCSE examination gained A\* to C grades and all students achieved A\* to G grades. These figures are well above the national average, they are the highest ever achieved by the department and they continue the upward trend of recent years. Proportionately more boys than girls obtained the higher A\* - C grades, although more girls achieved the A\* grade than boys.

158. An inspection of students' files in Year 11 indicates that the previous high standards are being maintained. Most show that students have a very good understanding of the theoretical aspects of the course with only a small number experiencing difficulty. The attainment of students in Year 10 who are following the GCSE examination course is above average.

159. The achievement of students in Years 7 to 9 is good. Although they enter the school with a wide range of previous experiences in physical education, most students make good and rapid progress in Year 7. In the extra-curricular activities seen, many younger students achieved well, particularly in team games. Students with special educational needs and students from minority ethnic backgrounds progress as well as others. The achievement of non-examination students in Year 10 is satisfactory. The rate of progress is slower for some students because they have only one session of

physical education each week. The achievement of students who are studying physical education at GCSE level is good. In Year 10, the students' practical performance is at least average for the course and for a significant number of students it is well above. Written work shows that students have a sound understanding of the theoretical aspects of the syllabus studied so far.

160. The quality of teaching is good in almost all lessons. Occasionally it is very good, particularly in those lessons where different challenges are set for students of different abilities. Lessons are purposeful and well organised. Relationships between teachers and students are very good and encourage learning. Students respond very positively to the teaching they receive and consequently learning is good across all year groups. Students conduct themselves with commendable maturity when given opportunities by their teachers to exercise initiative and responsibility. In many lessons students lead warm-up activities and they do so competently and confidently. Under guidance from the teacher, students also conduct some skill practices. An excellent example of this was seen in a Year 10 GCSE examination class in which four students took responsibility for organising different phases of a soccer lesson. They did this very impressively and their fellow students co-operated sensibly and with a keen sense of commitment throughout. Levels of participation are very good even when the weather conditions are unfavourable. In a Year 9 lesson a class of boys worked consistently well in cold, wet conditions when focussing on different types of training. The same positive approach was shown by a group of Year 9 girls in a netball lesson. The standard of kit is good in all lessons. Behaviour is consistently very good. Teachers know the students well and support individuals very effectively with both relevant coaching points and words of encouragement. In a small minority of lessons too little time is spent on practical involvement. In some lessons the higher-attaining students could be challenged more effectively. Teachers are not always able to access equipment such as digital cameras or computers and consequently there is insufficient use of ICT to support learning, particularly in examination classes.
161. The departmental staff, supported by five other colleagues, offer a very good range of extra-curricular activities for students of all ages throughout the week. During the inspection these included basketball, dance, football and netball. The school competes against schools in a range of different sports, frequently putting out more than one team for each age group. Teams have enjoyed recent successes in football, rugby, basketball, netball, cross-country, hockey, cricket and athletics.
162. Management is good. The teachers work well as a team. Several improvements have taken place since the last inspection. The problem of imbalance in curriculum content that was mentioned in the previous report has been successfully rectified. The opening of the new gymnasium has made a significant difference to the range of activities that can now be offered. Examination results continue to improve. The revised assessment system now incorporates the level descriptors. The boys' changing rooms have also been improved and upgraded. The situation regarding the showers in the girls' changing room is unsatisfactory. The long-standing problem that prevents the showers from being used has yet to be remedied. Outdoor provision is good but poor drainage on the fields means that the pitches cannot always be used after heavy rain, as happened during the inspection. There is no permanent base for teaching the theoretical aspects of examination courses. The department does not have its own ICT hardware, nor are all teachers fully confident in using ICT.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- The quality of relationships.
- The ability of teachers to explain and to draw out students' own ideas in discussion.
- Very effective use of homework.

### Areas for improvement

- Meeting the full requirement of the LEA's Agreed Syllabus.

164. Standards at Key Stage 3 are generally in line with those expected in most aspects of the local Agreed Syllabus. They have improved since the last inspection and students now have a sound grasp of the basic beliefs and practices of Christianity and some other world faiths. Students can make links between religious concepts and their own experience and ideas, for example, in considering temptation and their own beliefs and attitudes about death and life after death. They recognise that religion makes a difference to people's lives. Pupils, particularly the most able, do not fully develop their evaluative and analytical skills. This is particularly the case in Year 9 where time restrictions restrict coverage of key elements of the Agreed Syllabus. Overall levels of literacy are above average at the end of the key stage.

165. There is an improving trend in GCSE examination results. Although numbers of entries were small in 2001, results were above national averages with 70 per cent of students gaining A\*-C grades. The current Year 10 group of 24 students compares well in size with many schools and standards are high.

166. Overall attainment in Year 10 is below average. Students have a basic understanding of issues such as the sanctity of life and conflict in society. They can articulate their views well. However, the depth of their understanding of religious responses to these issues, and their ability to evaluate them on the basis of their learning, are below average. This is a direct consequence of the curriculum deficiencies and it is compounded in Year 11 where provision of religious education is negligible.

167. Standards in the Sixth Form are in line with national expectations. All students follow a non-examination general studies course which has a strong religious, ethical and philosophical element. This is a major improvement since the last inspection. Students are able to understand complex issues and to respond with their own opinions, doubts and questions.

168. Most students make satisfactory progress as they move through Key Stage 3, although Year 9 students do not fulfil their potential and higher-attaining students are not always challenged in all aspects of the subject. In Year 10, examination students achieve well in relation to their ability and are making very good progress. Other students in Year 10 do not achieve the standards of which they are capable. Although Year 11 students were not in school at the time of the inspection, the lack of any significant religious education programme reinforces the lack of achievement. Achievement in the Sixth Form is good. Students develop good levels of understanding and skill. They are challenged to think about profound and difficult questions and make significant gains in progress.



169. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers promote a good work ethic in the context of a relaxed, friendly and well managed classroom. Touches of humour and regular reference to students' own interests help to engage students in the lesson. The subject specialist has very good subject knowledge and the ability to clarify the key points of the lesson with relevant examples. In all lessons, there is good use of questioning and discussion to help students understand the work. Homework is used exceptionally well to reinforce learning, to research information and to prepare students for the next lesson. For example, students are set questions relating to their personal experience of temptation, as an introduction to a lesson on the temptations of Jesus. The library has CD ROMs for research on religious education topics but, generally, there is poor provision for use of ICT in the subject.
170. There are two main areas for development in the teaching. Written work and tasks are very structured and directed by the teacher and students have little opportunity to take initiative, be creative or investigate key questions. This leads to some lack of challenge, particularly for higher-attaining students. Since the last inspection, assessment tasks have been built into the structure of the course, usually at the end of a topic. Whilst these indicate the extent of students' knowledge of the work covered, they are not based on the standards outlined in the Agreed Syllabus.
171. The management of the subject is good. There are systematic and effective procedures for monitoring the work of the department. However, this has remained a single-specialist department since the last inspection, thus putting the onus for all subject development and support for non-specialist staff on to one person. This is not a satisfactory situation. Since the last inspection, the quality and popularity of religious education has improved as a consequence of the good teaching. There have been some gains in resources, some increase in time in Year 10 and in the Sixth Form. Despite these gains, the school is still falling far short of implementing the requirements of time and of the programmes of study in the Local Agreed Syllabus. This has a negative effect on standards and on the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students as they move through Years 9–11. Overall, therefore, progress since the last inspection is unsatisfactory.

## DRAMA

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

### Strengths

- Outstanding results in GCSE examinations.
- Very enthusiastic teaching.
- Excellent use of first rate accommodation leading to high standards.
- Extra-curricular activities.

### Areas for improvement

- More focus on the key elements of concentration, commitment and control.
- More development of acting skills through the application of the drama process.
- More time for students to reflect on the drama process and to evaluate their work.

173. Standards reached in the GCSE examination in 2001 were exceptional. These results show very good improvement on previous years. More than nine tenths of the students achieved in the A\*-C band. The results are well above national averages and above results achieved by students at comparable schools. The subject is growing in popularity with increasing numbers opting to study drama at GCSE. There are

excellent facilities provided by the recent addition of a custom-built music and drama suite.

174. Teaching was good or very good in nearly all lessons seen. Students enjoy their drama lessons and tackle the tasks set enthusiastically. They gain confidence through drama activities as they progress through Years 7, 8 and 9. Students work co-operatively together in pairs or groups establishing good interactional contacts. For example, a lively class of Year 7 students used a Harry Potter story as a stimulus for creating a scenario of visiting new places for the first time. Students worked at a good pace and some entertaining scenes were developed. However, more time for students to reflect on the drama process was needed to enhance the learning of techniques for creating a character from within as well as demonstrating the role played.
175. Students have good opportunities to develop responsibility for their own work by sharing ideas and learning from each other as they prepare to present group work for assessment at GCSE. Excellent topics were chosen exploring relevant social issues such as bullying and drug trafficking. Students worked very well establishing the conflict which was the focus of each improvisation, building dramatic tension by interacting sensitively with each other. Students made good progress in learning through the whole-class discussions evaluating the performances. However the emphasis was mainly on speaking and creating tension through the spoken word. More development of performance skills is needed through using different levels, body language, gesture, deportment and varying movement.
176. Overall, students' experiences in situational drama enrich their learning. As a result of skilful teaching, students learn to consider the impact of their actions on others. In this way their personal, social and emotional development is enhanced through the drama experience.
177. Extra-curricular activities are a strength of the school, in particular the annual musical production which is shared with the music department. Over 200 students took part in the most recent production of 'Oklahoma' and every year group was represented. There is open access for all students either in performing or in using technical skills of set design, costume design or lighting. This is an excellent vehicle for ensuring full educational inclusion. The department is well led and organised by a lively and charismatic head of department who is well supported by the senior management of the school.

## VOCATIONAL COURSES

178. Overall, the quality of provision in Business Education is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- Range of teaching methods.
- Teachers' enthusiasm for the subject.
- Quality of course materials.

### Areas for improvement

- Accommodation.
- ICT facilities.

179. Standards are satisfactory. Standards on entry to the GCSE course in business studies are below the national average. Students' predicted grades, based on their entry standards, are D grades overall. The course was successfully launched 16

months ago and the number of students entering the course is increasing significantly. No examinations have yet been taken. Attainment in lessons during the inspection was satisfactory in Year 10. Boys and girls were observed performing equally. There were no Year 11 lessons during the inspection. Students with special needs are well integrated in lessons and achieve satisfactorily with additional help and guidance from teachers. During the inspection, a part-time girl student with severe emotional problems was observed achieving satisfactorily with the aid of her learning assistant. There are no special arrangements for gifted and talented students.

180. Standards of learning are good. Students learn effectively about the business environment, the organisation and control of businesses, how businesses achieve their objectives and people in business by taking an interesting range of modules. During the inspection, students were seen reviewing well their previous work on market segmentation and learning in a very effective way about the buying habits of various groups of people - people in different locations, social groups and ethnic groups. In a very good Year 10 lesson, students were seen developing a questionnaire on computers to seek information about people's shopping habits and preferences for either mobile phones or holidays. The school is running a school bank under the guidance of the HSBC which has the potential to give students a good insight into banking systems. It is being set up with great enthusiasm and Year 10 students are currently being recruited to staff the school bank.
181. The standard of teaching is good. All teachers have a secure knowledge of the subject and display a real enthusiasm for it. As a result, students are keen to learn and well motivated. Teachers provide a good range of course materials in lessons which are supplemented by a good textbook and revision exercises on the computer network. All lessons are well planned and teachers use question and answer sessions effectively; consequently students make good progress. A good range of teaching methods is used in both theory and practical lessons. There are good relationships and working atmospheres in lessons. The attitudes and behaviour of students are always satisfactory and often good. Teachers set homework and mark students' work regularly. Students are well informed about their progress and what needs to be done to improve.
182. The department is well led by a keen and enthusiastic teacher who was appointed 16 months ago. She shares a commitment to improve with her other two colleagues. Teachers hold regular meetings and the department has a good handbook. The accommodation and computer network are adequate for the present range of courses and student numbers but will not support the planned future developments without enhancement. The GCSE course in information systems operating at the time of the last inspection was discontinued two years ago. The subject is better co-ordinated and the department is on a sounder footing than it was at the time of the last inspection. Attainment remains satisfactory.

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

183. 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 school.

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

***GCE AS level courses***

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Chemistry	11	100					
Biology	17	88					
Design and technology	13	84					
Home economics	5	100					
Art and design	9	88					
Drama and theatre studies	21	100					
Geography	27	70					
History	8	100					
English	9	100					
Modern languages	15	100					

**GCE A-Level and AVCE courses**

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	8	100	87	13	43	4.2	5.8
Chemistry	5	80	90	20	43	4.0	5.9
Biology	2	100	88	-	34	3.0	5.2
Physics	9	100	88	22	40	5.7	5.6
Full design and technology	9	89	91	-	30	3.7	5.3
Home economics	5	20	83	-	28	0.8	4.7
Computer Studies	7	71	86	-	23	2.2	4.6
Sports Studies	3	67	92	-	25	2.0	5.09
Theatre Studies	6	83	93	33	31	5.00	5.5
Art and design	3	100	96	100	46	8.6	6.5
Music	3	100	93	-	35	4.67	5.74
Geography	16	88	92	25	38	4.63	5.74
History	7	86	88	43	35	5.4	5.4
Sociology	2	100	86	50	35	7.0	5.3
English Literature	11	91	95	36	37	5.82	5.91
French	2	100	89	-	38	4.00	5.59
Home economics	5	20	83	-	28	0.80	4.73
Communication Studies	7	83	93	33	31	5.00	5.53

**Intermediate vocational qualifications**

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Business GNVQ	13	100		30		23.1	3.5

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

### MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

#### Mathematics

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

#### Strengths

- A/S results are above average.
- Teachers' knowledge of the subject.
- The positive attitudes of the students.

#### Areas for improvement

- A-Level results are below average.
- Too few girls choose to study the subject.
- Limited use of ICT.

186. When they start their sixth form course students' standards are variable. Some embark on GCE AS-level mathematics having previously taken a GCSE Intermediate course. These students struggle to achieve an AS-level pass grade by the end of Year 12. Nonetheless, with a small entry of 13 students, 2001 GCE AS-level mathematics results are above the national average and augur well for 2002 GCE A-level performance. A very small entry of eight students in 2001 attained GCE A-level results below the national average but too small to be significant because the school had limited success in recruiting students, especially girls, for the course. Some better results were achieved in earlier years but also with insignificant entry levels.

187. Inspection evidence shows that by the end of Year 13 overall attainment is around the national average. Students are competent in a range of topics in pure mathematics, decision mathematics and statistics. A few are held back because they are less confident, or familiar, with certain facets of algebraic manipulation. Students can tackle a variety of A-level questions on partial fractions, solve co-ordinate geometry problems and determine turning points of curves in their work on calculus. They show particular strength in applying their knowledge to shortest path and critical path analysis using various algorithms to solve practical problems. Students complete A-level questions on probability and hypothesis testing. They are helped to make good progress and achieve well by the capable teaching provided. Students use numeracy well in other subjects. In science they handle sampling analysis competently and in history they make good use of spreadsheets in analysing the civil war in the seventeenth century.

188. Teaching is of good quality and students learn well as a result. Teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of A-level pure mathematics, decision mathematics and statistics so that problems that students encounter are swiftly and competently answered. This is enhanced by the enthusiasm teachers have for the subject and their very positive relationship with students who appreciate the availability of teachers outside lessons in providing individual help. In the best lessons teachers fully involve students in discussion as a key part of the lesson. For example, in a very good Year 13 statistics lesson, the to and fro of ideas and suggestions contributed significantly to the lesson flow and ensured that the students gained much greater understanding of the central limit theorem and its use in various examples. In a few instances scope for student participation is missed. Teachers plan lessons thoroughly so there is rapid pace and challenging material. Notes are helpfully given to enable students to cope with later revision but this is less effective, and more tedious, when the teacher simply

reads information out from a sheet of paper. There is too little use of ICT, either through computers or programmable calculators.

189. There is a strong commitment in the department to high standards and teachers give freely of their time to helping students realise their potential. There has been satisfactory progress since the previous inspection. The number of students opting to join the AS-level mathematics course in Year 12, and then A-level in Year 13, is starting to rise. Too few girls choose to study mathematics in Year 13 although there are potentially more in the current Year 12 who could do so next year.
190. Three Advanced Level subjects - biology, chemistry and physics - have been offered by the school for many years. Occasionally GCSE science has been provided to meet the needs of individual Sixth Form students. Physics provision regularly included the Advanced Subsidiary alternative. The inspection focus was on biology in the Sixth Form. Chemistry was also sampled.

## Biology

191. Overall, the quality of provision in biology is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- Much improved results.
- Recruitment and retention rates much improved.
- Some excellent teaching.

### Areas for improvement

- Consistency in quality of teaching.
- Use of ICT.

192. The results for the most recent A-level biology examination were unsatisfactory, because only two students took the course to completion and the grades attained were unimpressive. In the two years prior to this, results were satisfactory though numbers entered for the examination fell steadily. Current work is stronger. Take-up from Year 11 into advanced biology is now good. The first year of the advanced provision is the new AS course. The results for the first cohort are satisfactory. For example, students attained broadly in line with what is expected of them considering their GCSE results. The range of grades attained includes some A grades and some grades below E. Retention during the course was satisfactory, and satisfactory numbers chose to complete their AL by taking the second year of Advanced Level. Standards in the current A2 course are satisfactory.
193. Teaching and learning are both good overall. The strengths in learning apply equally to female and male students. Students are acquiring new knowledge and understanding about biology to a good extent. However, progress in key skills is only satisfactory overall. Students make very good intellectual efforts. For example, the care and perceptiveness of the essay work of the current Year 12 AS students has improved steadily in their first term. This is true for all in the group, such as those with very high GCSE scores and those with modest GCSE results. These students concentrate very well in lessons, and also work very well as independent learners, when required. Teaching is inconsistent in quality and ranges from excellent to satisfactory. This is a limiting factor on the quality of learning. For example, an excellent lesson was based on the teacher's excellent expertise about biology, very astute assessment of students' previous knowledge, specially-made resources, and planned strategies which ensured students directly simulated - and so learnt - each stage of a complex topic. The topic was how genes

control protein synthesis. Students of all abilities made excellent progress overall. Other teaching includes some which is satisfactory in that points are presented clearly and students make satisfactory progress. The areas for improvement are the use of time and assessment. For example, a lesson presented ideas to students without well-planned methods for the teacher to check how well students understood. It was inefficient overall to leave these checks to the next lesson. Middle and low-attaining students coped, but the method did not suit the needs of high attainers. An overall strength in teaching is the marking of work. At best this is very detailed and a major contributor to the steady improvements in students' gains toward the level of detail in knowledge and understanding required for AS and A2.

194. Progress in key skills is inconsistent. There is a specific weakness over gains in information and communication technology (ICT). Communication and number skills are good. For example, essays are closely argued and well structured. Oral communication is clear and students discuss matters intelligently. However, the use of information and communication technology skills is much weaker than it should be for advanced students. This is not a weakness in teaching. It results from long-standing under-resourcing, so that students cannot use computers regularly as part of their advanced course.
195. Biology is led well. The new-style AS and A2 provision has been successfully introduced. The inconsistencies in teaching are being managed regularly and appropriately. Coursework standards are managed very well. Students are given the opportunity for an AL residential study week. Assessments are regular and accurate. Staff have sufficient value-added data, which they use well. Students' views are positive. They feel they were guided well as they chose biology, and they value the very good support available to them as their course moves on. Investment had been agreed to install ICT equipment over a two-year period.

## **ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING**

### **Design and technology**

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

#### **Strengths**

- Quality of teaching and learning.
- Quality of relationships.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- Attainment at A/S and A-Level.
- Provision for use of ICT.

197. Standards of work seen during the inspection are average in the Sixth Form. These standards are the result of teaching that is always good and in three-quarters of lessons seen very good. Students' achievements in relation to standards on entry are satisfactory. Their attitudes and behaviour, including the quality of their learning in design and technology, are very good. Students make better progress with their course work than they do under examination conditions.
198. By the end of Year 13, standards are generally average, in the work seen. Above-average standards are evident in the higher attainers' innovative ideas for a coffee table or a shelf unit. Planning and use of time, particularly under examination conditions, are problems identified by many of these students. Whilst students happily solve problems as they meet them in the design and make process, a number have



more difficulty when involved in written work. In the food group, standards are average. Students read accurately and clearly draw important facts from the text studied about the cultural variations to be found in bread products. One student is less confident in explaining what she means but the teacher sensitively translates her tentative ideas into the more formal language necessary at this level.

199. At A level in product design the proportion of students gaining the higher A-B grades over the period 1999-2001 was well below average, with not all students passing the subject in 2001. In the same period the proportion of students entered for food technology and gaining the higher grades A-B varied from above to well below average, with few students passing the subject in 2001.
200. Students enter the Sixth Form course with a minimum C grade at GCSE but not all students studying for AS level have taken that same technology option for GCSE. As a result, progress is slowed as students catch up with knowledge, skills and understanding. Confusion arose in 2001 over misunderstanding of requirements for the case study in food technology. The examination board provided no exemplar materials and this exacerbated the situation. Once the teacher concerned had attended a training session the problem was resolved. One girl is retaking the examination; she now feels more confident of success because she understands the level of written explanation necessary. In product design, members of an all male group each talk coherently about their multi-functional toy for a young child. Skill development varies from well above average as, for example, an intricate and close fitting wooden cube, to average levels of design, making and finish. Research skills show similar variations in standard with some students appreciating the value of prototypes and questionnaires and making full use of the results whilst others largely ignore the consumer's needs. One boy admits problems with written work but, given a practical problem to solve, he achieves well. In another Year 12 group students brainstorm ideas for electronic inventions in modern society and the teacher skilfully responds to students' questions by giving partial responses which promote further thinking. Unfortunately none of these students are scientists and concepts like the corrosion of metals require some scientific knowledge and understanding. The present food course also has a strong scientific base, which disadvantages students who choose to study at this level.
201. Students are well supported by the head of Sixth Form; however, there is no key skills course and little access to computers within technology or provision for CAD/CAM. Technology teachers currently work separately, with low numbers of students, when preparing them for study skills and examination techniques. This limits the sharing of good practice and ideas. The pressure on the technology rooms from the main school means that Sixth Form students do not always work in specialist areas. Enrichment activities are planned by way of study excursions to the Tate Modern and the Design Council. Unsatisfactory progress has been made since the previous inspection report in improving provision and standards at this level.

## **BUSINESS**

### **Business education**

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

#### **Strengths**

- The quality of teaching.
- Relationships between teachers and students.
- Attitudes and behaviour of students.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- Accommodation and computer facilities.
- Range of courses.

203. Standards are good. Last year the results in the GNVQ course at intermediate level were above the national average. Thirteen completed the course with nearly one-quarter obtaining distinctions and nearly one-third passes with merit, these results represent a good achievement. Standards are rising year by year satisfactorily. More boys than girls take the course but their attainments are equal overall. There are no students with special educational needs or English as an additional language on the course. Some of the work done by the most able students is of a very high standard.

204. The quality of learning is very good. Students learn by taking six interesting units which cover how businesses work, how businesses develop, business finance, customer service, people in business and promotion. In a very good lesson observed during the inspection, students were learning very effectively how businesses develop; they were comparing and contrasting a sole trader (garages, shops etc) with a franchise business (Next, Blockbuster etc). Interestingly, many students were considering their father's business as one of the companies. The work required students to research thoroughly how the companies they had chosen had grown and developed. In another similar and very good lesson in Year 12, students were preparing well their coursework on the development of their chosen companies, using computers. The completed coursework on how companies work was of a very high standard. One student also produced very good coursework based on Homebase, the DIY store. The work was well presented using word processing, and the text mainly addressed to a general audience was well written; it also contained some good formal letters seeking information from the company. Year 13 lessons did not run normally during the inspection and were not observed.

205. The standard of teaching is very good. All teachers plan their lessons well and have great enthusiasm for the subject. In the majority of lessons, students work independently very effectively, with teachers giving help when necessary. Teachers routinely interview students individually, comment on their work and progress, and give guidance on what to do next. The teachers' records of these interviews and students' progress are very good. The management of lessons and control of students are relaxed and very effective. As a result, students are eager to learn and make good progress. The attitude and behaviour of students are excellent.

206. The department is well led by a keen and enthusiastic teacher who was appointed 16 months ago. She shares the commitment to develop the department with her other two colleagues, all of whom work part-time in the department. There is a need to offer other courses to meet the needs of a wider range of students. This was reported at the

time of the last inspection and the department is currently planning to run an A-level course in 2003. The accommodation and computer network are adequate for the present GNVQ course but will need enhancement if the A-level course is run. Since the last inspection standards, progress of students and teaching have all improved. The completion rate on the GNVQ course has also improved.

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

207. Overall, the quality of provision in ICT is **satisfactory**.

### **Strengths**

- Quality of teaching, especially in relation to the use of assessment.
- Attitudes of the students.
- The development of awareness of the social, moral, legal and ethical implications of ICT.

### **Areas for improvement**

- Learning resources to enable computing to be applied to other AS and A-level courses.
- Recruitment to the course.

208. Standards are satisfactory overall. Last year, the examination results for the A-level in computer studies were well below the national average with none of the eight students gaining the higher A and B grades. Seven students achieved C - E grades. The results, although disappointing, were a slight improvement on the results in the previous year. This course has been discontinued. The new AS-level course in ICT began in September 2000 and four out of ten students obtained the higher A and B grades last year, a result which is above the national average. The A2 year of this course has not yet been examined but attainment in lessons is satisfactory. These results represent satisfactory achievement. Students have very limited opportunity to apply computing in other subjects.

209. The quality of learning is good. Students successfully learn to administer computer-based ICT systems, use ICT systems effectively, solve application problems, manage an ICT system and implement complex applications. In addition, students learn about the social, ethical and moral issues associated with major ICT applications. During a good lesson in Year 12, students were observed preparing for their coursework on applying databases to such areas as stock control, car sales or ordering systems. In a very good Year 13 lesson, students were seen learning about the social, ethical and moral implications of ICT applications. This lesson was very effective and involved students in lively exchanges about the issues raised. In a good lesson in the same year, students were observed preparing for coursework by learning about computer records, file design, forms and data validation. Students were also observed in Year 12 using computers to consolidate and extend their understanding of French grammar.

210. The standard of teaching is always good and some times very good. All teachers use very effective teaching methods, manage students well and use on-going assessment effectively. They also have secure knowledge of the subject. Teachers are very enthusiastic and as a result students have a positive attitude to their work. They maintain a good pace in lessons and as a result students make good progress. The methods of assessment are effective and students' work is marked regularly at the end of each unit. This enable students to know what progress they are making, the grades they are achieving and as a result it motivates them. Topics are always introduced well and the underpinning knowledge taught effectively.

211. The department is emerging from a difficult period. It is now led by two experienced, part-time, teachers who were appointed joint heads of department 16 months ago. The joint heads share the responsibility for both AS and A-level work and have a common commitment to improve provision. The school has a modern network of IBM and Research Machine workstations housed in very good accommodation. This facility is heavily utilized by the specialist courses in ICT and there is little spare capacity for other A-level subjects to use them for lessons. This was well illustrated during the inspection when an ICT lesson had to move to another room to enable the students learning French grammar to use one of the main computer rooms. The attainment of students improved last year and is better than at the time of the last inspection.

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

### **Physical education**

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

#### **Strengths**

- The recent introduction of examination courses.
- Quality of teaching.
- Positive attitudes of students.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- Increase the range of resources and develop use of ICT.

213. Although the four students who are studying physical education in Year 13 succeeded in gaining good grades at AS-level last year, they studied the subject off site. This is the first year that examination work has been taught in the school at Sixth Form level. In addition to the four students who are taking A2, another 16 students are following the AS course in Year 12.

214. Examinations were in progress during the inspection and it was not possible to observe any Year 13 lessons. Discussions with their teachers indicate that students are producing work of a high standard. Scrutiny of students' coursework folders confirms this judgement. Written work is accurate and detailed. Technical vocabulary is used well. Written work demonstrates that students have a sound understanding of aspects such as the social, political, moral and cultural issues that can affect participation in sport. They have produced detailed work on global issues including an in-depth study of Australia.

215. The majority of students in Year 12 have made satisfactory progress in the comparatively short time since they started the course. Within a wide ability range, most students achieve well. Several can convey their thoughts very effectively in discussion, for example when considering the functions of feedback. A small number remain fairly passive in lessons and they are content to leave others to contribute orally. Students generally work well together. In one of the lessons observed, on the effects of knowledge performance on feedback, they co-operated well when individual students acted as group leaders.

216. Teaching in the two lessons seen was good. Planning is thorough, relationships are good and lesson objectives are made clear to students, all of which contribute positively to learning. Students spoke appreciatively of the good level of support given by their teachers. Students have a responsible attitude to their work and they are enthusiastic about physical education. Their learning benefits well from the teaching

they receive. Resources are barely adequate. Although the library contains several relevant texts to support independent study, if the numbers following the examination course continue to increase, additional investment will be needed. Insufficient use is currently made of ICT.

217. All Sixth Form students have an opportunity to take part in recreational activities for two sessions each week. This is currently an optional activity that is supported particularly well by the boys. A small number of students help teachers in classes lower down the school and they do so effectively.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **History**

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

#### **Strengths**

- Teachers' knowledge of the subject and enthusiasm.
- Departmental leadership and management.
- Strong productive relationships between teachers and students.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- Develop a wider range of teaching strategies.
- Strengthen independent learning skills.

219. Standards in recent AS and A-level examinations have been very good and well above national standards. In 2001 all eight AS students achieved A to D grades, with 50 per cent achieving A or B grades. Also in 2001, 43 per cent gained A or B grades at A-level (all at A grade), compared to 35 per cent nationally. Relatively, history is one of the best performing Sixth Form subjects in the school. There are no significant differences in the achievement of boys and girls.

220. The standards of written work and levels of understanding are very high. The quality of work is above national standards and consistent with the very good results achieved in recent years. The higher-attainers in Year 12 showed maturity and insight in discussing the impact of the Zimmermann letter and the effect of the Bolshevik Revolution on the latter stages of the Great War. In discussion, they are able to demonstrate good research skills and a depth of knowledge and understanding.

221. Students have a strong sense of shared responsibility about their learning. This results from the very good relationships that exist between teachers and students of differing levels of ability. Assessment and target setting are used to good effect and are well understood by the students. In particular, they understand the importance of wider reading to add greater depth to their writing.

222. Year 13, are able to demonstrate a very good range of writing, including detailed notes from different sources and assignments based on wide reading. In the seminar, they demonstrate a thorough knowledge of the intricacies of the conversion of Gladstone to Irish Home Rule and the subsequent political upheaval.

223. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers are very secure in their subject knowledge and are able to stimulate reflection and evaluation amongst many of the students. However, at times there is a tendency to over teach, to give the students too much support, with the result that some are rather passive in the lessons. In a

discussion on the different reactions of English localities in the Civil War, some Year 12 students were happier to receive the teacher's analysis rather than actively contribute their own thoughts and ideas. These particular students need to be given greater opportunities to develop their own research and learning. There is evidence of excellent handouts, and overall the support from the teachers is very good.

224. Students use their ICT skills well to enhance the presentation and content of their work and they make good use of the computer facilities available in the library. ICT was used effectively to develop a spreadsheet to aid analysis of the membership of the Barebones Parliament. Departmental leadership is good and the teachers work closely and effectively together. There is a good range of Sixth Form resources including books, worksheets and videos, which are used comprehensively. The members of the department are committed to doing their best for the students and this creates a shared responsibility for learning.
225. Students are encouraged to attend conferences on the Civil War, Oliver Cromwell and The Great War modules. The chosen A-level syllabus enables students to develop an understanding of the nature and consequences of religious and military conflict in the English Civil War, Ireland in the nineteenth century and The Great War. The choice of topics offers a wide range of period and theme and considerable challenge for study. During the lessons observed and in conversation with many of the students, it was evident that involvement and enjoyment in the course were very high. All Year 12 students carried on with the course into Year 13 and several indicated that they were going to read history at university.

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

### English

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

#### Strengths

- Improving A-level results.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge.
- Independent learning is well developed.

#### Areas for improvement

- Assessment systems to track students' prior learning and monitor individual progress.
- More evaluation of students' reading to ensure breadth of study.

227. Currently, AS-level courses are offered in English language where classes are of mixed gender and English literature where there are 13 girls. There are five girls and three boys on the A2 English literature course. Results in English literature at A-level in 2001 indicate that nearly half the students achieved in the top band (AB) whereas in 2000 only one sixth achieved top band (AB). This is good improvement on standards achieved previously although still only 'in line' with national averages.
228. Year 2001 was the first year for examinations in AS-level English literature. Students did well considering their qualifications on entry, with one third of the nine students entered achieving a B grade. All candidates in both examinations passed, there were no failures. Retention rates are good and attendance is good also.
229. Students' achievements on their A-level courses are improving. This is confirmed by the standards of work seen during the inspection. In Year 13, students comment

perceptively on the texts, developing confidence as they use the language of literary criticism. Students exchange ideas, developing their points of view and sustaining their arguments in response to the texts studied. This reinforces their learning and prepares them for organising their thoughts when writing their essays. The higher-attainers make assured statements based on analysis of the texts studied. For example, students selected examples from Keats' 'Ode to Psyche', referring to 'trembled blossoms – mid hushed cool-rooted flowers' to illustrate their understanding of the language used to evoke feeling and arouse the senses. Students write for a range of purposes, selecting appropriate forms of language to convey the mood and genre of the text. For example, students wrote perceptively about the racial issues explored in Guterson's novel 'Snow Falling on Cedars' as readers led to make their own judgements on the central character in a murder trial.

230. Many Year 12 students are still coming to terms with the increased challenge of AS-level but achievement is satisfactory for this stage in the course. Students' response in class is sometimes tentative but they are gaining confidence in the use of literary terminology. Their essays show a developing understanding of writers' use of language to convey their message. For example students quoted from Philip Larkin's poem 'Talking in Bed', exploring the universal need of all people to communicate with each other.
231. The quality of students' writing varies considerably. Some write with precision, expressing their views clearly, others meander through a string of comments with haphazard use of punctuation and several grammatical errors resulting in an over-colloquial style. All students need to develop their skills in structuring a coherent argument and expressing this concisely. A good range of reading is covered on the course but students need to read more widely to broaden the scope of their understanding. Students on the AS-level language course use linguistic terminology with increasing confidence. They interpret discourse analysis competently identifying structural devices in speech, such as adjacency pairs.
232. Teaching in the sixth form is good with some very good features. These include very good subject knowledge, which teachers share enthusiastically with their students so that learning becomes a journey of discovery. Teachers establish an on-going dialogue with the class so that students are involved actively in their own learning. This skilled student management encourages students to make the maximum effort to improve their performance in all aspects of English. Skilful teaching is providing students with a foundation for lifelong learning that equips them well for higher education. Students appreciate the individual support they are given by their teachers, the good relationships established and the value of English studies to their personal development. However, there is a need for more rigorous assessment procedures to be practised to address students' individual needs systematically. This is particularly important because some students begin AS-level studies from a barely average base at GCSE.
233. There are good resources for the subject and the library is used profitably for reading and research. The leadership and management of English are good. The experienced and well-qualified staff plan effectively to offer a balanced programme of studies and teachers are committed to raising standards overall.

## Modern foreign languages

### French

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

#### Strengths

- Quality of teaching.
- High expectations.

#### Areas for improvement

- More guidance for students on how to raise standards.

235. The focus of the inspection was on French but work in German was also sampled. Two A-level German lessons were observed; in both the teaching was very good. The teaching in French, which is well organised, is good or very good. Teachers share lesson objectives with their students and enable them to see how each lesson fits into a sequence. Resources, which are of good quality and show variety, allow students to build on their prior learning and to develop and extend their knowledge and skills. In one Year 12 lesson, the teacher exploited a well-chosen text at considerable pace, whilst ensuring that students understood all aspects. In a Year 13 French lesson, the teacher stimulated a discussion on human rights in the European Union. She sensitively encouraged students to extend their rather limited knowledge of the topic by undertaking additional research.

236. The evidence from work seen in lessons and in students' files during the inspection shows that overall standards are above average in both Year 12 and Year 13. It would appear that both male and female students do equally well, although the one male Y13 student was absent for most of the lessons during the period of the inspection. Students of differing abilities are well catered for and achieve their potential. They adopt a mature attitude and show interest in the subject. However, standards and achievement are variable. Some students attain very well and should prove capable of obtaining the higher or highest grades; others less so, often as a result of insecurity in routine grammar or idiom. The ablest students in Year 13 are fluent, speak with confidence and make few mistakes. Some Year 12 students are prone to make more basic errors than one would expect at this stage, but their skills in listening with understanding and reading are developing well. Some students are finding the transition from GCSE to AS-Level particularly difficult. In nearly all cases, however, they are positive and acknowledge the efforts of teachers to teach them well and support them individually.

237. Teachers in the department have been working hard to increase the numbers of students opting for a language in the sixth form and to teach them more effectively. There are signs that these efforts are now beginning to pay dividends. One teacher makes excellent use of the ICT resources she has produced to assist students' learning and understanding of French grammar. A wider range of suitable literary texts, available in the department and in the library, should be used to encourage and promote more extended reading. Students of all abilities would benefit further from a more consistent and more rigorous approach to marking and assessment and to the provision of detailed feedback and advice on how they can raise their standards in all aspects of the language.