

INSPECTION REPORT

AYLESFORD SCHOOL

Warwick

LEA area: Warwickshire

Unique reference number: 125744

Headteacher: Ms S Dudley

Reporting inspector: Mr P Mason
3691

Dates of inspection: 3rd – 7th December 2001

Inspection number: 194293

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

© Crown copyright 2001

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of students:	11 – 18 years
Gender of students:	Mixed
School address:	Shelley Avenue Warwick
Postcode:	CV34 6LA
Telephone number:	01926 747100
Fax number:	01926 494194
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr R Lyttle
Date of previous inspection:	4th November 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
3691	Philip Mason	Registered inspector	Equal opportunities	What sort of school is it? What should the school do to improve further? How high are standards? How good are curricular and other opportunities offered to students? (1) How well is the school led and managed?
19436	Michael O'Malley	Lay Inspector		Attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
11926	Alan Alder	Team inspector	Science	
11830	Jonathan Banks	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages Post-16 German	
31146	Pamela Brooks	Team inspector	English	
17132	Julie Copas	Team inspector	Post-16 Psychology	
12971	Ann Davies	Team inspector	Physical education	
10170	Anthony Drane	Team inspector	Post-16 English Post-16 Drama and theatre studies	
15594	Janice Felce	Team inspector	Post-16 Business education Post-16 Health and social care	
23323	Janet Harvey	Team inspector	Music	
5028	Margaret Jones	Team inspector	History	
11684	Frances Le Pla	Team inspector	Religious education	How well are students taught? How good are curricular and other opportunities? (2)
18967	Brenda Loydell	Team inspector	Mathematics	
19533	Jan Martin	Team inspector	Special educational needs English as an additional language	Special educational needs assessment
12969	Ian Middleton	Team inspector	Art and design	
8119	David Milham	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
12968	Jon Parker	Team inspector	Design and technology	

12959	Michael Revell	Team inspector	Post-16 Chemistry	
12957	John Stout	Team inspector	Geography Post-16 Geography	
15640	David Thompson	Team inspector	Post-16 Mathematics	Assessment

** Please note – all sixth form subjects were sampled. Those listed above were inspected fully and are reported separately in Part E of the report.*

The inspection contractor was:

*Mr M Lovett
NIAS (Northamptonshire Inspection and Advisory Service)
Inspection Division
Cliftonville Centre
Cliftonville Road
Northampton
NN1 5BW*

Telephone no: 01604 259876

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Complaints Manager
Inspection Quality Division
The Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

Please note the following terms used in the report

ASDAN	Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network
AVCE	Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education
GCSE	General Certificate of Education
GNVQ	General National Vocational Qualification
ICT	Information and communication technology
Key Stage 3	Years 7 to 9 (ages 11 to 14)
Key Stage 4	Years 10 and 11 (ages 14 to 16)
LEA	Local Education Authority
PE	Physical education
PSHE+C	Personal, social and health education and citizenship
RE	Religious education
SEN	Special educational needs

REPORT CONTENTS

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

Page 7

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

ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM

PART B: COMMENTARY

Paragraph

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

1 - 47

The school's results and students' achievements
Students' attitudes, values and personal development

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

48 - 84

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

85 - 119

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

120 - 137

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS

138 - 143

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

144 - 165

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

166

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

167 - 176

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

177 - 305

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

306 - 376

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Aylesford School is a mixed comprehensive school for students aged 11 to 19. It has 1001 students on roll of whom 117 are in the sixth form. There are equal numbers of girls and boys. The school is average in size for schools with sixth forms. The proportion of students identified as having special educational needs (SEN) of compulsory school age (33.1%) is above the national average. Of these, a well above average proportion (6.4%) have statements of SEN. Most have literacy difficulties, but a significant minority have emotional and behaviour problems, and a few are physically, hearing or visually impaired. Almost all students (94.8%) are of white British heritage. There are 40 students who have English as an additional language. None qualify for additional funding to support language acquisition but some do need extra help, which they are given. Standards on entry are below average.

The school is situated in the south-western area of Warwick. It largely serves an urban area containing a broad mix of private and former local authority housing. Parts are classified by Warwickshire County Council as experiencing moderate social disadvantage; 103 students (10.3%) are eligible for free school meals. About 25 percent of students live in surrounding villages. Of the students with special educational needs, about 50 percent live outside the normal area from which the school draws its intake. The school has recently made an application to become a specialist languages college.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school has been undergoing a period of transition under the leadership of its headteacher, who has been in post for just under one year. Prior to January 2001, there had been a period of four terms when the school had temporary management. Standards are below average on entry at age 11, especially in literacy. By age 14, standards in tests have been above the national average in recent years. Examination results at ages 16 and 18 have been broadly in line, with some subjects above average. Three-quarters of the teaching in Years 7 to 11 is of good quality or better; one third is very good. Sixth-form teaching is even better than this. Procedures for promoting and monitoring students' personal and social development are good. Good management is ensuring that the school is moving forward on an agenda to raise standards further. Moderate funding is prudently managed and the school gives good value for money. Good strategies for the school's future development are set out in the School Improvement Plan. It has a good capacity to achieve its targets. Aylesford School has many strengths and these far outweigh its few weaknesses.

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

- The headteacher's leadership in managing change, supported well by the senior team.
- Students make good progress in learning from a below average starting point.
- Good standards are being achieved in Year 11 in English, history, geography, information and communication technology (ICT) when taught as a separate subject, and music.
- A higher proportion of good, very good and excellent teaching than usual.
- Literacy skills are developed very well across subjects.
- Good progress is made by students with special educational needs.
- Students demonstrate very good attitudes to learning and good behaviour.
- Personal, social, health education and citizenship, together with careers education, are strong.
- Target-setting enables students to understand how to make progress in the next stage of their learning.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- Co-ordination of ICT taught in different subjects.
- Boys' attainment to match more closely the above-average standards reached by girls.
- In the sixth form, the co-ordination of studies that broaden students' outlook on life, including RE.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in November 1996. Since then there have been many changes. There is a new headteacher, deputy head and senior management team. The school now has just over 100 additional students. Teaching time has been increased by 1.5 hours. There has been an increase of 25 students who have statements of SEN. The number of students receiving free school meals has doubled. Key Stage 3 tests and GCSE results have risen more rapidly than in schools nationally. In the sixth form, results have improved considerably. Attendance has improved by 1.6%. The very positive attitudes and behaviour of students have been maintained. These improvements have occurred while the school's intake has become more disadvantaged.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			Similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	C	C	C	C
A-levels/AS-levels	C	A	N/a	

Key

Well above average	A
Above average	B
Average	C
Below average	D
Well below average	E

At age 11, students' results in national tests taken before transfer are below average.

At age 14, the school's overall performance in national tests was above the national average in 2001. Standards in English were well above average; in mathematics and science they were average. Results were above average when compared with schools* taking students from similar backgrounds. In lessons, standards are similar to those expected nationally when taken overall, with girls performing better than boys in several subjects.

At age 16, when the results of all students are taken into account, performance was average in 2001. However, the proportion of students obtaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A*-C was above the national average. Girls gained better results than boys. When compared with schools* from similar contexts, results were average. Good results were obtained in English literature, geography, German and combined science. In lessons, standards are broadly average when taken overall, with girls achieving better than boys in several subjects.

At age 18, results in A-level or GNVQ equivalent examinations were well above average in 2000, the latest year for which comparative national data is available. Boys' performance was well above average and girls' was in line with average. No national data is available yet for 2001 but unverified results suggest that they were marginally below average. In 2001, results were very good in English literature and history. They were above average in general studies, geography and mathematics. In lessons, the performance of current students is broadly

average when taken across all subjects for the stage of courses being studied. Girls and boys are reaching similar standards.

The school sets performance targets annually which have a realistic element of challenge. In 2001, it met its targets, which had been very accurately predicted. Students achieve well and make good progress, particularly in Years 7 to 9. The larger-than-average number of students with SEN make good progress, especially in reading and writing.

** Similar schools are those taking broadly the same proportion of students that receive free school meals.*

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. The vast majority of students are highly motivated, eager to learn and work hard. Only a few find it difficult to concentrate for the full duration of the lesson. Sixth-form students have excellent attitudes and are highly motivated. Many students take part in a wide range of extra-curricular activities.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Students behave very well in class and around the school. They are trustworthy and courteous. Almost all learning takes place in a calm and purposeful atmosphere. There is only a very small proportion of classes in which a few students disrupt the learning of others.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Students respect each other's contributions in class and support one another. They are considerate and mature. Many take full advantage of opportunities to show initiative and responsibility. Relationships are strong at all ages and these have a significant, positive impact on students' learning.
Attendance	Very good. Attendance is well above average and unauthorised absence well below. Punctuality to school and lessons is very good.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching is good overall. This quality was observed in almost 75 percent of lessons in Years 7 to 11 and over 80 percent in the sixth form. Very good teaching occurred in over 35 percent of all lessons and 10 percent were excellent. This large proportion of good and better teaching enables students to make good progress in their learning. Across all years, 5 percent of teaching was unsatisfactory, mainly in Years 7 to 9. This was mainly seen in the lessons of temporary teachers or when skills of behaviour management were weak.

In English, teaching is of very good quality in Years 7 to 11, and in mathematics it is good. In science, teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 and it is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. In other subjects, the largest proportion of good teaching across Years 7 to 11 is in geography, history, ICT, music, and in personal, social and health education and citizenship (PSHE+C). It is also good in design and technology in Years 7 to 9 and in art and design, drama, and physical education (PE) in Years 10 and 11. No subject has a significant proportion of unsatisfactory teaching.

Skills of literacy are taught well. The teaching of reading and writing in Years 7 to 9 enables students to reach above average standards by age 14: a significant achievement because of the large number of students who have literacy difficulties when they enter the school. Teaching of numeracy across subjects has not been a school priority, but the National Numeracy Strategy has been adopted and standards are as typically seen in secondary schools.

Strengths in learning are: practising basic skills across subjects (particularly reading, writing, speaking and listening but also presenting work graphically); co-operation between students; applying the teacher's advice on how to meet targets; and, for students with SEN, working closely with learning support assistants. In a very small number of lessons, learning weaknesses occur owing to lack of application and misbehaviour by a small minority of students.

The school is meeting its aim to cater for all students' learning needs well. Its policy for teaching gifted and talented students is being applied effectively through appropriate grouping of students and setting extension tasks. Students with learning difficulties are taught well and they make good progress. However, the small number of students with the most severe difficulties with basic skills requires more focused support. Students with SEN are included very well in all aspects of learning and all gain appropriate qualifications at age 16.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. Arrangements for teaching National Curriculum subjects are effective, except when ICT is taught across different subjects. There is a good range of courses in Years 10 and 11, including work related learning activities. In the sixth form, there is a good range of subjects, including vocational courses. In Years 7 to 11, personal, social and health education and citizenship (PSHE+C) prepares students very effectively for life. In the sixth form, these aspects and religious education (RE), are not co-ordinated well enough. Careers education is very good. There is a very good range of extra-curriculum activities, particularly drama, music and sports.
Provision for students with special educational needs (SEN)	Good. Students make good progress in literacy skills and sound progress in numeracy. They attain well on a wide range of certificate courses in Years 10 and 11. Teaching is very well organised, including the deployment of learning support assistants. Students with behavioural difficulties are supported very well.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	Good. The learning needs of the small proportion of students for whom English is an additional language are assessed accurately on entry. They are supported well and make good progress.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good overall. Moral and social provision is very good in assemblies, PSHE+C and in the school's well-ordered routines. Concern for others is evident in all years, especially in the sixth form. Teachers' planning for spiritual development is better than usually seen. Cultural development is good, especially in arts subjects, history, geography and RE but there are insufficient opportunities to learn about the culturally diverse society of Britain.
How well the school cares for its students	Very well. Teachers know the students well. Heads of year promote the welfare of students very well. There is an ethos of valuing. Students are very aware of their progress, and target-setting is used very effectively to raise standards. Information to students about how they can take the next step in their learning is better than usually seen.

How well the school works in partnership with parents	Good . There is an effective partnership with parents. They receive regular information about school life and their child's progress. Computer-generated, annual subject reports are variable in quality: some are wordy and imprecise. Others, such as physical education, give clear statements about attainment and progress. The school responds very rapidly when there are concerns.
---	--

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher provides very good leadership, following a lengthy period of temporary management. She has implemented major changes to the work and life of the school with a high level of expertise. A cohesive management team fulfils its responsibilities very well. Heads of year provide very good leadership in Years 7 to 11. In the sixth form, good leadership is provided to tutors, but some aspects of curricular management require better co-ordination. Subject management is mostly good but science requires stronger leadership. Management of learning for students with SEN is very effective.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very well. Governors provide clear strategic direction. Their committee structure is very effective in assisting the governing body to determine its priorities. The chairman and committee chairs provide capable leadership. There are effective strategies for monitoring and evaluating school performance. Governors have a very clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. Robust systems that link governors and school management to different aspects of the school's work, enable monitoring and evaluation to be undertaken very effectively. A good range of data is collected on students' performance but the analysis of the information collected has been insufficiently analytical. ICT systems are being used effectively to store and evaluate information on standards and progress.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The budget is very clearly matched to priorities in the School Improvement Plan. 'Best Value' approaches have been adopted to inform important decisions, thereby ensuring that all options are fully explored. In most aspects, the budget matches average spending patterns. Teachers' skills are well matched to subjects taught overall. The larger than average number of learning support assistants are very well deployed. Learning resources are mainly satisfactory but in a few subjects there is a shortage of textbooks and modern equipment. Accommodation is unsatisfactory for the numbers educated. There are insufficient large spaces for daily assemblies, too few classrooms, insufficient social areas and no all-weather sports surface.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students are expected to work hard.• Their child makes good progress.• Teaching is good.• They feel comfortable about approaching the school if they have any concerns.• The school helps students to become more mature.• The school is well led and managed.• The school works closely with parents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The amount of work given to students.• The range of interesting activities.

The large majority of parents returning the questionnaire and attending the meeting for parents agreed with the positive comments. Relatively few parents expressed negative views. The inspection confirms the positive comments. The amount of work set is appropriately matched to students' capabilities and ages. The range and content of activities in lessons are good, and broadly similar to those seen in similar schools. Students have more opportunities to participate in interesting extra-curricular activities than usual.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form of this average-size comprehensive school has 117 students. It is marginally larger than in recent years. There is an even number of girls and boys. Almost all students are of white British heritage. About 40 percent of students from Year 11 continue into the sixth form and small numbers join from other schools. The 16+ examination results have been broadly average in recent years. For a school of its size, Aylesford School offers an appropriately wide range of two-year courses to AS/A2 (General Certificate of Education) and AVCE (Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education) qualifications. Two GNVQ (General National Vocational Qualification) courses are also offered as one-year courses. Almost all students embark on a two-year programme of study. Music is taught jointly with students from another local school. Five additional GNVQ courses are offered; these are taught at a local college of further education. This year, no students started a college link course.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The school offers places to all students who can benefit from the courses offered. Most students are learning effectively and are making good progress. In over 80 percent of lessons observed the teaching was at least good and in over 40 percent it was very good. Students' learning is monitored effectively in subjects and they get good feedback on how well they are performing. Examination results in 2001 were marginally below the provisional average* but they were well above the national average in 2000. Boys' results are better than those of girls.

The subject curriculum is organised well. Tutors are managed effectively and they actively monitor students' learning and personal development. A greater level of co-ordination is required for the programme of enrichment activities that provides opportunities for students to consider moral, ethical and religious questions. There is a good spirit in the sixth form. Many students participate in activities that support younger students and most are engaged in charity fund-raising. All participate in work experience in Year 12. The sixth form is cost-effective.

** Only provisional national data was available at the time of publication.*

Strengths

- Much of the teaching is of good quality and a significant amount (about 40%) is very good.
- Students make good progress in their learning overall.
- Examination results in English literature, general studies and mathematics.
- Tutors support students well in monitoring their academic and personal development.
- Advice about future careers and educational opportunities is of good quality.
- Working with younger students and participating in charity activities enhances personal development.

What could be improved

- Planning of enrichment activities so that opportunities for students to consider moral, ethical and religious issues are more coherent.
- Learning Key Skills requires better co-ordination so teachers know the commitments of students.
- Monitoring the participation of students during the weekly sports and recreational activities afternoon.

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Good. Examination results have been above average in recent years. Current students are working at above average standards. They are highly motivated as a result of good teaching. Assessment is a strength.
Chemistry	Good. Results were average in 2001 but well above in 2000. Current students have a good understanding and learn effectively. Teaching provides students with regular feedback on standards. Computers are rarely used in lessons.
Business	Good. Results have been broadly average. Current students work at average standards. Teaching is good. Attendance at business conferences and work experience placements provides relevant, practical learning experiences.
Health and social care	Satisfactory. Groups are small. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Standards are below average, but most students make steady progress in building on their previous GCSE results. They benefit from their work placements.
Drama and theatre studies	Very Good. Standards in performance are high, particularly in experimental drama. Stimulating learning activities are provided. Students benefit from experiences gained of live theatre with the on-site 'Playbox Theatre Company'.
Geography	Very good. Results in 2001 were above average. Standards of current students are a little above average. Most have good investigative skills. Teaching is very well organised: students gain from their coursework and fieldwork activities.
Psychology	Good. Standards are average overall. Students are making good progress in a new subject. The course is very well organised, with effective group tutorial work. The subject is being taught to large numbers in Year 12 for the first time.
English	Very good. Examination results were above average in 2000 and well above in 2001. Current students achieve very good standards. Excellent teaching leads to very effective learning. Students find the texts they study are stimulating.
German	Good. Currently, there are only students in Year 12. Standards are above average at this stage, particularly in comprehension skills. Teaching is good. Students are positive but some lack confidence in conversations in German.

In other subjects, a small sample of lessons was observed. Teaching was at least satisfactory overall. It was good in art and design and history, and very good in economics, information technology and travel and tourism.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Very well. There are very good systems for advice and guidance including; information about sixth form courses, induction, personal action planning and tutoring. High quality advice on future education and careers is given by tutors and Connexions Service staff. Students are set targets, progress is monitored

	effectively and they get regular feedback.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Sound. Management of subject provision is good. Tutoring is very effective. Co-ordination of wider aspects, such as the enrichment programme (introducing moral, ethical and religious issues), Key Skills and recreational activities, requires strengthening. Assessment information on individual performance is monitored and action is taken to assist students to improve standards. The governing body takes a full role in making strategic decisions for sixth form provision.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers are accessible if they have any difficulties. Courses are suited to individual talents. Clear, printed information is given on courses. They are taught well and challenged to work hard. They are helped and encouraged in their studies. Work is thoroughly assessed. They enjoy being in the sixth form. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The range of worthwhile activities. Listening to sixth form students' views. Information about their progress.

The strength of the positive views expressed in the questionnaire, recorded above, far outweighed aspects that students felt can be improved. The inspection finds that sixth form students have a good range of academic and recreational activities. However, opportunities for considering values and beliefs can be improved. The voice of sixth form students is heard effectively through their representatives. Students spoken to by inspectors were positive about the information they are given on their progress, including the progress reports they receive.

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

□ Standards on entry

- 1 On entry, standards are below average. Over the past four years, the results of students in the national tests taken at age 11 have been below the national average. These are taken in English, mathematics and science in the final term at primary schools. In 2001, results in English were well below the national average. There is a slightly better picture for higher attainers whose results have been close to average, but they dipped below in 2001. Tests taken soon after students entered Aylesford School in 2001, indicate that students' general attainment is slightly better than their national test results. Among the intake, there is a higher proportion of students with special educational needs than average. The number of students who have statements of learning and behaviour difficulties is well above average.

□ Performance in tests and examinations at ages 14 and 16

- 2 At age 14, students' results in national tests above average overall. They are broadly similar to the national average in mathematics and science, but in English, results are well above average. This pattern has been consistent over the past three years. The trend for improvement in the school has been above the national trend. Girls' results have been much better than boys' in English, but girls' and boys' results are close in mathematics and science. This reflects the national picture. Test results show that students make good progress during Years 7 to 9: very good progress is made in English.
- 3 At age 16, results in the GCSE or GNVQ have been in line with the national average in recent years when considering all students entered. In 2001, the proportion of students gaining five or more passes at grades A*-C was above the average but for those gaining five or more passes at grades A*-G, results were below. Results have shown a rising trend. This has been more rapid than the improvement nationally. Girls' results have been better than the national average for girls. The difference between girls' and boys' results has been wider than in schools generally over the past three years.
- 4 Some students take courses leading to the Certificate of Educational Achievement, Basic Skills Awards and ASDAN (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network) Youth Award. Completion rates are good. Their results are not included in the national figures.

□ Test and examination performance compared with similar schools

- 5 At age 11, the results of the intake have been below average in recent years when compared with schools taking students from similar backgrounds*. In English the performance is often well below, including 2001.
- 6 At age 14, national test results have been broadly average in recent years in mathematics and science when compared with similar schools*. In English, results have been above average and, in 2001, well above.
- 7 At age 16, GCSE results have been broadly average with those of similar schools* taking account of all students and all subjects. They were again average in 2001.

** National statistics which compare schools with similar backgrounds are based on the number of students eligible for free school meals. This indicator alone fails to represent fully the context of Aylesford School because of its higher-than-average number of students with SEN. As a result, the school is unfavourably represented in comparisons made with other schools.*

❑ **Standards of students who are currently in Years 7 to 11**

- 8 Overall, standards are average for their ages when taken across all subjects in the final years of Key Stages 3 and 4. Students make good progress from the time they enter the school to the end of statutory education in Year 11. They make particularly good progress in their literacy skills during their early years at Aylesford School.
- 9 The summary below indicates the standards observed in lessons during the inspection and from samples of students' work. There is wide variation in the standards achieved by individual students and groups from the highest to lowest achievers. The judgements reflect the overall picture in each subject. (Subject standards are recorded in greater detail in Section D of the report).
- 10 In **communications**, all students take English and Modern Foreign Languages. In **English**, standards of the intake are below average and in some years well below. Students make significant progress in reading and writing; by Year 9 their standards are above average. They continue to progress well so that by Year 11, many produce deep personal responses in written and spoken form, especially girls. In **French**, standards are broadly average in Year 9. Most have made reasonable progress in understanding familiar words and phrases, but speaking skills are more hesitant. There is a similar picture in Year 11. In **German**, students have made good progress by Year 9 in the shorter time they have had in the language. The higher attainers, who take German in Year 11, achieve above-average standards.
- 11 In **mathematics**, standards are average in Years 9 and 11. Students consolidate their understanding of mathematical processes well and use correct terms. Good standards are seen in classes of higher attainers. The progress of lower attainers and special educational needs (SEN) students is enhanced by good use of learning support assistants.
- 12 In **science**, the standard of work is above average in Year 9 and reflects good progress. Students' understanding of scientific concepts and application of practical skills are well developed for their age. In Year 11, standards are average overall: work shows greater variation between high and lower attainers than in Year 9. Girls make better progress than boys in Years 10 and 11 because their work is more accurate and complete.
- 13 In **humanities**, students make very good progress across Years 7 to 11 in **geography**. Standards are above average throughout. Students have a good knowledge of places and understanding of geographical ideas. Their investigative skills are well developed. In **history**, standards are above average in Years 9 and 11. Students have a good knowledge and understanding of the periods they have studied. By Year 11, they use good skills in comparing and contrasting sources of historical evidence. In **religious education (RE)**, standards are average in Years 9 and 11. Students have a sound knowledge and understanding of the religions they study. They make steady progress in research topics in Year 11.
- 14 In **performing arts**, standards in **drama** are very good. Students demonstrate high levels of oral and performance skills in Years 9 and 11: written work is average. In music, students reach the expected standard in Year 9 although individual capability varies considerably. Students in the Year 11 option are reaching very good standards in composing and performing skills. In **physical education (PE)**, standards are in line with those normally seen in Years 9 and 11. Some students develop high-level skills in team games. In examination groups, students' knowledge and understanding are at the level expected for this stage of the course.
- 15 In **technology**, standards in **art and design** are average in Years 9 and 11. Work in colour and use of abstract images is strong. Students make good progress in **design and technology** across a wide range of materials to achieve average

standards in Year 9. Standards remain average in Year 11 overall, but are higher in food technology and textiles than in graphics and resistant materials. In **information and communication technology (ICT)**, standards are good in Years 9 and 11 in separate ICT lessons. Where ICT is used in subjects, standards are average, but some subjects give few opportunities for students to learn or apply ICT skills.

- 16 In other subjects, standards are average in **business studies** and above in **economics**. Students studying for the **Youth Award** are achieving standards in line with their ability. Many have good skills in presenting their work.

❑ **Standards of different groups of students**

- 17 Students with SEN make good progress to improve their reading and writing skills, especially during Years 7 to 9. Almost all develop a sound awareness of spelling rules, phonics and sentence construction. They make sound progress in improving numeracy skills. However, the small number with intense learning difficulties make slower progress. The consolidation of literacy and numeracy skills enables students to make better progress than is usually seen in most subjects. By Year 11, all are working towards some form of national accreditation, and a significant majority achieve one or more passes at GCSE.
- 18 Girls' performance in lessons is better than boys in a number of subjects. This is seen, for example, in: English for higher and lower attainers; mathematics written work in Years 7 to 9; geography and history for lower attainers in Years 7 and 9; and science, design and technology and RE in Years 10 and 11.
- 19 The standards of students from ethnic minority backgrounds are in line with those of other students across the age range. There is a similar picture for the great majority of students for whom English is an additional language.
- 20 Gifted students make good progress overall. They benefit from working together in subject sets and they perform particularly well in national tests at age 14 compared with the national averages, especially in English. Talented students make good progress, particularly in drama, music and sports.

❑ **Standards in literacy**

- 21 Reading skills are good, overall, across subjects in Years 9 and 11: students read aloud with greater confidence than is usually seen. Although a larger-than-average proportion of students enter the school with low reading levels, they benefit from the specific techniques they are taught and their skills improve. Writing skills are above average. Most students write well in a variety of forms and styles. Speaking and listening skills are good.

❑ **Standards in numeracy**

- 22 Across subjects, the standard of numeracy is average. Good numeracy skills are developed in food technology, geography and ICT. In mathematics, numeracy skills are well developed, particularly with higher attainers. The use of mental mathematics at the beginning of lessons has had a positive influence on students' speed and accuracy when making mental calculations.

❑ **Performance targets**

- 23 The school sets targets annually to predict performance over a two-year period, in conjunction with the Local Education Authority. In 2001, the school met its targets which had been very accurately projected. For 2002, the school has set targets to increase performance further. Targets for students to achieve 5+ GCSE grades A*-C and 1+ GCSE grade A*-G have a realistic element of challenge. The 2002 target for the average point score is modest and it was achieved in 2001.

❑ **Parents' comments on standards**

- 24 In parents' questionnaire responses, a very large majority indicated that they believe

their child makes good progress at school. The inspection findings confirm parents' views. Students make good progress in most subjects across Years 7 to 11.

❑ **Progress since the previous inspection**

- 25 In 1996, standards were stated to be broadly in line with those found nationally in Years 9 and 11. Good progress was reported with respect to students' prior attainments. Girls' results were better than boys'. Students with SEN were stated to make good progress. This inspection finds a similar picture, although the standard of the intake in Year 7 is now lower. Since the previous inspection, standards in GCSE results have risen at a higher rate than average. This represents positive achievement over the past five years.

Sixth form

❑ **Performance in examinations**

- 26 Results have been broadly in line with the national average of students entered for two or more General Certificate of Education (GCE) A-Levels or AS equivalent examinations in recent years. These are measured from the average points score of students. In 2001, provisional results* indicate that they were marginally below average. However, there has been variation across years, with results in 2000 being well above average but they were below in 1999. The number of students entered for the Advanced and Intermediate General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQ) has been very small over this period. In A-level examinations, girls' results have been below average, but those of boys have varied above and below. Results in 2000* were well above the national average when they are compared with the GCSE results gained by students two years earlier. This indicates very good progress. A provisional analysis of results for 2001 indicates that students' progress from GCSE was steady.
- 27 The numbers entered for each individual subject have varied widely. Some subjects have had quite large entries, while in others, numbers have been small. For the subjects where there has been a reasonably large entry, results in English Literature, general studies and mathematics have been consistently above average over the past three years. The least successful subjects have been computer studies and physics. In 2001, students achieved well above average in English Literature and history, and above average in general studies, geography and mathematics. Results in art and design, communication studies, computer studies, design and technology and physics were well below the national average.
- 28 At age 18, no comparative data is published that compares schools taking students from similar backgrounds.

** The latest year for which national comparisons are available for post-16 results is 2000.*

❑ **Standards of students currently in Years 12 and 13**

- 29 The standards of current students are average overall. This judgement is based on evidence of lessons observed during the inspection and from a scrutiny of students' work. In Year 13, standards in English are well above average. In business studies, computer studies, drama and theatre studies, geography and mathematics standards are above average for this stage of the second year of the course. In other subjects, standards are broadly in line with course expectations. Standards in the one-year AS psychology are average. In GNVQ health and social care, standards are average in Year 13 but below for the Year 12 Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) course. In GNVQ travel and tourism, standards are broadly average in Year 13.
- 30 Most students in Years 12 and 13 are making good progress at this stage in their courses, based on their level of entry. Girls and boys are making similar progress.

Gifted students are demonstrating an appropriately high capacity for work. Their capability in critical analysis, presenting arguments from different perspectives and evaluation are appropriately high. The very small numbers of students with low standards on entry to the AVCE health and social care course are finding the depth of theoretical study too challenging, but they are progressing well on practical assignments.

□ **Standards in Key Skills**

- 31 Students are demonstrating an appropriate command of Key Skills. Communication skills are in line with expectation. Students show an obvious growth in their capability to record and analyse evidence. For example, in psychology, students make good links between theories, and contrast ethical issues arising from different models. In business studies, students apply concepts to topical situations using subject terminology accurately, and they use specialist journals for reference in geography. They are developing appropriate skills in researching situations and setting out arguments to justify their views, as in English when they work on texts from First World War literature. Orally, many discuss their ideas well. High levels of discourse were observed in drama and theatre studies.
- 32 Application of number is appropriately developed in context in a number of subjects. For example, in health and social care, students used tally sheets accurately when learning about genetics; in chemistry they manipulated data soundly and produced graphical summaries of their findings; and in geography they used a range of statistical techniques when studying a topic on the impact of tourism.
- 33 Students apply ICT skills to good effect in most of their post-16 studies; many are confident users of specific computer programs. For example, in travel and tourism they use an appropriately wide range of programs to analyse and record evidence; in physics, data-logging is effectively used to record velocities; and in computer studies, students develop high level skills in database design in Year 13.
- 34 Skills in independent learning develop at an appropriately steady rate. Most students engage in extended assignments and examination coursework using a sound methodology. They use the Internet extensively for information searches. At the time of the inspection, some groups of students in Years 12 and 13 were in the early stages of adopting a supported self-study approach to learning. It is too early to judge its impact on improving students' personal learning skills or standards achieved. A satisfactory start has been made, but in mathematics and physics, students and staff are taking longer to adapt than in other subjects.
- 35 In recent years the school has had a good record of students gaining access to places in higher education in studies of their choice. Others have gone on to colleges of further education; for example, to complete foundation courses in art and design before proceeding to degree courses. A smaller proportion has moved directly to employment. Of these, practically all students have been followed-up and they have got jobs.
- 36 Since the previous inspection, standards in the sixth form have risen more rapidly than in schools nationally.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

□ **Attitudes**

- 37 Students' attitudes to school are very good. Many state that they like school and they willingly take part in what it has to offer. There is good involvement in the wide range of extra-curricular activities including drama, music and sport. Similarly, students' attitudes to learning are very good. The vast majority are highly motivated. They learn willingly and apply themselves consistently to the tasks they are set. In a small

number of classes and on a few occasions, some students get distracted and find it hard to concentrate for the full period, and this slows their progress.

❑ **Behaviour**

- 38 Students' behaviour is very good. This has a significant, positive impact on their learning. There is an ethos of trust and students show respect for each other's and the school's property. There is very little evidence of bullying and, whenever it occurs, it is quickly addressed. The rate of exclusions is low when compared with similar schools. All the exclusions recorded last year were for good reasons. Good support is provided for students who are at risk of exclusion.

❑ **Personal development**

- 39 The personal development of students is very good. Students are polite, thoughtful, and helpful. They learn to listen to and consider the consequences of what they do. They respect each other's contributions, and support each other. A good example of this was observed in a Year 8 personal, social, health education and citizenship lesson (PSHE+C), when groups confidently prepared role-play presentations giving advice to young smokers. They did this without embarrassment, and the others in the class made sensible and supportive contributions in the subsequent discussions. It was clear that students trusted their peers' support. This is typical of the personal development observed in most lessons. When students perform in drama and music, applause is genuine and generous. On occasions when students misbehave, they are encouraged to reflect on what has happened and to consider the impact on others. If they have offended others they are quick to apologise.
- 40 Students respond very well to the many opportunities to take initiative and responsibility. Older students serve in leadership roles on the School Council, as prefects, running clubs, organising charity collections and assisting in sports activities. The participation of all students in the work experience programme in Year 10 promotes maturity. Younger students are provided with good opportunities to learn to take responsibilities by helping with routines around the school, such as tutor group monitors, assisting in the library and taking messages in reception. Some in each tutor group serve as representatives on the School Council. In each year group students are being trained to run a peer-counselling scheme.
- 41 Students' relationships with each other, their teachers and other adults in the school are very good. They work effectively in pairs and small groups, such as organising role-plays in drama, and collaborative activities in design and technology, geography and mathematics. The good opportunities provided for students' personal development have a very positive effect on their attitudes to school, behaviour and learning.

❑ **Attendance**

- 42 Attendance is very good. Last year it was 93.1 percent, which is well above the rate for comprehensive schools serving a similar age range. Unauthorised absence was 0.4 percent, which is very low compared with similar schools. Attendance could be higher still if students avoided taking holiday, which interrupts their education, during term time. Punctuality is good at the start of the day. Students arrive in class punctually and lessons start promptly.

❑ **Progress since the previous inspection**

- 43 The very positive standards in attitudes, values, and personal development recorded in 1996 have been maintained. Attendance has improved, and unauthorised absence has declined faster than the national average.

Sixth form

❑ **Attitudes**

- 44 Attitudes of students are very good: they have very positive attitudes to their school. They are enthusiastic, keen to excel and work very hard. Commitment to and interest in subjects studied is very good. They enjoy the challenge of more demanding work. A large majority willingly gets involved with sixth form activities. They also continue to be involved in the full life of the school through the prefect system, the School Council and taking part in activities, such as drama and music productions.

❑ **Personal development**

- 45 Students' personal development is very good. They are mature and confident, work effectively in groups and respect each other's views. The relationships between students and teachers are excellent and this has a significant positive effect on learning. For example, in mathematics, students rigorously pursue their questioning, both with the teacher and their peers, to make sure they fully understand what is taught. There is no embarrassment or fear of showing ignorance, and students willingly co-operate and support each other. Students are prepared to take initiative and responsibility for their own work. For example, they carry out questionnaires in the community, and they make good use of the many opportunities to research and present prepared views to the rest of the class. Outside lessons, they are willing to take responsibility for organising clubs and activities. Small, but keen groups of students, take part in sports leadership and Outward-Bound courses. They show a consideration for others through community service: looking after younger students in the 'buddy' scheme; raising funds for the developing world through the sixth form One World Group; and organising a busy and successful charities week.

❑ **Attendance**

- 46 The recorded level of attendance is satisfactory. Last year, attendance in Year 12 was 91.4 percent, which compares favourably with the attendance in Year 11. Attendance in Year 13 was 88.3 percent. This reduction in recorded attendance for Year 13 measures their attendance in class. Year 13 students are given more discretion over the use of their study time than Year 12. When they do not have lessons, some students are allowed to study at home and sometimes arrive after registration has closed. The record of attendance is not, therefore, an accurate picture because it fails to include all who have permission to study off site. Discussions with teachers, parents and students confirm that attendance for both Year 12 and 13 is good. This was confirmed during the inspection week.
- 47 Since the previous inspection, sixth form students have maintained their good contribution to the wider school community. The previous report made no specific reference to the attitudes or attendance of sixth form students.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

- 48 Teaching across the school is good. It leads to effective learning for the great majority of students.
- 49 Across Years 7 to 11, 33 percent of the teaching was very good or excellent. Teaching was at least good in 74 percent of lessons seen. The great majority of the remaining teaching was satisfactory. However, in 6 percent of lessons there were weaknesses sufficient to make them unsatisfactory. Most of the unsatisfactory lessons were in Years 7 and 8. Of the unsatisfactory lessons seen, only one was poor. Temporary teachers, or those whose behaviour management skills were weak, often taught these lessons.
- 50 There is proportionally more very good or excellent teaching across the school than is usually seen. The proportion of good teaching is about 10 percent higher than was

recorded in the most recent report on national standards in education. The proportion of unsatisfactory teaching is lower than that recorded nationally.

- 51 The largest proportion of consistently good teaching seen in Years 7 to 11 was in English, geography, history, ICT, mathematics, music and PSHE+C. It was also good in design and technology and science in Years 7 to 9 and in art and design, drama and physical education in Years 10 and 11. Excellent teaching was seen in individual lessons in design and technology, drama, English, geography, history, music, PSHE+C and science. In these lessons, the quality of students' learning was impressive.

- 52 There are only occasional, important shortcomings in lessons.

❑ **Good teaching**

- 53 Where the teaching observed was at least good, it exhibited a combination of many of the strengths listed below.

- 54 Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of their subject and convey enthusiasm.

The great majority of teachers demonstrate a good command of their subject and have a good understanding of the National Curriculum and examination syllabuses. Because of this, teaching is confident and well informed. An example was seen in a Year 9 history lesson, where the teacher's in depth description of the life of a RAF pilot captivated the class and helped students to learn more about events in World War II. In a mathematics lesson, a teacher introduced students to new work on scale by illustrating how artists use perspective.

- 55 Important basic skills are taught, such as reading, writing and calculation, that are necessary for students to succeed in subjects.

In a Year 7 geography lesson on settlement, the teacher ensured students knew and understood words such as urban, rural and linear, so that they could write about the topic using the correct vocabulary. In a music lesson, the teacher helped students to develop their speaking skills by asking them to describe the music they were listening to in sentences rather than single words. In a Year 9 mathematics lesson, the teacher gave the students a series of verbal questions to help them use and improve their mental calculation skills. In a Year 11 English lesson, the teacher gave low-attaining students an appropriate structure to help them organise their written response to a poem.

- 56 Students are managed well, and very good working relationships are fostered.

In a Year 9 Drama lesson, while one group performed, the teacher cast the rest in the role of director, so that they could suggest ways to develop and improve their acting. This skilful class management resulted in a purposeful learning atmosphere where students became responsible for the development of ideas to improve the performance. In a Year 10 ICT lesson, the teacher's good classroom management ensured that all students were able to work on a variety of programs in completing their coursework task. In a Year 8 PSHE+C lesson on smoking, the teacher handled the feedback from discussion groups skilfully so that all students had the opportunity to express their ideas.

- 57 Good use is made of support staff in lessons so that students with SEN make good progress.

In a Year 7 RE lesson, the teacher helped individuals to make good progress in their knowledge of Divali, with good support from the learning support assistant (LSA). In a Year 10 ICT lesson, the teacher used the LSA to work with individual students to enable them to make good progress when designing a business leaflet.

- 58 Students' work is marked and assessed thoroughly, providing them with feedback on their progress and what they need to do to improve further.

In a Year 11 design and technology lesson, the teacher returned the students' portfolios with helpful, annotated comments suggesting improvements. In a Year 10 music lesson, the teacher helped students assess their own and others' performances and gave individual targets for improvement. In Years 10 and 11 French, oral feedback during lessons and

written comments in exercise books ensured students knew how well they were progressing and what they had to do to improve.

- 59 In addition to the particular strengths identified above, the overall standard of teaching was good because there was a great deal of consistency across the school. This teaching enables students to make good progress in their learning.

❑ **Excellent teaching**

- 60 In a higher proportion of lessons than usual, teachers demonstrate many of the characteristics of the good teaching set out above, but they also bring advanced skills which inspire students. In these lessons, students accelerate their learning and reach standards that are well above those that could have been anticipated. Teachers challenge the bounds of students' potential by setting ambitious expectations. Students find learning hard but enjoyable.

❑ **Satisfactory teaching**

- 61 In one fifth of lessons the teaching is sound. These lessons have neither notable weaknesses nor causes for concern. In many of these lessons, students are attentive and follow the activities well. Typically, there are not enough imaginative opportunities for students to investigate situations. These lessons are adequately planned, taught effectively and enable students to make steady progress in their learning. They lack the intense engagement of students' interest that provides strong motivation and rapid progress.

❑ **Unsatisfactory teaching**

- 62 In the few lessons in which teaching was unsatisfactory, there are one or more important weaknesses. In these lessons, the pace of learning is usually too slow. Aspects of unsatisfactory teaching have the following features.
- 63 Insufficiently clear explanations of what students should be able to understand or do.
In these lessons, students often begin their work well but, because they do not have enough guidance on how to proceed or what is expected of them, they quickly lose interest. Often, they do not complete the tasks set.
- 64 Low expectations.
Learning in these lessons is well below students' capabilities because they spend too much time on simple tasks and are not challenged to extend and apply what they have learned previously.
- 65 The inability to manage the class and control the students, who then disrupt the learning of others.
Failure to apply class management strategies and sanctions results in students who wish to learn being denied the opportunity to concentrate because of the disruptive activities of other students.

❑ **Teaching of students with special educational needs (SEN)**

- 66 Students with SEN are taught well by specialist and subject teachers. There is some very good team teaching. For example, in a Year 9 English lesson, students were taught by the SEN support teacher how to mark text to elicit answers. Generally, specialist SEN teachers are underused for basic skills teaching to enhance students' reading and writing skills when they support subject teachers. The role of learning support assistants has been very well developed. The delivery of the literacy skills Progress Units is improving rapidly.
- 67 In the few less effective lessons, the teachers' questions limited students' responses and there were few opportunities for developing independent or collaborative learning. In subjects, learning was less effective when it was matched to class

rather than personal needs.

❑ **Teaching of gifted and talented students**

- 68 The school has taken a number of appropriate measures to address the needs of gifted and talented students. For some lessons, the most able students work together in high-ability sets. Many teachers adapt their lessons well by planning learning activities and using specific resources that are targeted to the needs of gifted and talented students. These include setting extension reading, providing tasks that require an increased level of response and providing out-of-school enrichment activities such as master-classes. Good examples were seen, for example, in English, geography and mathematics. Talented students are supported through coaching in sports activities. Instrumentalists with musical talents receive appropriate support from peripatetic teachers. The school has identified students who have other talents, such being good in debating skills and in caring for others. It is aware that it needs to continue to increase the learning opportunities of these students in lessons and is actively addressing this through the School Improvement Plan, the work of the SEN co-ordinator and the Curriculum Area Teams.

❑ **Teaching of literacy**

- 69 The school has policy documents in place for the teaching of literacy. Subjects have built these into schemes of work, apart from RE where there is more work to be done. There is much good practice evident where teachers plan activities to help students develop their reading, writing and oral skills. For example, in English the National Literacy Strategy is implemented in Year 7 and students write in a wide variety of styles and forms. The Strategy is promoting good progress by many students with SEN. In mathematics, a new range of text-books caters for students of different abilities by providing reading materials at three separate levels. In history, at the end of a Year 9 lesson on the Second World War, the teacher encouraged reading, especially for boys, by introducing the class to a range of relevant novels. In a PHSE+C lesson on abortion, students were asked to read and discuss the information on a well-produced series of work cards. Students are taught the specialist vocabulary of each subject: key words are frequently seen on classroom walls. Teachers provide good opportunities for oral work in most subjects, with regular, whole-class and group discussion. In mathematics, teachers explicitly teach listening skills.

❑ **Teaching of numeracy**

- 70 The National Numeracy Strategy has been introduced well into mathematics in Years 7 to 9. Mental mathematics starters to lessons are used effectively to improve the speed and accuracy of students' mental calculations. There is a whole-school policy for numeracy across the curriculum but, at present, it is inconsistently applied across subjects. However, there are some good examples of numeracy skills being used and applied. In design and technology, students used their numeracy skills to construct star profiles. In GCSE geography, more-able students make good use of 'nearest neighbour' analysis to map the dispersion of services. In modern languages, students create bar charts to present the findings of surveys.

❑ **Teaching during tutor group sessions**

- 71 On three afternoons a week, students have a twenty-minute registration period with their form tutor. The great majority of teachers settle their groups well and deal with attendance and daily administration efficiently. The time remaining is used effectively. Homework diaries are checked and many tutors monitor students' progress. For example, Year 9 teachers helped students to review the results of the recent progress check and record something of which they are really proud. In a Year 8 tutor session, teachers used the time well to lead class discussions on improving self-confidence.

❑ **Assessment**

- 72 Assessment is better used than is normally seen, and this is a strength of the

teaching. Teachers make widespread use of assessment to make sure that students have understood all aspects of their course. Marking of homework, tests and other pieces of work is used well to analyse gaps in knowledge. Students receive frequent information from teachers about their strengths, are given clear target grades for the end of their courses and are told what they need to do to succeed. Teachers make good use of students' planners to record targets and keep parents informed of what students should be doing.

□ Learning

- 73 Students' learning is promoted well by the high proportion of good or better teaching. They make good progress in literacy skills in particular, especially in Years 7 to 9. Across subjects they increase their understanding effectively because the learning of new knowledge and skills has been well planned. This enables them to increase their intellectual, creative and physical application appropriately as the move through the school. Teaching enables students to be aware of their own progress as learners and what they need to do to improve very well.

□ Progress since the last inspection

- 74 Progress has been good. The good standard of teaching reported in 1996 has improved further. Good or better lessons have risen from over half, at the time of the last inspection, to over three-quarters. The proportion of unsatisfactory teaching is now slightly lower and remains confined to a small number of lessons.

Sixth form

- 75 Teaching is good and leads to much effective learning. In Years 12 and 13, teaching was at least very good in 43 percent of lessons. Of these 8 percent were excellent. Teaching was at least good in 83 percent of lessons. Almost all the remaining teaching was satisfactory apart from one lesson, which was unsatisfactory.

□ Excellent, very good and good teaching

- 76 A high proportion of excellent teaching was seen in English and theatre studies. Very good teaching was seen in economics, general studies, geography, ICT, and travel and tourism. Teaching was good overall in art and design, business studies, chemistry, German, history, health and social care, mathematics and psychology.
- 77 Where the teaching observed was at least good, it exhibited a combination of the strengths listed below. The good quality teaching enabled students to make rapid progress in their learning.
- 78 Teachers have a deep knowledge and love of their subject which enthuses students.
In a Year 13 mathematics lesson, a clear and authoritative presentation on resolving forces inspired the students and led to high levels of concentration. In a Year 12 psychology lesson, the teacher's clear and detailed explanation of theories on the causes of stress led to the students quickly grasping the main points and applying them to their own ideas. In a Year 13 travel and tourism lesson, the teacher's good knowledge of the tourist industry helped students deepen their understanding of the way travel agents work. In a Year 12 German lesson, the teacher used well-chosen and clearly focused tasks to enable students to use the correct tenses and develop their own strategy for remembering them.
- 79 Teachers ask probing questions, which challenge students' thinking. They make rapid progress in developing a high level of knowledge and understanding.
In Year 13 English, the teacher used probing questions to elicit how students had interpreted extracts of text from the 'Duchess of Malfi'. Similarly, in Year 12 geography, the teacher used questions very well to probe students' depth of knowledge and understanding after watching a video on natural hazards. In a Year 13 chemistry lesson, the teacher used short tasks and a series of questions very effectively to promote a deeper understanding of oxidation.

- 80 Teachers build very positive and productive working relationships with students. There is a high level of mutual respect and students are given good feedback on their progress.

In Year 12 theatre studies, the teacher worked closely with the group and she exemplified techniques of choral speaking so that students could improve their own performance. In Year 12 geography, the students valued the high quality feedback they received on their essays because it gave them individual guidance on what they needed to do to improve.

❑ **Unsatisfactory teaching**

- 81 In the one unsatisfactory lesson seen, students were not clear about what they were supposed to be doing and they were unable to apply the knowledge and skills that they gained previously.

❑ **Teaching Key Skills**

- 82 Many subjects provide good opportunities for teaching Key Skills as a natural part of subject activities. Teaching integrates them particularly well into vocational courses. For example, in health and social care, students make presentations and in travel and tourism they develop effective speaking and listening skills through role play activities. In business studies, students use ICT to create newspaper articles.

❑ **Assessment**

- 83 In the sixth form, teachers make sure that students are very aware of the criteria which must be met by a piece of work. In many lessons, students receive high quality written and oral feedback on how well this has been achieved. This enables students to be very clear about the skills they need to develop and it provides opportunities to re-draft work to show improvement.
- 84 The previous inspection report did not provide a specific analysis of sixth form teaching. The good subject competence of subject teachers and expectations of students reported in 1996 is still evident. The previous report commented on a lack of provision in teaching of independent learning skills. This has improved, although in some subjects, such as chemistry, there is more work to be done. The recent self-supported study initiative is positively promoting independent learning.

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

❑ **Provision in Years 7 to 11**

- 85 The range of learning opportunities is good. Curricular provision enables students to make continuing progress in their studies and personal development. Course arrangements meet National Curriculum requirements, but ICT in Years 8, 10 and 11 is not sufficiently well co-ordinated across different subjects.
- 86 In Years 7 to 9, the curriculum provides students with a good breadth of experience. All National Curriculum requirements are met. Students' learning extends beyond the minimum: they study two languages, French and German, and all have a weekly drama lesson. All aspects of ICT are taught, but more work is required to co-ordinate the learning taking place in the separate ICT lessons in Years 7 and 9 with experiences in different subjects.
- 87 In Years 10 and 11, the picture is similar. Students have suitably wide learning experiences. These include a good range of subjects with an element of choice, including appropriate vocational courses. Subjects studied in Years 10 and 11 include three separate sciences, business education and economics. Gifted students can take additional qualifications in English, science and religious studies. There is good quality provision for those for whom a full range of GCSE subjects is inappropriate. The ASDAN course develops students' self esteem through a wide

variety of learning challenges. Five separate, work-related programmes enable groups of students to undertake vocational learning at local colleges and training centres. These lead to National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ), vocationally-related GCSEs and the college certificates. Students value these well-organised opportunities, and records indicate that they benefit well in their academic and personal growth.

- 88 There is a good homework strategy: all students are expected to undertake additional work that extends learning in lessons. This increases appropriately as students get older. The consistency in setting homework is good overall, with a few exceptions. The diary enables parents to know what has been set, and systematic checking by tutors is good. A positive feature of the school curricular provision is the homework club. Students can work in the learning resources centre after school on four evenings a week, using resources such as reference books and computers in a structured environment where support is provided.
- 89 Learning is enriched by a good range of off-site educational visits. These include fieldwork in geography, using historic sites and visiting museums in history, and exploring faith traditions at places of worship in RE. Exchange visits that take place with students from France enable students to practise their language skills. Visits are arranged to theatres and to music performances. In science, students undertake environmental research. Visitors, such as actors, artists, sports coaches and writers, bring expertise into school. The 'Dream Factory' on the school site, with its resident Play Box Theatre Company, is used well by drama students.

❑ **Special educational needs (SEN)**

- 90 Students with SEN enjoy an exceptionally good level of access to the curriculum. Through well-targeted, in-class support, they are included very well in most learning activities. Basic literacy skills development in Years 7 to 9 is offered through short sessions of withdrawal, some using programmes of work drawn from the National Literacy Strategy. Basic numeracy skills are addressed through National Numeracy Strategy 'Springboard' Units in Year 7 in mathematics lessons. These approaches do not meet the individual needs of some students performing well below Level 4, because there is insufficiently targeted teaching of basic literacy and numeracy skills. In Year 10, all students with SEN study a range of subjects for national accreditation at a level that meets their needs. Some attend appropriate work-related college link courses. Students with SEN participate fully in extra-curricular activities, and the SEN teaching team provides additional activities, such as the Fun Club, providing opportunities for social development.

❑ **Provision for literacy and numeracy**

- 91 The school's policy and guidance for literacy are implemented well. Advice given on teaching skills has been adopted by subjects and is incorporated into schemes of work. The school's approach to literacy is being reinforced by the adoption of the National Literacy Strategy. Different subjects are active in providing reading materials matched to students' reading abilities and in developing specialist vocabulary in subjects. A school numeracy policy is in place, but literacy has been the main focus of recent development. The National Numeracy Strategy has been introduced well into mathematics lessons, ahead of schedule. It is already making an impact on standards. Numeracy is an appropriate priority in the school's three-year improvement plan.
- 92 Provision for literacy across the curriculum is having a significant positive impact on standards.

❑ **Personal, social and health education and citizenship (PSHE+C)**

- 93 The provision of personal, social and health education and citizenship (PSHE+C) is a strength. Students enjoy their lessons and find them useful. The curriculum for these areas has recently changed. In Years 8, 10 and 11 there is one discrete

lesson a week taught by a specialist team. Modules cover careers education, health and citizenship. In Years 7 and 9, students have six-week units alternatively with ICT. A good range of issues is tackled including bullying, smoking and thinking skills. Teaching is of high quality and makes very good use of resources, as in a Year 9 lesson when students watched a video and reflected on the consequences of drug taking. Good use is made of drama techniques. The expertise of the school nurse is well used in teaching about sex education and parenthood. Every student has a PSHE+C file, which gives the subject status. An innovative feature is the use of a 'bridging project' with primary schools. Good liaison ensures that students are not repeating topics. The subject is very well managed and co-ordinated, and as a result it makes a positive contribution to students' personal development.

□ **Careers education and guidance**

- 94 Careers education and guidance provided for students is effectively managed by an enthusiastic careers co-ordinator who has received specialist training. There is a planned programme of careers education, which includes a very well organised work experience placement for all students in Year 10. The quality of teaching is good with carefully planned lessons that have clear learning outcomes. As a result, most students have a much better knowledge of the world of work than normally seen. For example, students in a Year 11 lesson understood what work-based training involves, what National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) are and the different levels. At present, there is insufficient provision of suitable material for students with SEN and a lack of computers for use in the careers room.
- 95 There is an excellent partnership agreement with Connexions (formerly the Careers Service). The careers advisers feel that they are a real part of the school. This close working relationship ensures all students have excellent access to impartial careers guidance. Students value careers provision and, as a consequence, they are well motivated to learn because they understand why qualifications are so important for their futures.

□ **Extra-curricular provision**

- 96 Opportunities to participate in extra-curricular activities are very good. A wide range is available for students to widen their interests or extend their talents. Activities take place in lunchtimes, after school, at weekends and during the holidays.
- 97 There is a lively programme of arts activities. Drama performances are regular, either as major productions involving many students or as studio events involving groups. The school's musical tradition is promoted through the orchestra, concert band, ensembles and choir. Practices take place regularly at lunchtimes, and students perform to audiences in school, in the community and at festivals. In drama and music, good opportunities exist for talented performers to take leading parts in plays and recitals, and for others to fulfil a wide range of supporting roles.
- 98 Sport is encouraged through regular practices and coaching sessions. Inter-form events enable moderate players to participate in competitive games. Inter-school sport thrives through an extensive programme of matches, and Aylesford School has a good record of success. Talented individuals and team players represent the district and county.
- 99 There is a wider range of other activities than is often seen. These include, the Fun Club for students with learning difficulties, computer club, Christian Union, chess club, Italian for beginners and a school bank. In a number of subjects, teachers support students by offering opportunities to continue their coursework at lunchtime or after school.

□ **Community links to the curriculum**

- 100 There are very good community links that enrich students' learning. Regular visits are made to local theatres, and local performers such as 'Bite Size Theatre' visit the

school. Year 7 and 9 students visited the Rugby library for the 2000 Carnegie Award in children's literature, and some Year 9 students have published their poetry nationally. The Dream Factory on site provides excellent facilities for teaching and school productions. For example, all of Year 7 students were involved in the Japanese Arts Festival. The links with the 'Playbox Theatre Company' have provided unique opportunities, such as the joint production of Pinocchio with Belgian children. Students take part in the annual Arts Festival in St Mary's church, and the school has had winning entries in the Warwick carnival programme cover design competition for many years. The Warwickshire Traffic Police Officers run the ASTRA driver road safety scheme for the sixth form, and Year 11 students take good advantage of the Leadership Challenge course run by the Royal Artillery army youth training team. Students in Year 9 visit the Universities of Warwick and Leicester universities to improve their understanding of opportunities in higher education. Many local businesses provide good work experience placements, support the vocational curriculum, provide mock interviews for all Year 11 students and participate in the Year 12 business challenge. Residents from local homes for the elderly are invited to school performances. The concert band plays at a number of local fetes, and the choir sings at the Leonard Cheshire home for the disabled. This diverse range of community links support learning and personal development very well.

□ **Curricular links with educational partners**

- 101 Links with partner schools are good. Effective transfer of information and visits by the liaison co-ordinator and head of Year 7 to primary schools ensure a smooth transition. This includes an induction day for students and parents. There are particularly good arrangements for students with SEN so that they can meet the learning support assistants. Bridging projects in PSHE+C and mathematics provide a smooth transition in learning. Students in Year 5 take part in master classes organised by subjects during the summer term and some participate in the literacy summer school. Local teacher support groups operate in mathematics and RE. The school enjoys good partnership arrangements with the Arthur Rank Training Centre, Moreton Morrell Agricultural College, the Rover plant and Warwickshire College, for its work-related curriculum. The 'Firebreak' course in Year 10 is provided in partnership with the Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service to support the personal development of Year 10 students. There are good links with local sports clubs, including hockey coaching for the younger students.

□ **Progress since the last inspection**

- 102 The curriculum has improved because the school has rectified deficiencies in the provision of RE in Years 10 and 11. The length of teaching time now matches the recommended level. SEN provision remains strong. Although the teaching of ICT has been strengthened, planning and monitoring across subjects is still a weakness.

PROVISION MADE FOR STUDENTS' SPIRITUAL, MORAL, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

- 103 Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good overall. Policy documents contain clear statements on how the school seeks to promote these aspects of students' development. Most subjects have addressed them in their documentation and have begun planning them into schemes of work.

□ **Spiritual development**

- 104 The provision made for students' spiritual development is good, and better than is usually seen. Across many subjects, such as English, drama, history, geography and mathematics, opportunities for reflection and consideration of the deeper meanings of life are created. In a Year 9 mathematics lesson, an opportunity for spiritual development was created through reflecting on the wonders of naturally occurring symmetry. In a geography lesson, the teacher played a CD to help

students reflect on the sounds of the rainforest. RE lessons provide good opportunities for spiritual development through reflection on topics, such as 'Is there life after death?'. Assemblies make a strong contribution to spiritual development through providing time for reflection. For example in an assembly on the theme of light, students were encouraged to think of ways they might 'Create a little light in someone's life'. In some year assemblies and form time, opportunities for reflection, such as quiet moments, are not taken. Accommodation limitations mean that there are not enough opportunities for students to take part in collective worship every day.

❑ **Moral development**

- 105 Provision for moral development is very good. Most subjects consider moral issues, such as in design and technology where students discuss the choice of materials in relation to sustainability and recycling. In history, teachers raise questions about the moral implications of war when students learn about bombing raids by the RAF during World War II. PSHE+C contributes to moral development well through exploring issues such as drug taking. Assemblies provide very good opportunities for students to think about moral issues. Students show a strong moral concern about the needs of others by raising considerable amounts of money for charities. They are encouraged to become involved in supporting their peers through initiatives such as a befriending support group. Staff set very good role models through the relationships they establish with other adults and students. They clearly demonstrate by their work, words and actions that there are principles that distinguish right from wrong. Students show good regard for playing by the rules in sports activities.

❑ **Social development**

- 106 Provision for student's social development is very good. Art, drama, music and physical education, effectively develop collaborative group work. 'Buddies' is an opportunity for older students to support and mix socially with younger students. 'Fun Club' is a popular opportunity for younger students with learning difficulties to mix socially. The very good range of extra-curricular activities, referred to above, provides good opportunities for social development, when students often work together in mixed age groups. The prefect system encourages students in Year 11 to take on responsibilities and show initiative. The School Council is actively involved in projects to improve social amenities and, in all years, students have the opportunity to be elected as a representative.

❑ **Cultural development**

- 107 Provision for cultural development is good. Students benefit from theatre visits, listening to live music and participating in school productions, such as 'The Little Shop of Horrors' and the 'Christmas Carol'. Students are introduced to traditions from other cultures, for example in English, geography, mathematics and music. In art, a recent project on facemasks helped to raise awareness of Japanese culture. Exchange visits to Saumur in France, as well as French and German experience days, help to raise students' awareness of European culture. Religious education contributes to students' growing awareness of religious diversity through the study of Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism. There is a good range of visits to local places of worship. Work that deals with issues of living in Britain as a culturally diverse community is less prominently represented.

❑ **Progress since the last inspection**

- 108 Since the previous inspection, provision for moral and social development has remained strong. Provision for spiritual development has improved, though there are still not enough opportunities for students to attend assemblies.

Sixth form - Curriculum

- 109 In the sixth form, subject provision for post-16 accreditation is good. It serves well the great majority of students who benefit from continuing their education at the school. Most aspects of provision for students' personal development are good, but some aspects of study that contribute to students' general education not well enough co-ordinated. The school fails to cover fully the LEA's Agreed Syllabus for RE post-16 through an appropriately-planned course.

□ **Subject provision**

- 110 The school promotes an inclusive approach to post-compulsory education. Its sixth form prospectus provides an appropriately wide range of courses for all who will benefit. These may be studied either wholly at the school or in collaboration with colleges of further education. The school offers 16 advanced courses (Level 3), including 12 for the Advanced General Certificate of Education (AS and A2) and four for the Advanced Vocation Certificate of Education (AVCE). Two intermediate and two foundation General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) courses (Level 2) are offered, but none are running at present in Year 12. Students have the opportunity to select from a further five GNVQ foundation or intermediate courses at a local college of further education: no students currently take up this option. In Year 13 there is a broadly similar range of Level 3 provision, including two advanced GNVQ courses. Music is taught jointly through a collaborative arrangement with a nearby school and this works well. The school has responded appropriately to its local circumstances and works well with other educational and training institutions. Students are given careful counselling before being admitted to courses, in line with the school's policy of providing continuing education for those who will benefit. All students who have gained four GCSEs at grade A*-C are given access to Level 3 courses. GCSE repeat courses are provided for students who are seeking to upgrade their previous English and mathematics results to A*-C grades.
- 111 A very small number of students with lower-than-usual entry qualifications remain at school post-16, including those with SEN. They and their parents believe that they will benefit from continuing to study in the school environment. Those in Year 13 are taking GNVQ intermediate courses, having followed a Level 2 course the previous year. The School Improvement Plan includes the introduction of Level 1 courses into Year 12 to cater for this group of students in the future. Appropriate caution was exercised by not introducing new courses in 2001. The school intends to adopt a programme which is in line with the new national proposals to be announced shortly.
- 112 Almost all students who start sixth form courses are retained and complete their studies. The low numbers dropping-out are almost matched by students who transfer into the sixth form from other local schools and colleges after the start of the academic year.
- 113 Students' learning activities are extended well through visits, visitors and work in businesses and industry. These include local and residential fieldwork in geography, ecological study in biology, mentoring from company designers and engineers in design and technology and work with actors at 'The Dream Factory' in drama and theatre studies. Students taking AVCE and GNVQ subjects have appropriate links with local companies, including work simulations, shadowing and placements. In sociology, students attend conferences led by nationally known speakers. All students in Year 12 participate in a structured work experience: this provides well-planned progression from previous placements in Year 10.
- 114 The school has adopted a weekly period of supported self-study in several subjects that have small numbers. This is being piloted as a means of promoting independent learning. It is being managed well in business education, chemistry, French and theatre studies. In mathematics and physics, staff and students are finding its introduction more difficult. In art, although students maintain progress well by continuing their coursework, no separate study units are being provided. Through this approach, the school is boldly tackling the need to increase the capacity of post-

16 students' independent learning, which was criticised in the previous inspection report, whilst managing provision of a broad range of courses economically. School management intends to evaluate progress during the academic year with the view to adopting supported self-study in all subjects in 2002-3. Monitoring is being supported by a school governor who is a member of staff from a local university. A sound, early start has been made in widening students' skills necessary for lifelong learning.

- 115 Late notification of changes to the recommended provision of 16-19 education by the national authority has resulted in alterations to the teaching of Key Skills. Clear criteria have been set out and all students are expected to show evidence of further development in at least one Key Skill. The monitoring of this provision across Years 12 and 13 is unsatisfactory. At the time of the inspection a comprehensive list of the Key Skills commitments of all students had not been compiled. However, individual sixth-form tutors know the work their students are undertaking and are monitoring individuals in their tutor groups effectively.

□ **Enrichment and extension opportunities**

- 116 The enrichment programme is not co-ordinated well enough. This takes place through assemblies, tutor time, events and conferences. It is supplemented well for about one third of students who opt to take general studies. Students do not have a clear view of how the enrichment complements their subject studies. Although they will attend a conference dealing with spiritual themes, teaching of RE does not cover the requirements of the LEA's Agreed Syllabus. A relevant sports and recreational programme is provided weekly, including team games and options such as self-defence, pre-driving and bowling. Not all students are accessing their entitlement, and their involvement is not monitored well enough.
- 117 The school has a strong commitment to Outward Bound education and some students visit activity centres in the Lake District, Scotland and Wales. Almost all students are taking advantage of the many opportunities provided for personal enrichment by participating in the good range of less formally structured opportunities, some of which they set up themselves. These include: taking responsibility for school routines; managing the School Council; befriending schemes; the sixth form charity week; and organising clubs and sports for younger students. Sixth-form students make a considerable contribution to drama and musical events. There is considerable involvement in activities that raise money for charities. All of these activities create a busy and purposeful sixth form atmosphere. Many students benefit considerably through the personal self-reliance they develop working with, and for, others.
- 118 The school works extremely well with the Connexions Service in the provision of careers education and guidance. This builds well on careers education from earlier years. Connexions provides students with high quality, impartial advice. They receive guidance to help with their initial choice of options in Year 12, the transition from Year 12 to 13, choice of university or employment, and support and guidance when the examination results are published. As well as running sessions on university entrance and work-based training, the Connexions Service provides very good access to specialist careers advice whenever students need it, by self-referral or by tutors' request. Tutors receive an annual update by the specialist careers adviser so they are able to guide students effectively. An outstanding feature is the provision of one week of work experience in Year 12. All the students spoken to found this a valuable learning experience which had taken their careers thinking forwards.
- 119 Since the previous inspection, the school has maintained its good range of advanced courses, although some still attract small numbers. Vocational subjects now form an important part of the sixth-form curricular provision. A good range of college link courses further extend vocational opportunities. In the previous report, no comments were made about provision for enrichment and extension opportunities.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

- 120 The school provides a secure and caring environment. Students know that they will be supported if they have concerns by tutors, other adults such as the nurse or Connexions staff, or through the school's trained student support groups.

□ Promoting and monitoring personal development

- 121 Students' personal development is promoted very effectively by the work of tutors and the personal, social, health education and citizenship (PSHE+C) programme. There are very effective systems for monitoring students' progress. A good range of information is received from primary schools. Heads of year and tutors stay with the same form group during their time at the school and know students very well as individuals. Tutors help students complete their records of achievement. This process gives students an opportunity to reflect on their personal qualities, note achievements, set aspirations and raise concerns. The school works well with outside agencies to give extra support where necessary. Parents state that they are confident to approach the school with their concerns. In these ways the school ensures that the individual needs of students are met.

□ Promoting and monitoring good behaviour

- 122 Arrangements for monitoring and improving behaviour are very good. The school's Learning Code lists clear expectations of behaviour. The Code of Practice for using school transport sets high standards for behaviour and safety: students and parents sign it. Students are praised for responsible behaviour and they value the system of rewards. Sanctions are appropriate and encourage students to think about the consequences of their actions. Specific incidents are noted on information sheets, and tutors, heads of year, and curriculum co-ordinators are well informed. Personalised targets are set where behaviour lapses. Parents support the school's high expectations of standards of behaviour by signing the home-school agreement, target sheets and report cards. The school is quick to involve parents wherever there are problems. Good, additional support is provided by the Learning and Behaviour Support Service for students with specific behavioural needs. The vast majority of teachers maintain high standards for students' behaviour in class. However, a few are unable to manage the poor behaviour of some students, and this disrupts their lessons.
- 123 The school is extremely effective at eliminating oppressive behaviour. The PHSE+C programme includes topics to discourage and address bullying. Any bullying, racism, or sexism is quickly addressed and dealt with effectively.

□ Promoting and monitoring attendance

- 124 Procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance in Years 7 to 11 are excellent. All unexplained absence is followed up and, where necessary, the attendance assistant telephones on the first day of absence. Good attendance is rewarded with certificates. All unsatisfactory attendance is addressed through letters or discussion with parents. The school works well with the education social worker to support students with poor attendance. The school needs to continue to discourage holidays taken during term time. Lateness is monitored and addressed well.

□ Promoting and monitoring health, welfare and safety

- 125 Procedures for child protection are satisfactory. Staff responsible have undertaken refresher training but it is several years since there has been whole staff awareness training.
- 126 There are good arrangements for regular health and safety checks. The school has recently received a very positive feedback following a LEA commissioned health and safety audit. The inspection has found that there are hazards with the emergency

stop system in design and technology that were missed in the audit.

❑ **Promoting and monitoring students' academic progress**

- 127 Assessment processes that promote and monitor students' academic progress are good. The school has comprehensive policies on raising achievement through assessment and target setting. These have resulted in students being more aware of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve than is normally seen. There is also greater consistency in the way assessment is used by different teachers to help students achieve than is typical in most schools. Students receive frequent information from teachers about their strengths, are given clear target grades for the end of their courses and are told what they need to do to gain success. Good use is made of students' planners to record targets and keep parents informed of what students should be doing.
- 128 Students are informed what grade they should be aiming for at the end of each key stage. Teachers use assessments from tests and other pieces of work to track each individual's progress towards achieving these grades. However, some teachers are not yet making sufficient use of nationally available data to determine the targets.

❑ **Use of assessment information to guide planning**

- 129 Teachers make widespread use of assessment to make sure that students have understood all aspects of their course. Marking of homework, tests and other pieces of work is used well to analyse gaps in knowledge so teachers can reinforce them in subsequent lessons. The school has devised its own series of structured questions which are used by all subject teams to analyse their examination results and determine strategies for revising planning to raise standards further. This is improving subject provision and is having a beneficial effect on students' learning and achievement.
- 130 Although assessment in specific ICT lessons is effective, there is no system of assessing how students are developing ICT skills in other subjects, nor an appropriate analysis of how ICT skills can be planned across subjects.
- 131 In some subjects, such as English, mathematics, science and RE, some boys are not achieving as well as they should and teachers are failing to notice this.

❑ **Progress since the previous inspection**

- 132 The school's strengths in promoting and monitoring students' welfare, personal development and learning have been maintained and developed further. Data on student achievement is now used well, and target-setting has become an important strategy for raising standards. The health and safety problem in the school bus park has been satisfactorily resolved.

Sixth form

❑ **Advice, support and guidance**

- 133 There are very good systems for advice and guidance to students in the sixth form. An effective induction programme ensures that students are given opportunities to adjust to the new pattern of work. Students complete a Personal Action Plan, which they find useful in helping them to reflect on their personal development and progress. Relationships between tutors and students are excellent. Tutors are well trained and undertake their role rigorously. They provide high quality help and advice with option choices at the end of Year 12 and the move into further or higher education, or employment, in Year 13. This is complemented by high quality

guidance given by Connexions advisers. However, the time for tutors to carry out their role is limited and this restricts individual discussions that can take place. Much guidance is within small groups, which is not always appropriate to the personal needs of individuals. Records of enhancement activities and Key Skills are not always up-dated in students' Personal Action Plans.

□ **Assessment**

- 134 Assessment practices in the sixth form are good. Students are appreciative of how teachers' use of assessment contributes to effective learning and enables them to make positive progress. Teachers often use a combination of assessment techniques very successfully. For example in mathematics, teachers use questioning to check students' understanding and they also circulate rapidly around classrooms to examine and comment on work. This is then supplemented with frequent tests and marking of homework. The overall effect is that students receive frequent and thorough information on what they are achieving and how they can improve. In other subjects, such as design and technology, English, ICT and geography, teachers make sure that students are very aware of the criteria which must be met, and they receive high quality written and oral feedback on how well they have achieved. This enables students to be very clear about the skills they need to develop.
- 135 The analysis of test and examination results is generally better than is normally seen. Most subject teams look carefully at results to determine strategies for raising standards. Where practice is particularly effective, such as in mathematics, teachers use marking of 'mock' examinations to inform revision strategies. However, in some subjects, there is too little analysis of results to determine whether students are making sufficient progress. In general, the analysis of data to compare the performance of students in the school with the national picture is at an early stage of development and requires further work.
- 136 Checks on students' progress in all subjects occur regularly. These include an element of self-assessment as well as comments by teachers and tutors, and they are received by students and parents. They enable tutors to accurately diagnose future learning needs and ensure that students are provided with additional support. They also offer the opportunity for students and their parents to respond to teachers on any difficulties being experienced.
- 137 The previous report made little reference to the provision of advice and support in the sixth form. However, target setting and developing strategies for individual improvement are still effective.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

- 138 The links the school makes with parents are good and their involvement has a very positive impact on the work of the school. Parents are very satisfied with what the school provides and achieves. Overall, the quality of general information provided for parents is good, but reports on progress are unsatisfactory.
- 139 Parents are kept very well informed about life and work at the school. Newsletters are regular, informative, and well presented, and are now distributed within the local community. These, together with the prospectus, option booklets and governors' annual report, provide a comprehensive and clear summary of the school's provision and achievements. Parents state that they are very satisfied with the quality and effectiveness of its general communications to them. Arrangements for parents' evenings are good. In addition to the report evenings there are home-link evenings on topics such as raising achievement, literacy and numeracy, course options and

careers. The termly support group for parents with children who have SEN are valued. Homework diaries and planners are used well by students, teachers, and parents, and therefore they are a good source of information, about targets, homework or problems. Parents regard highly the regular letters of commendation that they receive and also state that they are confident that the school would let them know promptly if there were concerns about their child's academic progress.

- 140 However, the quality of reports sent to parents on students' progress is unsatisfactory, overall. Reports provide high quality information on the knowledge, understanding and skills students have developed since their last report in some subjects, such as drama, French and physical education. In other subjects, such as mathematics, science and design and technology, reports contain insufficiently specific comments on students' improvement. End-of-year reports are computer generated. In many subjects there is too little variation in the wording of comments. Some parents state that they are disappointed with the impersonal nature of the yearly report they receive. Interim progress reports sent out mid-year provide useful information, and parents and students appreciate them. In the 6th form, parents and students receive regular progress checks that provide good information about achievements.
- 141 At the meeting for parents, those with students in the sixth form stated that they are pleased that the school still keeps them well informed, although the students are now at the non-statutory phase of their education. They are confident that if their child was not making sufficient effort that they will be informed. For example, they said that they are contacted when homework is handed in late. A very small number felt that they had been informed too late about the decision to introduce supported self-study into some Year 12 and 13 subjects.
- 142 There is an active Parent Teacher Association that meets regularly to organise events and raise funds.

□ Progress since the last inspection

- 143 The school has maintained the priority that it gives to working closely in partnership with parents. The quality of reports was not included in the previous report.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

□ Leadership

- 144 The quality of leadership by senior managers is very good. A new management structure was adopted in September 2001: this is working very effectively. The picture in middle management is mostly good: the leadership of some teams is extremely effective but improvements are required in a few areas.
- 145 At the time of the inspection, the headteacher had been in post for just less than one year. She provides very clear direction to staff and students. This is appropriately focused on: raising achievement further; optimising students' potential; involving parents in students' learning; and developing staff skills of self-evaluation, in the context of an inclusive school. The school aims to become a specialist Languages College.
- 146 Before January 2001, the school had a lengthy period of temporary leadership. Over the past three terms the headteacher has led change to fundamental aspects of school life. In the Spring term, the process of school improvement planning for 2001-4 was changed radically. In September 2001, a new management structure and school timetable, together with changes to the curriculum, were implemented. This bold programme of change was skilfully facilitated. Consultation was extensive among staff, parents and students. The senior management team is monitoring the effectiveness of the new arrangements and is committed to further fine-tuning if

necessary. Inspection findings show that the changes have been implemented very effectively: there have been few teething problems. Positive attitudes of the great majority of staff have been an important factor in the success of the new arrangements.

- 147 The new management arrangements provide a very clear structure for leadership and accountability. The deputy head teacher, who took up post in September 2001, has already formed a good overview of school standards and results for which he is responsible. He has already initiated new approaches to data analysis. The three assistant headteachers provide good leadership in their responsibilities for community and quality and teaching. The linking of senior managers to curricular areas and year teams is a strength. It facilitates good communications as well as promoting the accountability structure.
- 148 The quality of middle management is mostly good. Appropriate delegation is provided. There are examples of very good subject management by co-ordinators and heads of subject, such as in English, drama and geography. However, there is variability in quality and, in science, subject management is unsatisfactory. In the main school, heads of year demonstrate strong leadership to their tutor teams. They also know the students in their years very well.

□ **Strategic planning**

- 149 The School Improvement Plan is central to the future development of the school. It sets out clearly the vision and targets for the next three years. Planning reflects an ethos of inclusiveness, which covers all aspects of school life. For example, administration, site staff, catering and learning support staff have their own plans. Priorities have been determined through wide consultation. They provide a very appropriate agenda based on two strong principles: raising standards and valuing the achievements of all. Subject plans vary in quality: many are good and the modern foreign languages plan has provided a good model to other departments. Not all have sufficiently clear targets that can be measured; in some instances the time-scales for developments are too imprecise. Considering this is the first year of adopting a more rigorous approach to planning, middle managers have sharpened their skills impressively. Separate plans for the proposed Languages College and the ICT plan required by the LEA, have been fully integrated into whole school planning.
- 150 Curriculum Area Teams (CATs) provide an excellent approach to development across the school. Each of the five CATs meets regularly and it provides a forum of representatives from all curricular areas and year teams. Strategies and actions are proposed for consideration by the senior management. The CATs take responsibility for seeing that actions agreed are implemented and outcomes are monitored. Currently, there are CATs for promoting: student achievement; teaching and learning; SEN/gifted and talented students; ICT; and community involvement.

□ **Governing body**

- 151 The work of the governing body is impressive. Governors who met with inspectors have a very clear view of their role, which reflects their precise terms of reference. The chairman, an experienced governor but recent to the post, leads the governing body very effectively. Governors bring wide experience from different backgrounds. They support the school very well through their dual roles of critical friends and evaluators. Governors are well-informed in monitoring the school's performance through visits on agreed agendas, receiving reports and listening to presentations from staff. They commission reviews from LEA advisers when they wish to gain an external perspective. These strategies enable them to discharge their accountability to parents and the community very effectively. They have given strong support to the Language College bid. Also, they have justifiably made representations to the LEA

that the imbalance of students with SEN in local secondary schools is compromising Aylesford's commitment to be a fully inclusive, comprehensive school which is representative of its local community. A particularly strong feature of their work is the adoption of best value reviews before endorsing major changes. The 'Best Value Review of the Proposed Change to the School Day' is exemplary. Discussions with individual governors during the inspection revealed a very consistent view of the school's strengths and areas for further development. Governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities fully, with the exception of providing for a daily act of worship and full compliance with the requirements of Warwickshire's Agreed Syllabus for RE in the sixth form.

❑ **Personnel management**

- 152 Personnel functions are managed very effectively by the assistant headteacher, bursar and the chair of governors' personnel committee. Performance reviews of teachers have been implemented thoroughly, and lesson observations are helping to promote the school's priority for raising effectiveness in teaching and learning. Approaches to professional development have widened in range and are very well linked to the School Improvement Plan. The induction of teachers new to the school is thorough, and a very helpful information pack is given to supply teachers. The school is well placed to pursue its aim of achieving Investor in People accreditation.

❑ **Financial management and deployment of resources**

- 153 Financial management is very good. The budget is well planned and bench-marked to national spending patterns. Spending on learning support assistants is much higher than average owing to the large numbers of students with SEN. The inspection finds that this spending, which includes additional resources to those provided by the LEA, is fully justified because it supports good progress. Over recent years there has been a lower level of spending on learning resources than average. This has resulted in some areas of deficiency identified in Sections D and E of the report. The bursar manages accounts very efficiently and the school has recently received a very positive auditor's report. All designated grants provided are spent appropriately. A larger-than-usual carry forward has prudently provided the finance necessary to furnish and equip the new buildings due in 2002.
- 154 Staffing matches curricular requirements well, with very few discontinuities caused by late staff resignations and maternity leave. Accommodation is unsatisfactory: there is insufficient teaching space and a large number of lessons are taught in temporary accommodation. There are insufficient large spaces to enable the school to meet the requirement for a daily act of collective worship, the library is too small and there is no all-weather games surface. Social spaces inside and outside the building are inadequate. The impending building programme will address some, but not all, of these issues.
- 155 The school provides good value for money. Students make good progress in their academic and personal development at Aylesford School. Funding is now in line with the average for the age range served, although it has been lower in recent years.

❑ **Progress on the action plan resulting from the previous inspection**

- 156 The 1996 inspection report had three key issues for action. Progress has been good for one issue. It has been mostly satisfactory for the other two, but in both of these there is further work to be done.
- 1- Positive action has been taken to resolve health and safety issues in the bus park. Adjustments have been made to the road layout, and students' departure from school is well supervised.
 - 2- ICT is now used systematically across the curriculum and students cover

National Curriculum requirements, but co-ordination across subjects requires consolidation.

- 3- Warwickshire's Agreed Syllabus for religious education is fully covered in Years 7 to 11 but not in the sixth form.

Sixth form

❑ Leadership and management

- 157 The sixth form curriculum has been managed well at a time of rapid national change. The management of individual guidance and support is good. Management of timetabled enrichment activities is unsatisfactory but the sixth form leadership facilitates many extra-curricular opportunities that promote personal growth.
- 158 There is a clear management structure. Members of the senior management team fulfil a similar overview of sixth form teaching, learning, quality and community functions, as they do for the main school. Day-to-day responsibility for implementation of school policies is through an experienced head of sixth form. He works closely with senior managers and subject co-ordinators. The school's meeting structure enables full consideration of sixth form issues. The head of sixth form leads an experienced team of tutors. He is successfully managing the tutors' involvement in the personal development of students.
- 159 Course management by the assistant headteacher and head of sixth form has been effective and has incorporated changes in national guidance after one year of Curriculum 2000. The transition to A2 courses in 2001-2 has been managed smoothly, although the late publication of text-books has left students without dedicated resources for some work in mathematics and science. Some teachers have been resourceful in obtaining proof copies prior to their publication. Teachers of GNVQ courses manage their work effectively, but would benefit from a greater level of co-ordination. After one year of full coverage of Key Skills, management has been responsive to the new national guidance. Individual tutors are supporting students well and are positive in promoting Key Skills in order to raise student commitment. Students state that they perceive the accreditation is not being given full credit by higher education and businesses. However, it is unsatisfactory that there is not a definitive list of individual students' commitments to Key Skills this year.
- 160 The management of the curriculum enrichment programme is a mixed picture. Outward Bound and work experience provision is strong. Much informal enrichment takes place from a wide range of activities through which students support their peers and younger students very well. They also engage very actively in charity work. However, the formal enrichment programme of talks, conferences and tutor-based discussions is not planned in detail as a progressive experience, and statutory RE is not covered adequately. Students state that they are unaware of what this wider curriculum programme will cover during the year. Management of sixth form sport and recreation by the PE team is too casual. There is a relevant programme but many students did not participate during inspection week.
- 161 Governors take a full role in strategic decisions that are shaping the changing direction of post-16 education. These include the piloting of supported self-study as a means of promoting greater independence in learning. However, they do not ensure that students have full access to the LEA's Agreed Syllabus for RE.
- 162 Financial planning for the sixth form is good. Costs are appropriately linked to priorities in the School Improvement Plan. Some courses are running with lower than economic numbers to ensure there is wide curriculum access. These are balanced by the strong numbers in popular subjects. The cost of educating the sixth form matches the funding provided by the LEA.

□ **Resources**

- 163 The deployment of well-qualified staff is good. Learning resources are just adequate overall: there are some deficiencies in books and insufficient equipment for advanced work in science. Sixth-form accommodation is barely adequate, especially considering the anticipated growth in size. There is insufficient space in the common room and two quiet study areas.
- 164 The sixth form is cost effective. The school seeks to offer a comprehensive sixth form education. The great majority of students make good progress in their studies. They have good attitudes and show responsibility to others. Students have a good record of successful entry to the next stage of their education or employment.
- 165 In the previous inspection report, there was no specific comment on management of the sixth form. However, governors are now well informed about the balance of funding for the sixth form compared with the rest of the school.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- 166 **To raise standards and the quality of learning further the school management, governors and staff should undertake the following action.**

Years 7 to 11

- 1- Raise standards in information and communication technology (ICT) by:
- ❑ co-ordinating more effectively ICT taught in different subjects, especially in Years 10 and 11;
 - ❑ creating an assessment record-keeping system to enable each student's progress in ICT across subjects to be monitored; and
 - ❑ raising the competence and confidence of teachers who are inexperienced in using ICT as part of their subject teaching.

(Ref paras 15, 85, 102, 130, 197, 211, 222, 245, 252, 255, 257, 272, 291)

- 2- Raise the attainment of boys to match more closely the above-average standards reached by girls by:
- ❑ ensuring boys complete classwork and homework as thoroughly as girls; and
 - ❑ identifying the small number of boys who are working in sets where the work taught is below their personal capability.

(Ref paras 2, 3, 18, 179, 199, 209, 237, 240, 290)

Sixth form

- 3- Improve co-ordination by:
- ❑ communicating to staff and students the content of the enhancement programme covering personal and ethical topics, including religious education;
 - ❑ ensuring full participation in sport and recreation periods; and
 - ❑ monitoring the learning taking place in Key Skills, so that the programme can be evaluated.

(Ref paras 109, 115, 116, 157, 159, 160, 161)

Aspects for further development, not included as issues for action, which should be considered by the school are recorded in paras 62, 90, 126, 140.

ADDITIONAL FEATURE SPECIFIED FOR INSPECTION

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS (SEN) ASSESSMENT

- 167 Overall, the quality of provision in special educational needs and assessment is very good.

Strengths

- High quality inclusion which allows students full access to learning.
- Leaderships and management of the SEN team.
- SEN students make good progress in literacy skills.
- The quality of information on students' learning needs, particularly in individual education plans (IEPs).
- Work of learning support assistants (LSAs)
- Communications with parents.

Areas for improvement

- Targeted teaching of basic literacy and numeracy skills to students achieving considerably below average.
- More effective use of SEN teachers when supporting subject staff.

□ Standards

- 168 Students make good progress in their learning across Years 7 to 11. At the end of Year 11, all with SEN achieve some form of national accreditation, and a significant majority achieve one or more GCSE passes. Students who have higher ability achieve a number of GCSEs, which represents good achievement. A few continue into the sixth form, where they make satisfactory progress. The majority move into a range of post-16 courses at colleges, including GNVQs, or occupations that involve further training.

□ Teaching

- 169 Students with SEN are taught well. Special needs teachers have a very good understanding of their needs, and share this knowledge very effectively. There is some very good team teaching with subject staff, although specialist teachers are often an under-used resource within mainstream classrooms and as specialist teachers in basic skills. The role of LSAs has been developed very well. The delivery of the literacy skills Progress Units is improving rapidly. In the few lessons where teaching is less effective, questions provide little opportunity for reflection or prediction, and too few opportunities are provided for independent or collaborative learning.

□ Learning

- 170 Students with SEN make good progress in developing literacy skills, and sound progress in developing numeracy skills. Through well-planned English teaching, and some additional small-group sessions, students in Years 7 to 9 develop a sound awareness of spelling rules, phonics and of the construction of sentences. They extend their expressive vocabulary well. By Year 10, they consolidate basic study skills and organise writing assignments successfully, with some support. Progress in addressing the learning needs of these students in numeracy is satisfactory. They consolidate basic number operations and data-handling skills effectively. Students with SEN develop good learning habits. They understand routines and gain good levels of concentration. Most develop their listening skills well. They build on their social skills and develop their confidence; as a result, they integrate well. Students with behavioural difficulties learn good strategies to manage their behaviour and make good progress in learning.

- 171 Overall, students with SEN make good progress in acquiring knowledge and understanding of subjects through the support they are given.

❑ **Attitudes**

- 172 Students with SEN behave very well. They listen attentively, concentrate throughout lessons and relate very well to their teachers and each other. They come to lessons with the expectation that they will enjoy learning. Occasionally, in subjects in which the teaching is predominantly oral, their attention weakens and standards of behaviour drop a little.

❑ **Assessment**

- 173 Assessment procedures for students with SEN are good. Starting with very good links with primary schools, the procedures for identification, assessment and provision work very well. Assessment of literacy skills is good, although currently there is no diagnostic assessment of students with the lowest attainment in numeracy. Code of Practice procedures are followed well. Progress is monitored effectively prior to reviews. The involvement of parents and students in reviews represents good practice, although not all annual reviews record progress towards annual objectives, or set specific learning or behavioural objectives. Individual Education Plans (IEPs) are usually of a very high standard, with some exemplary practice in addressing the differing or additional needs of students. The assessment information and IEPs are shared very well with subject staff and tutors. Assessment of students with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties (EBD) is good. There is very effective liaison and communication between the pastoral staff, LEA support staff, and school's SEN team. Consequently, most EBD students make good progress in addressing and overcoming their difficulties.
- 174 The LEA support services provide a very good service to the school. There are good links with other external agencies.

❑ **Communication with Parents**

- 175 The SEN team communicates very well with parents of students. Parents state that they appreciate this support. This is very good practice, since problems can be addressed quickly and parents are able to support learning and behaviour well at home. A support group for parents meets termly.

❑ **Leadership & Management**

- 176 The SEN co-ordinator provides very strong leadership, enabling the school to be exceptionally inclusive: it gives students full access to a curriculum of good quality. His vision is shared by the support team and all of the school community. Very effective teamwork has been developed. The SEN team has very good knowledge of the strengths and areas for further development. Monitoring is good, although there is no designated responsibility for monitoring the progress of students with SEN in the sixth form. The governors' monitor funding of SEN very well, both from external sources and from within the school's own budget. This is used effectively to raise achievement. However, ICT is an under-used resource in teaching and learning, and for SEN administration.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	167
	Sixth form	63
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students		63

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
--	-----------	-----------	------	--------------	----------------	------	-----------

Years 7 – 11

Number	17	39	68	33	9	1	0
Percentage	10%	23%	41%	20%	5%	1%	0%

Sixth form

Number	5	22	25	10	1	0	0
Percentage	8%	35%	40%	16%	2%	0%	0%

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting the percentages for the sixth form as each lesson represents more than one percentage point. Percentages have been rounded and may not add up to 100.

Information about the school's students

Students on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students on the school's roll	884	117
Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals	101	2

Special educational needs

	Y 7 – Y 11	Sixth form
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	57	0
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	293	2

English as an additional language

	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	40

Student mobility in the last school year

	No of students
Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	22
Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	20

Attendance

Authorised absence 2000-1

	%
School data	6.5%
National comparative data	8.1%

Unauthorised absence 2000-1

	%
School data	0.4%
National comparative data	1.1%

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001	95	87	182

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	63	63	64
	Girls	72	65	66
	Total	135	128	130
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	74 (71)	71 (69)	71 (63)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	51 (40)	45 (42)	37 (30)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	59	61	68
	Girls	72	68	69
	Total	131	129	137
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	72 (82)	71 (74)	76 (89)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	43 (42)	49 (43)	48 (41)
	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 students in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	92	98	190

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of students achieving the standard specified	Boys	41	80	90
	Girls	56	91	97
	Total	97	171	187
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	School	51 (46)	90 (92)	98 (96)
	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 student	School	38.5 (36.0)
	National	39.0 (38.4)

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those students who achieved all those they studied	School	0	n/a
	National		n/a

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	22	20	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	21.3	17.8	19.6 (15.8)	0	6.0	2.0 (n/a)
National	17.1	18.6	18.2 (17.9)	2.6	2.9	2.7 (n/a)

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 students who achieved all those they studied	School	0	n/a
	National		76.5

International Baccalaureate		Number	% success rate
Number entered for the International Baccalaureate Diploma and the	School	0	N/a

percentage of those students who achieved all they studied	National		N/a
--	----------	--	-----

Ethnic background of students

	No of students
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	3
Black – other	0
Indian	18
Pakistani	2
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	6
White	949
Any other minority ethnic group	21

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	4	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	1	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	7	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	60.7
Number of students per qualified teacher	16.6

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	22
Total aggregate hours worked per week	564

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	76%
---	-----

Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13

Key Stage 2	n/a
Key Stage 3	25.0
Key Stage 4	25.2

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000-1
----------------	--------

	£
Total income	2,621,641
Total expenditure	2,556,815
Expenditure per student	2578
Balance brought forward from previous year	187,147
Balance carried forward to next year	251,973

Recruitment of teachers

Full time equivalent teachers who left the school during the last two years	8.2
Full time equivalent teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	8.0

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1.7
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1001
Number of questionnaires returned	323

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	34	54	7	3	2
My child is making good progress in school.	41	51	4	0	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	23	59	8	2	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	21	59	15	3	2
The teaching is good.	32	61	3	1	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	28	55	11	1	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	53	42	3	1	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	60	38	1	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	35	50	9	1	5
The school is well led and managed.	33	54	4	2	7
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	40	53	4	1	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	28	48	12	2	11

Please note. Percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number and may not add up to 100.

Other issues raised by parents

- Good relationships between the school and home are encouraged.
- Any bullying that occurs is dealt with well.
- Teachers of special educational needs involve parents well.
- The students' diary is a good means of communication between school and home.
- Home-school link evenings are valued as they inform parents about relevant educational issues.
- Parents are not informed routinely about the topics to be covered in the curriculum.
- Mid-year progress checks are valued.
- Parents state that they are confident that they will be informed if their child is not making progress.
- The school consults parents on changes, for example about change to the school day.
- There was not any consultation about the introduction of supported self-study in the sixth form.
- Reports are computer generated. Many of the statements are impersonal.
- ICT has improved and there are now more computers.
- The positive ethos of the school has been maintained despite a lengthy period of management transition.

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

ENGLISH

177 Overall, the quality of provision for English is very good.

Strengths

- Achievement is above average overall and high for girls.
- The quality of teaching is very good: teachers convey their own enthusiasm to students.
- National Curriculum requirements are covered very well, with good provision for using ICT.
- Individual lessons are very well structured and contain a variety of activities.
- Marking is thorough. Students understand what they need to do to improve further.
- The pace of learning is rapid. Students make evident gains in lessons.
- The subject is led and managed very well.

Area for improvement

- To raise attainment of boys closer to girls for highest and low attainers.

178 At age 14, results in national tests over the last three years have been above average at Levels 5 and above. The difference between the performance of boys and girls is in line with the national trend. At Level 6 and above, girls' results are very good indeed and they substantially outperform boys. The lower rate of progress observed for the most-able boys is also reflected in teacher assessments. Almost all students are entered for GCSE English and results over recent years have been above the national average. At grades A* to C, the difference in the performance of boys and girls is in line the national norm but girls substantially outperform boys at grades A* to B. Over half of the girls achieved these high levels in 2001, and this is a significant achievement. The number of students entered for GCSE English literature is smaller, but increases each year. Results were well above the national average in 2001, with 95% achieving A* to C grades. Boys performed better in literature than in English, with more gaining higher grades although the number entered was much smaller.

179 Students enter the school at age 11 with standards that are below average, and some times well below. Standards of current students are above average overall by Year 9. Their achievement in lessons across Years 7 to 9 is good. In speaking and listening activities, students are confident and articulate, with a range of skills appropriate to their age. Teachers make a conscious effort to include all of the class in questioning. Students are clear about their progress in this aspect of their work and keep personal assessment record sheets. Standards in reading are good and they are given demanding reading materials. In one Year 7 class, able students had already worked on 'Beowulf', 'The Canterbury Tales' and 'Macbeth', and were forming an understanding of the Romantic Movement. In Year 9, lower-ability students consider the wider moral implications of texts they are reading, such as 'Buddy'. Students follow a programme of independent reading and compile a written record of their progress. The quality of written work is above average across the ability bands. All are required to write in a range of forms, such as responses to literary texts, descriptive writing, persuasive writing, letters and diaries. These cover the National Curriculum requirements in a systematic way. Students take pride in the presentation of their work and gains are made across Years 7 to 9 in improving levels of basic accuracy. However, a small number of boys are underachieving because they are in sets that do not match their potential. Ways need to be sought to raise basic levels of literacy of students on the borderline between Levels 3 and 4

who are currently working in large classes, so that they become independent readers and writers.

- 180 In lessons, standards are above average in Year 11 and achievement over the five years has been good. Students working in discussion groups on an examination text 'I'm the King of the Castle' were able to articulate their ideas using sophisticated language, and report back to the class with confidence. A particularly good feature of this oral work was the way in which students were able to question each other and offer alternative hypotheses about the text. Students in Years 10 and 11 are being challenged by the reading demands made of them, from one able group reading 'Silas Marner' to lower-ability groups reading 'Macbeth' and the poetry of Simon Armitage. Coursework folders reveal that students of below-average ability are capable of producing sustained assignments with above-expected levels of accuracy. They write stories using direct speech with some success. A media assignment in which they focused on the analysis of a film extract, indicated their ability to use appropriate technical language. There was, however, evidence in lessons that some boys are not working to their full potential. Some individuals are in classes too low for their actual ability. Students working at the higher levels are producing very sophisticated responses to literary texts and show deep personal involvement in their responses. Achievements of students with SEN are good across Years 7 to 11. Those for ethnic minority groups and students for whom English is an additional language are similar to other students across the years.
- 181 The behaviour of students is very good. Almost without exception they come to lessons eager to learn. They work hard with their teachers.
- 182 The quality of teaching is very good overall. In a third of lessons seen it was excellent. Students benefit from teachers who are experts in their subject knowledge, use a wide range of teaching techniques, and have high expectations of academic success and behaviour. Current setting arrangements result in some challenging classes but, almost without exception, these are handled extremely well. Teachers' marking of work is very good indeed. They highlight students' achievements and indicate clearly what further progress is needed. The setting of clear targets, which students copy into the front of their exercise books, reinforces learning. ICT is used very well, with an interactive whiteboard in the department. Excellent use is made of recorded materials such as films.
- 183 Leadership and management are very good. In a department that has an unusually high level of delegation, teachers work well as a team; some less experienced teachers are relishing their added responsibilities. Teachers share best practice and support each other with their special expertise, for example in ICT. This is an enthusiastic and vibrant department. Good use is already being made of data but there is a need to monitor the achievement of some boys more closely, to ensure that under achievement is identified and addressed.
- 184 Since the previous inspection, there has been further improvement. There is now regular use of the library for independent reading. Resources have been improved dramatically through the acquisition of up-to-date reading materials and with the use of ICT. Systems for assessment and marking students' work are excellent.

□ **Standards in Literacy and Oracy**

- 185 Speaking and listening skills are good, and often very good. Students listen attentively to teachers and each other. They develop discussion and presentation skills in many lessons. For example, in Year 7 science, students explained accurately and concisely why light is refracted when passing into a denser medium than air. In drama and music, students listen attentively to the work of others. Through mature discussion they develop and improve their initial efforts. This is also a feature of their learning in ICT. Students develop their own learning through their oral work and become confident and articulate young adults.

- 186 Standards of reading are good. Students read aloud with more confidence than is usually heard: this was especially noted in history lessons. In literacy lessons in Year 7, students benefit from being taught focused reading skills, and those with SEN use basic skimming and scanning techniques effectively. In ICT and design and technology, students show good capability in reading and editing relevant information downloaded from the Internet.
- 187 Writing skills are above average across subjects. Most students can write in a variety of forms and styles. By Year 11, the most able students are able to produce sophisticated responses to literary and media texts. Younger students demonstrate their ability to construct short, factual answers. They learn spelling rules and grammar in English and this is reinforced in modern foreign languages. In English, students learn to redraft and improve their work. In geography, good guidance for structuring written work is given to lower attaining groups. Many students with SEN make good progress in recording facts but, in extended writing, they remain reliant on support. Handwriting is good: displays throughout the school reveal students' pride in their work.

DRAMA

- 188 Overall, the quality of provision for drama is good.

Strengths

- Students make good progress.
- Teaching is very good. Teachers are enthusiastic and convey this to the students.
- Departmental documentation is a strength, with clear policies and schemes of work.
- The subject makes a major contribution to students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development.
- There is a very good range of extra-curricular drama.
- Good cross-curricular links have been established.
- The subject is led and managed very well.

Areas for improvement

- Increase the number of students achieving the highest GCSE grades.
- Add multicultural elements to schemes of work in Years 7 to 9.

- 189 Drama is studied by all students in Years 7 to 9 and is a option in Years 10 and 11. It did not form part of the full inspection but was sampled.
- 190 GCSE drama results are consistently in line with the national average. Students often achieve their best GCSE result in drama. The least able students perform particularly well but improvements can be made at the highest grades. Boys achieve at least as well as girls. Students from different cultural backgrounds reach similar standards.
- 191 All students are taught drama in Years 7 to 9. Standards are above average. In the two lessons observed, students were making real progress in their dramatic skills. They have confidence in improvisation and understand such techniques as hot-seating, thought tunnelling and conscience figures. In one Year 9 lesson, real maturity was shown as the performance of one group was analysed by the rest of the class. Constructive criticism at such a high level is rarely seen in Years 7 to 9. There was a high level of trust and co-operation within the class.
- 192 In Years 10 and 11, two lessons were seen, along with an after school rehearsal in which older students worked on 'Blood Wedding'. The level of performance skills

were exceptionally high, with students being given a great measure of responsibility for their work. In Years 10 and 11, students who opt for drama make good progress and the achievement of the less able, including those with SEN, is a strength. During a Year 11 lesson, which was structured into clear stages, students working on examination techniques made significant gains towards their final piece of detailed writing. Students display their ability to analyse their own performances using appropriate subject vocabulary in their notebooks. These show consistent evidence of their commitment to work. Teachers have already identified the need to raise the standards of the highest achievers, especially in their responses to written examinations.

- 193 Teaching was satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and the two excellent lessons were observed in Years 10 and 11. Specialist teachers have exceptional subject expertise and enthusiasm. Some students are taught by non-specialists, so not all students benefit from this level of subject expertise. The best teaching centred on making students responsible for the quality of their work. There was constant evidence of evaluation of work in progress, drafting and polishing of performance. Deadlines are set and students make progress at a rapid pace. Marking of written work is very thorough and students are clear about what they can do to improve standards. Students say they look forward to their drama lessons.
- 194 Drama teachers use shared accommodation, including the year hall and dining hall, making it impossible for the space to be fully utilised for the subject. This directly affects the quality of provision. Also, during examinations, some spaces are not available for practical work. Lack of suitable accommodation inevitably means students' progress is hampered, especially in Years 7 to 9. The future building programme is designed to remove these problems.
- 195 Subject management is very good. Documentation is of high quality. Schemes of work are good, focusing on topics that are of interest to the students, and building up a systematic understanding of subject skills. In Years 7 to 9, there is no specific reference to multicultural topics. Drama has built good links with other subjects and works well with English in Years 7 to 9 on the Shakespeare text and with PHSE+C on drugs' education. There is collaboration between the expressive arts, for example a recent celebration of Japanese art, music and theatre. Drama makes a valuable extra-curricular contribution to the life of the school.
- 196 Progress since the previous inspection has been good. In 1996, drama was identified as a strength of the school and this remains the case.

MATHEMATICS

- 197 Overall, the quality of provision for mathematics is good.

Strengths

- Progress made in improving standards by the end of Years 9 and 11.
- Teaching overall is good, and in some lessons it is very good.
- Assessment procedures are effective: marking is constructive and targets are set.
- A good beginning has been made in teaching the National Numeracy Strategy.
- Leadership and management are good.

Areas for improvement

- Consistency of all teaching and increasing the range of learning activities.
- Better match of work and expectations to students' potential in some lessons, including boys' written work in Years 7 to 9.
- Greater use of ICT in mathematics, by improving access to computers.

- 198 Standards were above average for the proportion of students with Level 5 and above in the Year 9 national tests in 2001. In previous years, test results were in line with the national average, with an improving trend. The proportion of students with Level 6 and above was in line with the national average in 2001, as was the average points score. In 2000, the boys' results were much higher than girls, a reversal of the national trend, but in 2001, girls' results were much higher. Results at age 16 are improving, with 51 percent of students attaining a GCSE A*-C grade in 2001, slightly above the national average, whereas results in 2000 were slightly below. GCSE passes at A*-G grades have been in line with the national average over several years. Girls achieved higher than the national average for girls in 2001, but boys' results were below the national average for boys.
- 199 In lessons, standards are in line with national expectations in Year 9, but vary with the set, teacher and topic being studied. In Year 7, the lowest set was observed to make good progress in their knowledge and understanding of our money system, using practical activities. The top set in Year 8 demonstrated appropriate skills of algebraic manipulation in a lesson on inequalities, developing a depth of understanding from their previous work on equations. A Year 9 lower-attaining class had a good understanding of the equivalence between common fractions and percentages. In Years 7 and 8, the introduction of mental mathematics 'starters', which develop numeracy skills, is having a beneficial effect on standards. Students consolidate their previous learning well when using 'show me' whiteboards, for example in a Year 8 middle set, when writing algebraic equations and solutions from the teacher's spoken description. Correct mathematical terms are used well by students, as in a Year 7 middle set dealing with co-ordinates or Year 8 work on enlargement. Overall, boys and girls work equally well in most classes, although boys tend to be better orally than girls, but are poorer at written work
- 200 In Years 10 and 11, standards are average overall. They are good in the higher-attaining sets, as seen in a Year 10 lesson investigating straight-line graphs. The use of graphical calculators improved the rate at which they discovered the connection between the equation of a straight line and the appearance of the graph. The Year 10 lowest set made good progress in being able to simplify algebraic expressions, building on the previous lesson's work on negative numbers. Under achievement was seen in one middle ability set on distance-time graphs owing to the poor attitude and distracting behaviour of a substantial minority of students. There is a gender imbalance in the Year 11 sets, with more boys in the top and bottom sets and more girls in the middle sets. Standards in Year 11 lessons and books are in line with national expectations at this stage of the course. Achievement from entry at age 11 is good, including students with SEN.
- 201 Teaching is good overall. Nearly one-third is very good, with practically all other teaching being satisfactory. Well-qualified and experienced teachers have good subject knowledge. All teachers have undergone National Numeracy Strategy training and are using mental maths 'starters' well. The best lessons are well planned with a variety of student activities. Good time management leads to quality review of students' learning. Structured group work, paired discussions and investigations improve students' learning, such as in a Year 9, top set lesson investigating relative frequency and probability. These activities are not used by all mathematics teachers and some talk too long when students could be more actively engaged in learning by 'doing'. Most teaching is aimed at the middle attainment level of each set, with a limited range of objectives for those at the extremes. Occasionally, insufficient challenge or extension work for higher-attaining students in each set impedes their learning, while lower-attaining students need more support. The lower groups in each year have SEN teachers and learning support assistants to help the class teacher give much-needed individual attention. Many students at Level 2 or below on entry to Year 7 need 'catch-up' programmes to achieve mastery of basic numeracy skills. Most teachers know their classes well, have good strategies of classroom control and good relationships with students. Homework is

conscientiously set, and usually tackled well by students, as an integral part of their learning. Marking is good, with frequent, constructive comments which help students know how to improve. Targets are set regularly.

- 202 Attitudes to mathematics are good. Students show interest, and often enthusiasm, in class. Homework is usually completed well. Students know the expectations of the teachers, are familiar with the structure of lessons and usually bring the correct equipment. They appreciate the assistance of teachers and LSAs as they circulate around the class, and readily ask for help when needed. Most behaviour is very good, with only rare incidents when individuals are uncooperative. Most students work very well with others and they help or compliment each other appropriately. They enjoy producing work for the very good displays which are in all mathematics classrooms.
- 203 The head of mathematics gives clear vision and direction to a stable team of capable teachers. Management is good and change has been introduced effectively, with the introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy in Years 7 to 9 and the new GCSE syllabi in Years 10 and 11. New schemes of work have been written and text-books bought. There is an appropriate strategy of setting by ability in Years 7 to 9, allowing smaller groups for those with lower prior attainment and SEN. Book resources are now very good, and interesting equipment is being developed, but more graphical calculators and improved access to computers are vitally needed. Although most mathematics classrooms are on the second floor, two teachers have to be based elsewhere, which is a disadvantage. Departmental assessment policies and procedures are good. The mathematics improvement plan is thorough and fits well with school aims and priorities.
- 204 Since the previous inspection, there have been positive Improvements. Higher standards are gained in external examination results. The teaching is of better quality. Schemes of work now include the use of computers for LOGO and spreadsheets, but access to computers is still too limited, and this, along with the need for further training of teachers, has hindered development.

□ **Standards in numeracy**

- 205 Students' skills are broadly average. In mathematics, standards of numeracy are good and teachers have used mental techniques over several years in advance of the National Numeracy Strategy. Numeracy skills are practised in a number of subjects and no difficulties were observed that impeded progress. Graphic skills for recording numerical information are generally found to be good, such as creating bar charts in French, presenting data in ICT and analysing food products using attribute analysis in design and technology. In science, a good example of numeracy was observed in Year 10, when students were required to change the subject of an equation. However, specific numeracy teaching strategies have not been co-ordinated across the school.

SCIENCE DEPARTMENT

- 206 Overall, provision for science is satisfactory.

Strengths

- Much of the teaching in Years 7 to 9 is of good quality.
- Teachers are knowledgeable and well qualified.
- Students make good progress in Years 7 to 9.
- Books are marked helpfully, so students know how their work can be improved.
- Students' investigation skills have improved well since the previous inspection.

Areas for improvement

- Subject management, including more frequent monitoring and evaluation to identify areas for improvement in standards and the training needs of teachers.
- Analysing students' answers and the progress of students and groups, so that under-performance is recognised and can be dealt with.
- The attainment of boys in Years 10 and 11.
- Updating schemes of work.

- 207 In 2001, the overall performance of students in national tests was average in Year 9. It was average in the previous three years. Results are in line with the average for similar schools. At age 16, the proportion of A*-C grades in GCSE examinations was above average. Girls achieved slightly higher results than boys'. At the highest grades (A*-A) attainment at the school for both girls and boys was almost double the national average.
- 208 The standard of work at the end of Years 7 to 9 is above average. This represents good achievement because when students enter the school at the age 11 their knowledge and understanding of science is below average. There are no differences between girls' and boys' attainment, and students of all abilities are developing a good understanding. For example in a Year 9 lesson, a group of lower-attaining students was able to predict correctly what gas would be released when a lump of limestone was heated. They understood the names of chemicals sufficiently well to be able to say what else would be formed. Practical skills are well developed and students work with care and accuracy. Their manipulative skills are good. Students in Year 9 made an electric motor, as part of the study of electromagnets, and did so with impressive skill. The contribution of science to the development of students' literacy is satisfactory. However, insufficient opportunities are given for them to engage in extended writing. There is too much variation in the attention given to the development of scientific vocabulary by different teachers. For example in one Year 7 lesson, students were taught to use the correct terms 'converging' and 'diverging' when applied to lenses, but another class of the same age incorrectly used the term 'rainbow' instead of 'spectrum'. The development of numeracy and ICT skills is also too limited.
- 209 The standard of work in Years 10 and 11 is average overall, although it is more variable in range than in Years 7 to 9. Higher-attaining students follow a course leading to three separate science GCSEs. Their work is of an appropriate standard for their prior attainment, and most students cope with it well. A small number are having difficulties but are making reasonable progress. For example, most students have a good understanding of how to calculate the speed of sound waves. Most do their calculations quickly and efficiently, and are able to apply their new learning to new situations. Students who follow the balanced science course, which leads to two GCSEs, are making satisfactory progress. A third group of students is following a non-GCSE course. Their work is detailed and thorough. They are developing a sound understanding of the everyday science that they study. In all groups though, there is a small but significant number of boys whose work in science is incomplete or who do not do enough homework. Students with SEN progress well across Years 7 to 11, as do those for whom English is an additional language.

- 210 Teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. In Years 7 to 9, the percentage of good or better lessons is more than 80 percent, whilst in Years 10 and 11 it is over 40 percent. The proportion of unsatisfactory lessons is small: about one lesson in twenty. In the most successful lessons, teachers have high expectations of what students are able to do and how they can help their understanding. They plan lessons that motivate students and give good support for dealing with challenging new work. A good example of this was seen in a lesson for lower-attaining students about genetics. The teacher quickly reminded them of the work they had done previously and what would be needed to understand the new work. Students' interest was aroused by a short introduction to the lifestyle of an early geneticist. Interest was sustained because students were told what they would know as a result of the lesson. They were then asked to predict the result of one of the geneticist's experiments. The challenge to the class was to understand why the result, which was unexpected, occurred by referring to the earlier work they had done. A good proportion gained a clear understanding of a complex piece of biology. Teaching is less successful when the abilities of the full range of students are not catered for in a lesson.
- 211 Students' books are marked well. Some teachers make detailed and helpful corrections to work and all tell students how their work could be further improved. Tests are given regularly, but the content needs to reflect more closely the demands of the National Curriculum. There is insufficient analysis of the answers students give. As a result, the information from testing is not used sufficiently to evaluate the success of the teaching approaches. Individual students and small groups who are not performing as well as they should be are not identified well enough using assessment records. Science lessons make a good contribution to students' social development but, on the basis of the work seen, there is little provision for their spiritual, moral or cultural development. The use of computers to aid learning in science is too limited. Although data-logging equipment has been purchased, it is infrequently used at present. There is little planned use of computers for researching information.
- 212 The response of students' to science teaching is good and often very good. They show interest in lessons, ask questions and produce good quality work. There are very few instances of disruptive behaviour.
- 213 The overall leadership and management of the science department is unsatisfactory. However, the day-to-day organisation of the separate aspects of science is smooth running. Important issues, such as the updating of the curriculum for Years 7 to 9 in the light of changes in 2000 have not yet been completed. As a result, some aspects of science no longer in the National Curriculum programmes of study are still being taught. The work of teachers is monitored, but not with sufficient frequency. Too few opportunities are created for colleagues to share with each other some of the very good practice which exists. There is insufficient monitoring of the progress made by groups of students through regular reviews of work or assessment records. There is evidence of under-performance by boys in some GCSE groups, but this has not been picked up. Resources are adequate, but ageing. The department is well served by a small but hardworking team of technicians.
- 214 Improvements since the previous inspection are moderate. The teaching of investigative skills has been improved and is leading to higher standards. More up-to-date ICT equipment has been purchased but its use is still not widespread. No judgement on the management of science was made in the previous report.

ART AND DESIGN

- 215 Overall, the quality of provision in art and design is satisfactory.

Strengths

- Teaching provides clear direction, with good support for individual students.
- The art curriculum provides a broad experience of themes.
- Good relationships are established.
- A stimulating environment for learning has been created in the art block.

Areas for improvement

- First-hand experiences for students, particularly contact with original art and artists.
- Students' independent research skills, particularly those which demand analysis and evaluation of artists, materials and methods.
- Specialist resources, particularly provision for ICT.

- 216 In 2001, students achieved A*-C grades at GCSE in line with national averages. This followed a year when results had fallen from a level consistently above average. Grades A* and A are rarely attained. The stronger performance of girls reflects the national trend in the subject. Successes in competitions and participation in community projects add to this achievement. For example, some students had work published in a calendar during inspection week.
- 217 In Years 7 to 9, standards are in line with those expected nationally. The use of colour and the development of work that involves abstraction are strengths. These are seen, for example, in shoe studies and work inspired by the artist Hundertwasser in Year 7. Students know about different artists, as in a Year 9 lesson about perspective when they recalled knowledge of Renaissance artists. Drawing and painting skills progress soundly during Years 7 to 9. Three-dimensional work is popular with boys, although opportunities to develop skills are infrequent. Schemes of work are adapted to enable students of all abilities to progress well in relation to their ability. Learning support assistants contribute to the motivation and good understanding of students with SEN, who achieve well.
- 218 In Years 10 and 11, standards are average overall. Students make swift initial progress due to skilful planning to guide the first GCSE project. They are able to combine drawing from direct observation with the abstraction skills developed in Years 7 to 9, together with an understanding of an art movement. The Cubist, mixed-media collages which result are very effective in enabling the development of individual responses from a shared starting point. Projects that enable students to apply personal experiences and interests result in work of good quality. For example, in a Year 11 group observed, one student's understanding of Indian culture was confidently applied. In another group, an interest in supernatural phenomena inspired powerful imagery associated with the chosen theme of 'Alien'. Where skills developed earlier are applied to more challenging contexts, the results are very good; for example, the large relief panels inspired by Gaudi, and textile and papier-mâché work inspired by Africa. Both projects extended students' skills in handling materials well. The least successful work depends too much upon secondary sources or makes too little reference to previous work. Achievement across Years 7 to 11 is generally good.
- 219 Teaching is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Competent teaching drives the pace of learning. Where there is good and very good teaching, demonstration is used well and time is managed effectively. Teachers create lively and interesting art rooms that contribute positively to students' experiences. The good subject knowledge of staff underpins students' achievements. This is enriched by the personal investment of staff in art-based experiences out of school. Short and medium-term planning is good. Long-term planning for progression is an area for development as this would enable students to pursue skills to a depth commensurate with their ideas. Homework is often well linked to coursework. It is regularly marked and sometimes shared to provide a context for the use of specialist

vocabulary. This effectively addresses the issue of extending students' language that was raised in the previous report.

- 220 Attitudes and behaviour in art lessons are generally good. Interest is sustained across lessons and projects. However, the majority of students are too dependent upon the teacher. This is illustrated by the Year 11 mock examination preparation observed, where independent preparation, based on a thoughtful analysis of students' previous successes, was rare. Self-review and target-setting are not sufficiently linked to the assessment requirements of the National Curriculum and GCSE examinations.
- 221 The subject is well co-ordinated. Staff have successfully improved the environment in the art rooms. However, they lack sufficient resources and provide a significant proportion, particularly images, artefacts and books, from their personal collections. Public display spaces are frequently used for art exhibitions but the good quality art produced by older students is not being used sufficiently to help promote the schools' ethos of 'excellence for all'. The subject makes a good contribution to students' development of specialist language.
- 222 Since the previous inspection, standards have remained broadly similar. Staff have been effective in developing the art curriculum. They have worked hard to create a visually interesting environment. The role of ICT within art remains under developed.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- The leadership of the design and technology co-ordinator.
- Teaching in the large majority of lessons.
- Relationships between staff and students.
- Informative marking that lets students know how to improve their work.

Areas for improvement

- Developing strategies to raise boys' achievement in GCSE graphic products and resistant materials.
- Providing students with better access to modern textbooks.
- Addressing the health and safety issues in the resistant materials workshops.

- 224 In recent years, not all students have had the opportunity of studying design and technology to GCSE level and, clearly, this has had an impact upon results. For example, in 2001, only eighty-five students were entered for the examination. Students' GCSE results during this period have been below average for grades A* to C. Girls have achieved consistently much higher results than boys. Over the last three years, girls results have been close to the national average, whilst boys' results have been well below average. Boys' results vary considerably across subjects within the department. They have achieved well in food and textiles, but results are well below average in graphic products and resistant materials.
- 225 In the current Year 9, the attainment of students is similar to that normally seen at this age. From Years 7 to 9, girls and boys, and those of differing prior attainment, are making good progress using a wide range of materials to design and make a variety of products. For example, in Year 7, students develop their knowledge and understanding of electronics, and carefully solder components onto a printed circuit board to assemble 'Jitterbugs'. In Year 8, they use patterns to prepare materials in textiles, and assemble them confidently using sewing machines to make 'Housemonsters'. In Year 9, students are able to work in an area of their own choice to prepare for GCSE courses. They extend their knowledge and understanding by

investigating existing products. For example, in resistant materials, they analyse mobile phones and use hand and machine tools with appropriate accuracy to develop prototype designs of their own. In food technology, students learn how to record the sensory characteristics of different food products before making their own pasta dishes and sauces. Students with SEN make good

progress developing their designing and making skills. For example, in Year 7, they learn how to solder safely, with good help and guidance from the learning support assistants.

- 226 In Years 10 and 11, students are able to specialise in one material area. In these years, progress and achievement are sound overall, but vary considerably across the department. In the current Year 11, the attainment of students in the design and technology subjects overall is similar to that normally seen at this age. In Year 10, students make good progress, learning a range of skills before starting their GCSE projects. For example, in textiles, they use a range of constructional and decorative techniques to design and make a variety of cushion covers. In systems and control, they develop their knowledge and understanding of mechanical and electronics components to design and make buggies. In Year 11, students have embarked upon a range of coursework projects that are matched closely to the requirements of the examinations. However, in this year, progress is variable across the teaching groups and attainment remains higher in food and textiles than in graphic products and resistant materials. In textiles, for example, students have undertaken detailed research and investigation, including visits to museums to collect information for their projects. In resistant materials, the gifted and talented students have used the Internet and have visited companies to collect relevant information. However, the GCSE coursework of a significant number of students in graphic products and resistant materials does not demonstrate the range or depth of work required by the course. Their design work is superficial and they do not have a sufficient understanding of the materials and processes they will use to realise their ideas. A good number of students in all material areas are using computers to enhance the presentation of their coursework. Students with SEN make sound progress. For example, in Year 11 graphics, a student was working closely with a learning support assistant to construct a model of a shop front.
- 227 Overall teaching is good, particularly in Years 7 to 9. Teachers demonstrate a secure knowledge and understanding of their material specialisms. Individual lessons and projects are well planned to make good use of the time available. Students learn effectively when teachers have planned a range of different activities for the one-hour lessons. This was observed in a textiles lesson in Year 10, when students were learning how to describe the properties of fabrics. Teachers generally give clear introductions at the start of lessons to clarify their expectations for the session. They usefully bring students together at the end to summarise the work that has been undertaken and to evaluate the learning that has taken place. For example, in food in Year 9, the teacher asked students to read out sentences to describe the food products they had investigated. Where teaching is good, teachers demonstrate skills effectively to their groups, for example in systems and control in Year 10, showing students how to construct accurate working drawings of their buggy designs. Good assessment procedures are in place to record attainment at the end of each piece of work. In addition, the marking of on-going coursework for GCSE is a strength; students are given detailed advice and guidance about how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve their work. Where teaching is less effective, as in graphic products and resistant materials in Year 11, the range of projects is too broad and teachers are unable to provide individuals with sufficient help and support to enable them to make significant progress within the lesson.
- 228 Students respond well and show a good level of interest in the subject. Standards of behaviour are nearly always very good. Students work well together, such as in food technology in Year 9, preparing pasta dishes in pairs. Relationships between

students and their teachers are good. In Year 11, the GCSE coursework provides opportunities for students to take more responsibility for their learning and many have put a substantial amount of effort into the presentation of their folders. However, a significant number of students find this aspect of the course difficult and need further support in order to successfully manage the extended coursework task.

- 229 The design and technology co-ordinator is providing good leadership and management of the teaching team. This is evident in the planning and delivery of schemes of work, and the day-to-day running of the department. Monitoring of teaching and learning has become established across the department. However, staff need to ensure that appropriate teaching and learning strategies are put in place to raise boys' achievement in graphic products and resistant materials. There are some resource shortfalls which are currently restricting attainment, such as textbooks which students can use at home. There is a health and safety issue in the resistant materials workshops, as not all machines are connected to the safety circuit.
- 230 Since the previous inspection, the department has made satisfactory progress and standards are now similar to those normally seen. However, there is still considerable variation in the attainment of students across the different GCSE courses.

GEOGRAPHY

- 231 Overall, the quality of provision in geography is very good.

Strengths

- Standards of attainment are above average.
- Strong leadership and management.
- Very effective teaching, particularly in Years 10 and 11.
- A well-planned curriculum.
- High standard of marking.
- Good contribution to students' literacy and numeracy skills.

Areas for improvement

- Attainment of under achieving boys in Years 7 to 9.
- Continue to support non-specialists to maintain the high standard of teaching.

- 232 Students do well in their tests and examinations. Attainment in geography in Years 7 to 9 has improved in recent years. In the 2001 teacher assessments in Year 9, standards were well above the national average. Girls continue to do better than boys. Examination results at GCSE also continue to improve. In 2001, the number of students who gained the highest grades was above the national average. Almost three-quarters of the students gained grades A*-C, and of these almost half gained grade A* or A. There was no significant difference between the performance of girls and boys.
- 233 Students make very good progress overall in Years 7, 8 and 9: they demonstrate standards of knowledge and understanding which are above those observed in similar schools. Students have a good knowledge of different places around the world, and of the changes occurring in both the natural and the man-made environment. For example, work on settlement in Year 7 gives them a good understanding of how places change. Work in Year 8 on rivers helps them to gain a good understanding of changes in the physical landscape. Their work on the tourist industry in Year 9, shows a good understanding of environmental issues in a National Park. Gifted students make good progress. For example, in their work on rain forests, they show a good understanding of the threat posed by development and of how the environment could be managed in a more sustainable way. Students with

SEN, make very good progress in geography, and also against their individual targets. Students develop valuable skills of literacy and numeracy in their geography lessons. For example, in Year 8, they have a good knowledge of

- 234 vocabulary and specialist terms, and write good descriptions about Nairobi. Girls achieve more highly than boys' overall and a moderate proportion of boys have the capacity to reach higher standards.
- 235 Students who choose geography in Years 10 and 11 make good progress and reach standards above average. They have a good understanding of how urban and rural environments are changing. For example, their study of Coventry in Year 10 gives them a good understanding of patterns in urban areas. From work on flooding in Bangladesh in Year 11, they gain a good understanding of the inter-relationships between people and their environment. Students gain a lot from their fieldwork, both in the local area and in Swanage. They have well-developed investigative skills, including the ability to collect, present and analyse data. They can also make conclusions based upon careful evaluation of the facts. Gifted students achieve well. For example, their very good grasp of studies in urban areas, including the locality, northern England and South America, gives them a good understanding of changing patterns of migration and the effects on city environments. Students with SEN make good progress in geography. They are well supported by their teachers, and this helps them to gain a good understanding of the subject. Much of the work in geography gives students opportunities to develop their skills of literacy and numeracy. These are seen in their written work and their ability in drawing graphs and maps. Girls and boys make similar progress.
- 236 The main reason the students do well in geography is the good standard of teaching across Years 7 to 11. Teachers use their subject knowledge very well. They plan lessons which are interesting and challenging, and which match the individual learning needs of students. Teachers support students well, marking their work carefully and providing very helpful guidance on how to improve. For example, in a Year 9 lesson on the tropical rainforests, the teacher showed a real enthusiasm for the subject, which rubbed off on the students. She was extremely well organised and planned the lesson to include a demonstration by herself and an opportunity for all students to take part. An excellent explanation of the formation and effects of a cyclonic storm were given, included playing a recording of rain forest sounds. Homework was carefully planned to extend the lesson to include other aspects of rain forests. Students responded very well, with complete attention and a high level of interest. They tackled the follow-up work in class with determination and concentration. As a result, they gained a very good understanding of some of the distinctive features of the rain forest ecosystem. Similarly, in a Year 10 lesson on the local area, the teacher started the lesson well by recapping on work covered so far on some of the features of Coventry. He then set an activity for the students to analyse and graph census data. This was explained extremely well so the students understood very clearly exactly what was required. Help sheets were provided for the less confident students. As a result, all were able to complete the work successfully. They all gained a lot from the lesson, developing their skills of data interpretation and in understanding the social factors which affect cities. In a very small minority of lessons in Years 7 to 9, the teachers do not have this high level of subject knowledge and expertise, so do not set challenging work for all students.
- 237 Attitudes are very good. Students show interest in their work and try hard. In Years 10 and 11, they show a particular determination to do well, and this is part of the reason for their success in the examinations. The standard of behaviour is mostly very good. There is a small minority of the younger boys however, who sometimes lack concentration and this affects their progress in lessons.
- 238 Management of the subject is very good. The subject leader has created a very strong sense of teamwork and co-ordinates the geography teaching very effectively. There is a clear understanding of the subject requirements and appropriate changes

to the schemes of work are made as required. Good support is given to colleagues to maintain the high standards of teaching. Leadership is a significant factor in the success of the subject.

- 239 Since the previous inspection, good progress has been made in three areas. There is now greater consistency in the amount of high quality teaching. As a result, standards have improved further. There has been a significant improvement in the use of ICT to support learning.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Standards are good for students aged 11 to 16.
- Teaching is very good.
- Assessment is accurate and used well.
- Relationships between teachers and students are excellent.
- Imaginative use is made of the local community and field work.
- The department is very well managed.

Areas for improvement

- Extend the use of ICT in the teaching of history.
- The quality of written work of some boys in lower sets.
- Identify and use more opportunities for the teaching of citizenship, and the spiritual, social, moral and cultural development of students'.

- 241 Results in teacher assessments at age 14 have been improving year on year. By the end of Year 9, students are reaching standards above those expected nationally, with girls' performance at Level 5+ well above that of boys. At age 16, GCSE results are above the national average. Although the percentage by which results are above have fallen slightly, the proportion of higher grades has risen. The few students who study for the Certificate of Achievement do very well.
- 242 In lessons, standards of work for students in Years 7 to 9 are above average. Students have good knowledge and understanding about the periods of history being studied. For example in a Year 8 lesson, they were able to describe the differences in life in Warwick between Tudor times and now, looking at sanitation, housing, transport and commerce. Students can effectively interpret sources to deduce meaning, and communicate this orally and in their written work. This was seen in a Year 9 lesson, when students grasped the purpose and effect of anti-semitic Nazi propaganda by examining cartoons from the time. Students understand the difference between primary and secondary sources of evidence and have a good grasp of chronology. The written work of some of the boys, particularly those in the lower sets, does not match the quality of their oral work.
- 243 In Years 10 and 11, standards of work seen in lessons are above average. Students produce high quality coursework based on primary sources, comparing and contrasting different types of evidence, as in their work on the conflict in Northern Ireland. They can select and organise relevant information, and many present precise answers to historical questions. They communicate ideas about the past very effectively. Higher-attaining students produce some very good extended writing. Oral skills are good: students enjoy role-play, debate and discussion. In the mixed ability classes in Years 10 and 11, on a few occasions teachers failed to set tasks at different levels according to students' abilities. In these lessons, less able students struggled with the concepts involved. For example, in a Year 10 lesson on the history of medicine, some of the boys had difficulty understanding that Harvey's experiments led to the discovery of the circulation of the blood. Students with SEN

are supported very well by additional help and through tasks that are adapted for them. Overall, attainment is good at both key stages.

- 244 Teaching in history is mostly very good with some excellent lessons. Teachers are enthusiastic and plan their lessons with a variety of tasks. They hold the interest of the students and this ensures good progress in learning. The concentration spans and learning of a group of Year 9 students with SEN were enhanced by a 'hot seating' exercise. The teacher pretended to be Adolf Hitler and the students asked questions so they could then go on to write a newspaper article. Teachers make good use of strategies to raise the standards of boys. For example, in a Year 8 lesson, the teacher made excellent use of pictures of fighter planes, photographs and anecdotes from the Battle of Britain to really engage the attention of the boys and then to get them to write their own notes. Teachers actively involve students wherever they can. For example, this was observed in a Year 10 lesson where students presented their research findings. They acted a series of role-plays on the differences in medical care in the Middle Ages for rich and poor. The level of support and challenge, along with the positive encouragement given by the teacher, meant that students deepened their knowledge and understanding and made excellent progress.
- 245 Students are very well motivated because they enjoy history. They produce a large quantity of work and take pride in its presentation. They are keen to learn, participate well in lessons and are confident in asking and answering questions. They are willing to express their own opinions. In all lessons seen, relationships between teachers and students were unfailingly positive, good-humoured and respectful. Assessment of students' work is regular and accurate. It is used well to indicate exactly what they need to do to improve the quality of their work. Good use is made of the GCSE and Certificate of Achievement assessment schemes with students. On the single occasion when teaching was not satisfactory, it was due to the tasks set not matching the ability of the students. They failed to understand the work and made little progress. However, even in this case, classroom management and behaviour were good. Some use is made of ICT in history but it is not used as a matter of course to aid the written work of the weaker students, particularly the boys.
- 246 The subject is very well managed and has an excellent ethos. History contributes well to the life of the school through the wide range of field trips, use of the local community and the annual history day which is arranged for the whole school. Schemes of work are well written but these do not include sufficient reference to teaching citizenship or widening students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, or the use of ICT. History makes a very strong contribution to literacy development across Years 7 to 11.
- 247 Since the previous inspection progress has been good. The tasks set for students are now more challenging and the quality of teaching has improved further.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

- 248 Overall, the quality of provision for ICT is good when taught as a separate course or module. Provision for ICT across subjects is unsatisfactory.

Strengths

- Planning and teaching of the discrete ICT modules in Year 7 and Year 9.
- Good teaching in examination classes.
- Teachers of discrete ICT courses have very good subject knowledge.
- Students with special educational needs are fully integrated into all ICT lessons.
- Investment in ICT over two years now provides access to good quality resources.

Areas for improvement

- Recording those aspects of ICT taught in different subjects.
- A system for recording and monitoring students' achievement in each year group.
- Improving the consistency in teaching ICT in many subjects.
- Increasing access to ICT for subject teaching.

- 249 In Year 9 teacher assessments for 2001, results were slightly above the national average, with girls achieving more highly than boys. In Year 11, GCSE passes at A*-C have varied very widely over the past three years. Results were very low in 1999 and 2000, but improved to 46 percent in 2001, although this was still below the national average. Girls achieved marginally higher results than boys. Of the nine students entered for GNVQ examinations, four achieved distinctions, one a merit and one a pass.
- 250 Students make good progress to reach average standards within the discrete ICT modules taught in Year 7 and Year 9. For example, when using PowerPoint, students were able to produce a visual presentation based on their interpretation of a virtual family. They are good at developing their ideas and making things happen, as well as finding things out and exchanging information. Their slides showed good use of imported images and clear text. Different animation techniques and a variety of colour were used to make the presentation eye catching. Higher-ability students were stretched, and they included more advanced animation. Students also modified their text and images as their confidence improved. When using databases in Year 9, students had carried out a survey using a questionnaire to find out information from local residents. After producing the database they were able to interrogate it and present their findings. In a well-paced lesson, students made good progress, girls worked more quickly than boys and were more imaginative. All students used the database software confidently. In a geography lesson, good use was made of the Internet to find out about the effects of deforestation on the earth's surface. In French, the use of a spreadsheet, compiled by students using images and text in French and English, reinforced their learning. The key skills of searching for and selecting, exploring and developing, and presenting information using text and images are well developed at a basic level in Year 7 and Year 9. SEN students are fully integrated and achieve well.
- 251 In Years 10 and 11, students have a choice of options available from GCSE and GNVQ. Students studying short course French also study a short GCSE course in ICT. By Year 11, standards are average in ICT options. In Year 10, students were observed working on a coursework task using Publisher to produce a leaflet to advertise a company product. Good use was made of text and images to show the company logo, name and give important detail on the six available surfaces of the folded leaflet. The final colour prints were imaginative and of good quality. The teacher made good use of high quality wall display for exemplar material. The majority of students were working to the higher levels of attainment. In another Year 10 lesson, students were learning how to present information by writing a report. They had previously hand-written the minutes of a meeting and used these notes as the basis for their word-processed document. Students had to make their own decisions regarding the layout, font style and spacing. Literacy skills were enhanced by making a list of words specific to agendas and minutes. The teachers' good subject knowledge enabled all students to achieve success. Coupled with excellent attitudes and behaviour, students made good progress. In Years 10 and 11, students on ICT courses achieve well, including those with SEN. They build on their basic level Key Skills and become much more proficient in the handling of software and making decisions.
- 252 However, the use of ICT is very inconsistent across subjects. In some subjects, and with some teachers, students have little opportunity to apply the ICT knowledge and skills. In others, they extend their skills well.

- 253 The quality of teaching in all lessons observed was good and over half was very good, especially in Years 10 and 11. This includes where ICT was taught in subjects. These reflected teachers' good subject knowledge and delivery skills. Lessons began with clear introductions and in many cases there were good supportive documents. In a Year 7 lesson using PowerPoint, students were taken through the steps required to produce their presentations by clear demonstrations. Students were interested and attentive. Their positive attitudes and good behaviour enabled the lesson to progress at a good pace. In an impressive control lesson in Year 8, students learnt how to program traffic lights to simulate different conditions. Switches were also incorporated into the sequences. In a Year 9 lesson, the teacher made excellent use of the new interactive whiteboard to explain the procedures for interrogating a database. The clear, fast demonstration enabled effective use of time so that students could work on their PowerPoint presentations. In a small, short course group in Year 10, all students had SEN. The lesson was carefully structured to enable all to progress without losing concentration. Learning support was effective and detailed individual education plans (IEP) informed the teacher of students' needs. Relationships in the group were very good. A strength of all lessons seen was the positive attitude of students to their learning. This enabled them to make good progress. This was particularly apparent in a GNVQ examination revision lesson, where students used pre-release material to write descriptions from memory. However, in some subjects, teachers rarely use ICT to support students' learning.
- 254 Behaviour is good overall and very good in the majority of lessons. In some lessons it was excellent. Students respond well to good teaching in a calm, orderly atmosphere and they listen carefully. They enjoy their learning, make good progress, and are challenged by the tasks. Students with SEN are fully integrated into lessons.
- 255 The co-ordinator has been in post for only one year but has made good progress in solving many of the inherited problems. There is good co-ordination of examination teaching and courses in Years 7 and 9 where ICT is taught in discrete modules. Departmental documentation is good and a very effective development plan is being implemented. This has made a strong impact. A very competent technician supports the subject. The subject is well placed to contribute to the proposed Languages College. Examination levels have risen dramatically this year. Good records are kept where ICT is taught discretely. However, at school level, leadership and management are insufficiently strong. The school's Curriculum Action Team for ICT has recommended setting up a recording system for ICT skills developed in different subjects. This has yet to be implemented. Some subjects are restricted in teaching ICT applications because of limitations of accommodation and access. More ICT equipment and accommodation is needed for subject cross-curricular work.
- 256 The further development of ICT was a key issue for action in the 1996 inspection. There is now much improved provision for learning basic ICT skills in Years 7 to 9. Control is now fully integrated into design and technology. There is good provision of networked computers in the library. Insufficient progress has been made in planning for ICT coverage across the curriculum and recording students' attainment.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Good teaching was observed in one half of lessons observed across Years 7 to 11.
- Planning is good in German.
- Assessing and monitoring students' progress are done well.
- Students know how well they are doing.
- Standards in German are improving.

Areas for improvement

- Students routinely speaking in French or German.
- Sharing good practice to ensure that teaching is consistently of good quality.
- Using ICT to improve language learning.

258 In French, teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were above average in 2001. In Year 11, most students take a full French GCSE course, apart from some students with SEN, who take a Certificate of Achievement. In 2001, French results at GCSE were below average for girls and boys. This has been the pattern in recent years and few students gain the top grades. At present, only more-able students take German at GCSE. Results in 2001 were well above average, with girls doing particularly well. Two-thirds of girls gained A*-B grades. German results have been consistently better than French results in recent years.

259 In lessons, standards are broadly average in French in Year 9. In German, it is only the second year of study for some of the students. Standards are average for the length of time they have been taking a second language. This represents good achievement overall, given the lower than average levels of general attainment when students enter the school. However, there is a very wide range of attainment from well-above average to well below. By Year 9, able students have a very good grasp of the languages covered. They write accurately and can speak with confidence. Most students have a reasonable understanding of familiar words and phrases about the weather and they can write short dialogues. However, many speak hesitantly, and responses are largely teacher-directed and limited in scope. Few can use French routinely in extended speaking or writing. Low attainers, including those with SEN, make good progress because they receive good support. They are confident with words and phrases they have covered but often need help. However, when undertaking a class survey in Year 9, they were all willing to have a go and made themselves clearly understood. In German, the more-able students who started the language last year are making good progress and are on course to achieve above average levels. They can, for example, understand the main points of a cassette recording about leisure activities. Students can also express simple opinions and write accurately. They are achieving well in the short time they have had. Other students who started German this year have taken well to the new language; most are making good progress.

260 In Year 11, standards in French are broadly average. In German, standards are above average but only more able students take German in Years 10 and 11 at present. In both French and German, able students have a good understanding of GCSE topics. They can speak and write well, for example about past holidays and their present and future plans. Some gifted students reach high standards. Almost all students continue with French to GCSE. Most of them have a reasonable understanding but are hesitant when speaking and writing more than set phrases without support. Many low-ability students understand basic vocabulary but lack confidence to speak and write unaided. For example, students in Year 10 readily understand the teacher's routine instructions in French but find it much harder to pick out key words about the weather from a cassette recording. They are being coaxed

along to achieve creditable levels for their ability. The emphasis on grammatical understanding helps to develop students' literacy skills. Overall, most students are making at least steady progress, and achievement in both subjects is satisfactory across Years 7 to 11.

- 261 Teaching in French is satisfactory across Years 7 to 11. In one half of the lessons observed the teaching was at least good. In German, teaching was mostly good. Some teachers teach French and German and differences in the quality of teaching are related to individual teachers. The most significant difference in teaching between the languages is in the planning. Activities in German lessons are generally better matched to the students' needs. Some activities taken from the French course book do not interest the students. Otherwise, in the best French and German lessons, the teacher controls the class skilfully and plans the sequence of tasks well. For example, in a Year 9 French lesson, the teacher dealt expertly with students with challenging behaviour and learning difficulties. She guided them skilfully through a series of activities which helped them to gradually understand and speak more about leisure activities. In another very good Year 9 lesson, the teacher made the steps in learning very clear, so that students knew exactly what was expected: what they were to learn and how to do the tasks. She quickly helped the students to see the link between the German they had already practised and the new points they were about to learn. There is some expert teaching of students with SEN. These teachers create an atmosphere in which students feel secure and where they can succeed. In these lessons, students enjoy learning and make good progress in French or German. In the satisfactory lessons, teachers make the aim of lessons clear, present tasks and language adequately but without inspiring students' enthusiasm. Often, activities do not offer the wide range of learning styles or experiences outlined in the National Curriculum guidance and some students become bored, which slows learning. In too many lessons, teachers do not do enough to encourage students to speak French and German routinely in class. Assessment comments, written in exercise books, are helpful and are often linked well to targets.
- 262 Most students like learning foreign languages, but this depends on which teacher they have. In the best lessons, they clearly enjoy the activities, join in willingly and want to learn. Students generally apply themselves sensibly in whole-class speaking practice, when working in pairs or completing written work. They respect each other and the teachers. In a few cases, students are not motivated, either because of previous bad experiences in language learning or because the tasks are not interesting enough. Only occasionally does casual chatter or reluctance get in the way of learning.
- 263 The department is well led by a relatively new co-ordinator. There is a clear understanding of the subject's strengths and which areas to improve. Plans define appropriate actions, particularly if the school is successful in becoming a Language College. The More Able Project is working successfully. Routine analysis of results from monitoring and evaluation is at an early stage. From this year, all students take both French and German in Years 7 to 9. This reflects the school's commitment to developing the capability of all students in modern foreign languages.
- 264 Since the previous inspection, standards have remained broadly similar in French but have improved in German. Routine communication in the language taught is still under developed. Teaching quality remains too variable. There is now much stronger planning to move the subject forwards. The impending building programme should improve facilities considerably.

MUSIC

265 The quality of provision for music is very good.

Strengths

- Excellent teaching.
- Curriculum planning is detailed.
- Planned provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Students' enthusiasm for music and their hard work in class.
- Use of assessment to raise standards.
- The wide range of extra-curricular activities.
- Visionary leadership.

Areas for improvement

- Accommodation is cramped.
- Increased access to classroom percussion in Years 7 to 9 and to composing software in Years 10 and 11.

266 Due to illness, it was only possible to observe one of the two music teachers during the inspection. A sample of students' work and assessment records taught by both teachers were inspected.

267 Results in GCSE examinations have been broadly in line with national averages, though the number of GCSE candidates is too small to compare meaningfully with national results. In 2001, three-quarters of students gained A or B grades from an entry of eight.

268 In Year 7, students have a wide range of attainment, from well-below-average expected standards to just in line. Most are very hesitant performers. By Year 9, they have made very good progress to reach expected standards for their age. Even the least-able musicians, including students with SEN, can compose simple pieces in an intended style, though some still cannot perform them without a lot of support. The most-able students in Year 9 achieve standards slightly above expectation in appraising and composing, though individual levels of performing skill vary widely. Students of all abilities are consistently effective at working together to produce performances which are better than the sum of the individual contributions. They acquire and develop a good range of musical skills, especially in ensemble performance and composing.

269 In Year 11, standards are above average. Students seen during the inspection were performing towards the upper end of the GCSE range for this stage in the course. Even the most limited players can present performances polished to the highest level of GCSE requirements. Their listening is almost as good: they review critically their own and others' performances. They identify very effectively things that could be further improved. Some of their compositions are sophisticated. High quality composing has been promoted by a recent project undertaken in collaboration with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra's education team. Achievement across Years 10 and 11 is very good because students grow significantly in confidence. They develop self-appraisal to the point where they can improve their work without constant reference to their teacher. This high quality progress is promoted by outstanding teaching and by students' high level of commitment.

270 Students of all ages work hard in lessons. Whatever their ability, they are interested in music. There is very little inattention in class, and those who seek to distract are quickly and firmly quelled. Relationships between students are very good. They work together effectively in mixed-gender groups. Students from all ethnic backgrounds are fully incorporated into classroom activities. Impressive features of all performances are respectful listening and warm applause at the end, however modest the performance may have been. In this response, students follow the

consistent example of their teacher. Their only weakness is lack of confidence; some students need a lot of encouragement to perform in front of others. Comparatively few students take music beyond Year 9 to GCSE. This is despite strong encouragement, for example, by inviting high-attaining students in Year 9 to perform informal GCSE recitals early in order to develop a taste for further musical study. Extra-curricular instrumental lessons are popular. Students' personal development is very well sustained in music: they show moral and spiritual awareness, for example in the words which Year 9 have written for their rap compositions.

- 271 Teaching is excellent, with many strengths. In particular, lesson planning is of very high quality, with every minute accounted for, and very good time-keeping. Students are reminded of the work in hand. They are given targets for planned activities and trusted to get on with them. Firm but unobtrusive discipline enables work to proceed unhindered by distractions. This is the more impressive because rooms are cramped and it is hard for students to hear clearly the music they make as individuals or groups. Warm praise raises students' self-esteem and confidence. This leads to very effective learning: students work independently and only ask for help if it is genuinely needed. Great strides can thus be made in a single lesson, as seen in a Year 7 class on gamelan, where students managed to compose and perform a five-part counterpoint. Careful attention is given to students with SEN, both the most and the least musically able. Students are carefully grouped so they can help each other, freeing the teacher and learning support staff to assist those who most need help. Though all students study the same music, different worksheets are given according to the understanding and abilities of different groups. This leads to impressive progress by all, especially by gifted and talented musicians. A minor weakness of the teaching is the absence of questions at the start of some lessons to check students' prior recall, though they learn so well it has no major negative impact.
- 272 The curriculum is superbly planned and links seamlessly from Year 7 to Year 11. There are well-planned contributions to the development of students' literacy skills, particularly oracy and confidence in public presentation. Careful assessment of students' work is used to help planning of future lessons. A strength of the assessment is the involvement of students in self-assessment, including their own evaluation of points for improvement. Planning for students' personal development is skilled. There is very good breadth of extra-curricular activities. These offer an outstanding range of opportunities for performing and for social development. Teachers from the County Music Service support instrumental ensembles, such as the brass group, well. Reports to parents meet statutory requirements, but comments taken from the National Curriculum subject levels do not use everyday language and are not easily understood. The leadership and management of music is excellent. The head of department has a firm grasp of all important issues. Her analysis of progress since the previous inspection and of what the department needs to do to go forward are accurate. Resources are just satisfactory, but there is not sufficient access to composing software for GCSE students, especially the weaker performers. There is very little multi-cultural percussion, regrettable in a department that takes so seriously the study of world music. The library has insufficient books for research in Years 7 to 9.
- 273 Since the previous inspection, very high standards have been maintained. The accommodation has been somewhat improved internally, but neither music room is large enough and there is insufficient storage space. The school has plans to resolve this by further building, but at present the accommodation remains unsatisfactory.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION (PE)

274 Overall, the quality of provision in physical education is satisfactory.

Strengths

- Commitment of the PE team to improvement.
- Monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching.
- Detailed reports of performance and progress to parents.
- Encouragement of students to celebrate each others' achievements.
- A very good extra-curricular programme, which is well supported by students.

Areas for improvement

- Planning that ensures all four strands of PE are readily identifiable in all activities.
- Sharing the department's good practice to improve subject knowledge in gymnastics.
- Management of students' behaviour in some lessons.
- Ensuring that students studying GCSE have their own text book.

- 275 On the days that PE was inspected, lessons timetabled for Years 7 to 9 were predominantly from the lower band. In these years the standards of students from the higher band were judged from one lesson and a number of extra-curricular activities. Across years, badminton, basketball, football, gymnastics, hockey, netball, and trampolining were observed in lessons. Basketball, hockey, netball and rugby were observed in extra-curricular activities.
- 276 At age 14, teacher assessments in 2001 were above the national average, especially for girls. There have been no GCSE results in recent years.
- 277 In Years 7 to 9, standards overall are broadly comparable with those normally seen. Some high levels of performance were observed in extra-curricular basketball, netball and rugby. In boys' gymnastics, standards are barely in line with similar students at this age range. They can perform simple balances, and most can link these together with simple rolls but these actions are performed with insufficient quality, such as extension or body tension. Most students know how to warm up appropriately and can perform a range of stretching activities. In games activities, several students show high levels of skill in passing and receiving the ball, especially in basketball, netball and rugby. Students playing in matches against other schools show good knowledge and understanding of the rules of games. All students accept officials' decisions without question.
- 278 By Year 11, students achieve standards in line with those normally seen. Some high levels of performance were observed in basketball, football, hockey and trampolining. Students have sound levels of fitness. In basketball, football and hockey most students can dribble and pass the ball with a satisfactory degree of accuracy. In basketball, students understand the principle of person-to-person marking and zone defence. In football, they know and apply the off-side rule. In hockey, they can devise tactics at penalty corners and evaluate their effectiveness. Most students can create and perform sequences using basic trampolining skills. A few students can perform difficult skills such as swivel hips and somersaults well. Examination course students' knowledge and understanding of the circulatory system ranges from very high to poor.
- 279 The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. It ranges from very good to one lesson that was poor. However, it is good, overall, in Years 10 and 11. When the teaching is good or better, objectives are clear and shared with students so that they know what gains in knowledge, understanding and skills will be expected by the end of the lesson. Skills are built up in small, manageable stages and are exemplified by teachers' and students' demonstrations. Appropriate coaching points are given and reiterated throughout the lesson. Students are given time to practise and refine their

skills, usually expending the appropriate amount of physical energy in doing so. They are also given opportunities to evaluate the effectiveness of their performance and consequently to know what they have to do to improve. In these lessons, students' acquisition of skills is good. When teaching is barely satisfactory or poor, tasks are not clearly set or sufficiently challenging. This leads to students feeling frustrated or disgruntled and, consequently, leads to poor behaviour which is not managed well. In the theory lessons seen, teachers used a limited range of teaching strategies. Too much time was spent by students in making notes from textbooks, with very few checks made on their understanding of what they were writing. Achievement is satisfactory at both key stages.

- 280 Students' responses are satisfactory overall and are dependent on the quality of the teaching. When teaching is good, they listen well to instructions, watch demonstrations carefully and work co-operatively in groups or teams. In most lessons, students are encouraged to celebrate each other's achievements and they respond well. There is good uptake on the Junior Sports Leaders Award, GCSE courses in Years 10 and 11 and the A/S course in Year 12.
- 281 The curriculum offers students a good range of games activities, but there are more limited opportunities for them to take part in gymnastics and dance, especially in Years 10 and 11. Whilst tasks for most activities are identified well, planning does not take full account of the four compulsory strands of PE set out in Curriculum 2000. Reports to parents are informative, giving a clear statement on students' progress. There are insufficient textbooks for all GCSE students to have their own. This creates difficulties when students do homework.
- 282 The department is effectively managed and led. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching is good. Staff have a positive commitment to further improvement. All members of the department give unstintingly of their time to provide the very good extra-curricular programme. Whilst the drainage to the playing fields has recently been repaired, water-logging still occurs and limits their use.
- 283 Since the previous inspection, standards have remained similar. There is still variation in the quality of teaching. The range of extra-curricular activities remains a considerable strength. Reports on students' progress are now much improved.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (RE)

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

Strengths

- Students taking the full course GCSE achieve very good standards.
- Good opportunities are provided for students' personal development.
- There are effective procedures for assessing students' progress.
- Students with special educational needs are supported well in lessons.
- There is strong leadership of the subject.

Areas for improvement

- Standards of students taking the GCSE short course.
- The range of strategies used to support the development of students' writing skills.
- Opportunities for using information and communication technology.
- Non-specialist teachers' knowledge and understanding of the religions they teach.

- 285 A GCSE short course for all students was examined for the first time in 2000. Results were disappointing and the proportion gaining grades A*-C was well below the national average. There was a similar pattern in 2001. Boys results at grades

A*- C were well below average and their achievements in other subjects. Girls' results were in line with the national average. In 2001, a small number of students was entered for the full GCSE course in religious studies. Results were very good and the proportion of students gaining grades A*-C was well above the national average.

- 286 By Year 9, students attain standards that are similar to the expectations of the Warwickshire Agreed Syllabus. They have sound knowledge and understanding of some of the main features and beliefs of the religions they are studying and make steady progress. In Year 9, students know about the main teachings of Christianity. In their work on Martin Luther King, they recognise the way that teaching in parables, such as the Good Samaritan, may have influenced his life and work. In their work on authority, students in Year 8 can describe the life of Muhammad. They are beginning to understand why events such as the revelation of the Qur'an are so important to Muslims. Students are able to reflect on their own experience and recognise what influences their own lives. This was seen in Year 7 when, during their work on symbols, students were able to create their own badge depicting their individual character and interests. The majority of students make steady progress across Years 7 to 9, especially in their knowledge and understanding of the main features of Christianity and other faiths. The progress of students with SEN is often better than would normally be expected because the work is adapted to meet their needs and they are supported well in lessons. The most-able students make satisfactory progress because they are able to extend their understanding of religions by undertaking their own research on the topics they are studying.
- 287 In Years 10 and 11, students make steady progress in acquiring knowledge of the topics being studied as part of the GCSE course. Their standards are in line with expectations for their age and ability. In Year 10, students can describe some of the different opinions that people may hold on issues such as euthanasia. In Year 11 lessons on evil and suffering, students can explain how Muslim beliefs about evil influence their attitudes to suffering. In discussion work, they recognise the ways in which religious beliefs can influence lifestyles. Students' writing often lacks the detail, explanation and evaluative comment usually expected at this age. For example, in their work about euthanasia, students struggle to support their arguments for and against it with references from the teaching of the religions that they are studying. Students with SEN make steady progress because the work is modified to meet their level of understanding.
- 288 Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and good in just over one third of lessons. Where the teaching is good, the lesson objectives are clearly stated, and students know what they are expected to achieve by the end of the lesson. Materials and tasks are adapted well to meet the needs of different groups of students. This was effective in a Year 9 lesson with a high-ability class. With this class, the teacher used additional resources on prejudice and racism to help develop students' knowledge and understanding of the life of Martin Luther King. Students were set a challenging task which involved working in pairs to produce a play script combining information from a video, worksheet, textbooks and their own research. This task challenged them to reach as high a standard as they could. In lessons with SEN students, teachers work well with support teachers and assistants to help them make good progress. In a Year 7 lesson on Divali, the support teacher helped a group of students with their written work whilst the class teacher showed Divali cards to another group. Teachers successfully create opportunities for students' personal development by including times for reflection in their lessons. In a Year 8 lesson on Muhammad, the teacher introduced a 'Guided Fantasy' on the theme of gifts, to help students try to understand the importance of the revelation of the Qur'an. Students' work is marked thoroughly, and helpful comments are given. This ensures that students know what they have achieved and what they need to do to improve.
- 289 Due to staffing difficulties, a substantial number of lessons are taken by relief

teachers or non-specialists from those outside the subject. In these lessons, the teaching and learning are less effective because teachers do not have sufficient subject knowledge. These teachers do not cover the material in sufficient depth to enable students to make enough progress in developing their knowledge and understanding of topics covered. For example, in a Year 7 lesson on Festivals of Light, the teacher had not explored the key events or beliefs associated with Divali in sufficient detail to help students gain an understanding of why the festival is important. As a result, they found it difficult to complete the tasks set. Weaker lessons often lack pace, and the work does not challenge students to think in real depth about the topic being covered. In a Year 8 lesson, because too much time was spent reading the textbook around the class and answering factual questions on the life of Muhammad, opportunities for students to think about his role in the development of Islam were missed. Overall, across the years, teachers do not place enough emphasis on developing the writing skills, such as explanation and evaluation, that students will need to be successful in the GCSE examination.

- 290 The great majority of students are well motivated in lessons. They are interested in the topics covered and willingly work on the tasks set. Students are keen to ask and answer questions. They show respect for each other's views. In a Year 10 lesson on beliefs about life after death, students listened patiently to those who were expressing their personal views. Behaviour is generally good. In a small proportion of lessons, when the work lacks challenge, some boys become restless and disrupt the learning of others.
- 291 The subject is well led and managed. The acting subject co-ordinator has a clear view of the priorities for development. There has been much recent good work in developing assessment. This has resulted in effective procedures for assessing student's work, which helps them set targets for improvement. Schemes of work are detailed but do not include enough guidance to support non-specialist teachers. The department has begun to work on developing student's literacy skills through displays of the names of religions and, in some classes, using 'word store', but much more work is needed on improving this aspect of learning. Few opportunities are taken for using ICT in teaching and learning.
- 292 Since the previous inspection, satisfactory progress has been made in improving the content and range of the curriculum in Years 10 and 11. It now meets the requirements of the Warwickshire Agreed Syllabus. Through opportunities for reflection on topics such as 'Is there a God?', and consideration of moral issues, the subject now provides good opportunities for students' spiritual as well as moral, social and cultural development.

OTHER SUBJECTS STUDIED IN YEARS 10 – 11

- 293 The subjects below are not National Curriculum subjects and were not fully inspected. However, they were sampled as part of the school's general curricular provision.

Youth Award (ASDAN - Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network)

- 294 The Youth Award course is offered to students as a full option in Years 10 and 11. It is an activity-based programme which consists of a series of challenges which are accredited for a nationally-approved qualification. The emphasis is upon those skills and qualities that employers and colleges of further education regard as important. Students who would benefit from this alternative type of course to GCSE are counselled before being accepted onto the Youth Award programme.
- 295 During the inspection, two lessons were observed in Year 10. Records of challenges that had been undertaken and written up by students were inspected from

Years 10 and 11. Standards are in line with students' general ability. Most students work hard on the short challenges, and the large majority maintain comprehensive folders of the activities that they undertake. For example, students from one class in Year 10 were planning an interview with a business manager to be undertaken the next week. They planned the task responsibly and some used ICT effectively to record the questions they were to ask at the interview. In a second Year 10 lesson on the six Key Skills, students discussed and then recorded a range of words that described each skill. Although students' literacy skills were below average, and some well below, students engaged fully in the task and advanced their understanding well. The standard of presentation of challenges is good and students use basic ICT skills competently. Many take a pride in presenting their work and achieve well.

- 296 The teaching in both lessons observed was good. It was well planned, with objectives clearly explained to students. There was a pleasant but firm rapport that ensured that students' work progressed across the hour-long period. Learning of basic skills was emphasised and reinforced through topics that students see as important.
- 297 Students benefit from a course that offers accreditation through short-term activities through which they can see tangible successes.

Business Studies

- 298 Standards in business studies are satisfactory. In Year 11, attainment is broadly in line with national averages. In 2000, 100 percent of students gained A*-G grades. However, fewer than average gained the higher A*-C grades. In 2001, the figures show an improvement, with more students opting for the subject and 34 percent gaining A*-C grades.
- 299 Overall the progress made in lessons is good. Current students are generally well motivated and often show enjoyment for the subject. In Year 10, students are making progress in recalling, understanding and explaining concepts at various levels. They are able to use technical vocabulary and give examples to illustrate their ideas.
- 300 The students are helped by effective, individual support given by the teacher. Students work well at their own pace and they develop skills as they are needed to complete the tasks.
- 301 Teaching contributes positively to promoting high levels of achievement and much is good. Courses are well planned and documented. Lessons are planned in the context of sound schemes of work, which identify clear learning objectives.

Economics

- 302 Standards attained in economics are good. Students achieve good standards in relation to their ability in many of the lessons. There were no examination results for this subject in 2000. However, in 2001, the proportion of students gaining A*-C and A*-G was in line the national average.
- 303 Standards of current students are above average. Many more boys than girls have chosen this subject at GCSE. Students are generally well motivated and often show rapid progress. The attitude and behaviour of students is very good. When they are set tasks that have high expectations, students respond well.
- 304 Teaching is good and has some strong features. Courses and lessons are well planned. Students of differing abilities are able to work at their own pace, helped by individual support from the teacher.

- 305 The subject is well led. Teachers are appropriately qualified and show a good command of their subject. Curricular content is closely determined by the examination syllabus, and good use is made of local business for case study materials.

CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

306 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.

307 The tables below show entry and performance information for courses completed in 2001. National comparisons are shown for GCE A-level courses. At the time of publication, national performance information for GCE AS or GNVQ courses was not available.

GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	12	83	N/a	50	N/a	2.9	N/a
Chemistry	6	83	N/a	33	N/a	2.3	N/a
Biology	10	90	N/a	20	N/a	2.2	N/a
Physics	8	100	N/a	25	N/a	2.3	N/a
Economics	5	100	N/a	40	N/a	2.6	N/a
Art and design	4	75	N/a	0	N/a	1.5	N/a
Drama and Theatre Studies	4	100	N/a	0	N/a	2.3	N/a
Geography	17	100	N/a	53	N/a	3.4	N/a
History	9	100	N/a	44	N/a	3.3	N/a
Sociology	10	90	N/a	30	N/a	1.9	N/a
English Literature	21	91	N/a	14	N/a	2.4	N/a
French	4	100	N/a	0	N/a	2.3	N/a
German	1	100	N/a	0	N/a	3.0	N/a
General Studies	13	85	N/a	23	N/a	2.5	N/a

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	12	100	87	33	43	5.83	5.80
Chemistry	12	100	90	25	43	5.83	5.90
Biology	12	92	88	25	34	4.83	5.25
Physics	9	67	88	22	40	3.11	5.67
Design and Technology	8	63	91	25	30	3.75	5.38
Business (Full GNVQ)	4	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	10.5	10.5
Computer Studies	8	25	86	0	23	1.00	4.62
Health and Social Care (Full GNVQ)	4	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	9.0	11.0
Economics	5	100	89	20	36	5.60	5.52
Art and Design	7	86	96	29	46	3.71	6.57

Geography	8	100	92	38	38	6.25	5.74
History	6	83	88	50	35	6.33	5.45
Sociology	8	75	86	13	35	5.00	5.32
English Literature	19	100	95	42	37	6.74	5.91
Communication Studies	5	80	93	20	31	4.00	5.53
French	2	50	89	0	38	2.00	5.59
General Studies	29	38	30	83	85	5.52	4.91

Intermediate vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Business	4	100	N/a	75	N/a	6.0	N/a

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

MATHEMATICS

308 Lessons were observed from the AS course in mathematics with statistics in Year 12 and the A2 course in mathematics with mechanics in Year 13. Work in Key Skills application of number was also observed.

309 Overall, the provision for mathematics is good.

Strengths

- A-level results have been above the national average in recent years.
- The standard of work of current students is above average.
- Teaching is good and, consequently, students are highly motivated and work hard.
- Assessment is used well to identify strengths and help students overcome weaknesses.
- The department is managed well: teachers collaborate very effectively as a team.

Areas for improvement

- Increase the use of computers in lessons.
- Introduce greater rigour into the monitoring of teaching.
- Analyse why so few girls choose mathematics in the sixth form.

310 The mathematics department does well for its sixth form students. Over recent years they have gained results consistently higher than the national average. Notable features have been the 100 percent pass rate maintained over many years and the fact that students achieve significantly better in mathematics than in their other subjects. The take-up of the subject is much lower for girls than for boys. There are too few results for girls over several years to enable a comparison to be made between the examination performance of girls and boys.

311 The standard of work seen in lessons and in students' folders confirms that attainment is higher than normally seen. This positive picture has been maintained since the previous inspection. Students quickly achieve average standards when starting a new topic, and then move on rapidly to demonstrate a quality of work which is better than that typically seen. For example, Year 13 students quickly master the use of scale drawing when resolving forces and then move on to more sophisticated methods involving calculations and use of components to solve increasingly difficult problems. Students occasionally experience difficulties in remembering simple skills from past work, such as expanding brackets or recalling trigonometric ratios. However, this is quickly overcome, and students have a good understanding of the links between different aspects of mathematics. For instance, in Year 12, they confidently analyse different versions of quadratic expressions to identify the characteristics of a parabola.

312 Students following the Key Skills course in application of number achieve average standards. They have a good understanding of how to demonstrate mathematical skills within a practical context, such as organising a social event. However, they make slower progress than other students of mathematics because they do not maintain such rigorous concentration and pace of work throughout lessons.

- 313 Teaching is good overall and enables students to learn well. Teachers inspire confidence in their students, who are very appreciative of the variety of strategies used to help them overcome difficulties. Lessons are planned thoroughly and have clear objectives, but these are not always clearly conveyed to students. Experienced teachers have very good knowledge of mathematics and how it can be taught. They collaborate well with those who are less experienced, especially in considering teaching approaches. This results in well-structured lessons with high levels of challenge and rapid pace.
- 314 As a result of the good teaching, all students following AS and A2 courses are highly motivated, work hard and maintain their concentration throughout lessons. This was observed when students in Years 12 were considering the probability of a medical supplies company being unable to meet demand for their deliveries. They persevered well, and collaborated effectively with each other and the teacher until they solved the problem. The marking of students' work is a particular strength. Teachers make very effective use of comments, and give subsequent presentations to their classes, which identify what has been done well and how to overcome any misunderstandings.
- 315 The mathematics department is managed well. Teachers are enthusiastic, committed to improvement and work well together to bring this about. They have been particularly effective in ensuring that students progress as well as possible in the new examination courses, despite publishers failing to meet their deadlines in delivering textbooks. Although some informal observation of lessons takes place there is insufficient regular monitoring of teaching and too little use of computers. Student retention rates are good. Overall this is a successful subject and teachers work hard to maintain good achievement.

SCIENCE

- 316 The focus was on chemistry, but biology and physics lessons were also sampled. Numbers of students had been relatively low, but there was a good increase in the A-level entry in 2001. Biology results have usually been below the national average but in 2001 they rose to the national level. Physics A-level results have usually been well below the national average. One biology lesson was seen, which was satisfactory. In both physics lessons observed, students were too passive in their learning.

CHEMISTRY

- 317 Overall, the quality of provision for chemistry is good.

Strengths

- The teaching is very consistent and of high quality.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is strong: they communicate enthusiasm for the subject.
- Relationships in lessons are good: there is a warm and rigorous rapport.
- Marking of assignments is good, with precise comments that help students to improve.
- The course and lessons are well planned and efficiently organised.

Areas for improvement

- Provide more opportunities for the development of independent learning.
- ICT should make a stronger contribution to the subject.
- Analysis of test and examination results to ensure all students make sufficient progress.

- 318 A-Level chemistry results show a rising trend. Results in 1998 and 1999 were

below average. In 2000, they improved significantly with half the students gaining A or B grades: well above the national average. In 2001, 25 percent of students achieved these higher grades, with overall performance being close to the national average. Boys' results have improved more than girls', and boys achieve better results in chemistry than in their other A-Level subjects. In comparison, girls do not do quite so well.

- 319 Standards of current students in Year 12 are at least up to expectation and there is a number of able students. In most lessons they are achieving well for the AS course. Year 12 students show good understanding of factors that effect rates of chemical reactions and they can manipulate experimental data effectively through graphs and calculations. Their understanding of changes to dynamic equilibria and introductory organic chemistry are developing well. Virtually all students have continued with the course from Year 12 into Year 13 and they are achieving well. In Year 13, they demonstrate a good understanding of redox reactions and equations and they are confident in the practical techniques of carrying out titrations. They are working at standards expected.
- 320 The teaching of chemistry is consistently good. Teachers display good subject knowledge and this is used well in their questioning, explanations and the structured approach to teaching key ideas. This also enables much enthusiasm for the subject to be communicated to the students. Planning is very thorough, building well upon the GCSE programme, with some additional support early in Year 12. The teaching is animated and engaging: this sustains a high level of student interest. A lot of activities, swiftly undertaken, are incorporated into the learning. These provide a lot of variety and stimulation in lessons but do not help develop students' longer-term, independent learning skills sufficiently. Computers are very seldom used in lessons. Homework is set which extends classwork. Day-to-day marking is thorough, with many helpful, detailed comments on how students can improve their work. Students are given good feedback on their progress, and their work is accurately assessed.
- 321 Overall, learning is good. Students learn well and are not over-reliant on memorising large quantities of information. For example, Year 13 students recalled work from various parts of the course and synthesised it into a deeper understanding of the shape and function of the haemoglobin molecule. In the supported self-study lessons, the course has been appropriately organised to use those parts of the learning that are less reliant on direct teaching input. Some limited contact with teachers during these periods, and effective follow up in the subsequent lesson, helps to ensure students continue to make satisfactory progress. In most lessons students respond well, work hard and complete tasks. The most talented chemists are effectively challenged and they make good progress.
- 322 Leadership in chemistry is good. The course is tightly organised and there is good teamwork. There is a commitment to continuous improvement as numbers rise in the subject. Student retention rates are good. Analysis of test and exam results should be more detailed in order to identify any possible under achievement and improvement strategies. Over the past two years there has been good progress in results.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

- 323 No subject was inspected in this curriculum area.
- 324 In design and technology, examination results were below average in 2001. One lesson was observed in AS level Design and Technology: Product Design. These students were making sound progress preparing for the coursework component of the AS examination.

BUSINESS

325 The focus was on courses in business. The school also offers economics, but this was only sampled. Standards in A-level economics had been well below average in recent years, with low numbers of students for national comparison, but in 2001, results were average. Teaching was very good in the one AS level economics lesson observed.

326 Overall, provision in business courses is good.

Strengths

- Good teaching methodology provides an appropriate blend of direct teaching and individual assignments.
- A wide range of opportunities to promote independent learning.
- Students share ideas freely and work well together in small group activities.
- Students make good progress from related courses studied in Years 10 and 11.
- Good use is made of business and industry case studies.

Areas for improvement

- Strengthen teaching in weaker AVCE lessons in Year 13.
- Develop further students' ability to synthesise data and information, and to research and present ideas in innovative ways.
- Review accommodation in the light of the growing popularity of the subject.

327 Standards improved in the advanced GNVQ in 2001, reversing a decline but numbers have been small. In 2000, only five students took the advanced course and no student achieved a distinction, but two gained a merit and all students completed the full award. In 2001, four students completed the intermediate GNVQ course, with three gaining merits. On the AVCE course, four students completed and two gained merit awards.

328 Standards of current Year 13 students are in line with the average for this stage in the course. There is a similar picture for current Year 12 students undertaking the AVCE course. When taking account of their previous attainment in GCSE economics or GCSE business studies, this represents good progress for many students. Current students following the AVCE course in Year 13 are making good progress in the knowledge and understanding of the units of work being taught. The work seen in lessons and in students' files during the inspection shows that standards are rising, particularly for the most capable students. They are demonstrating the higher-level analysis skills required, as seen in their case studies.

329 Attainment in Year 12 is above average. All students are making good progress and achieving standards well above those expected for this stage of the advanced course. The most capable students achieve particularly well in understanding the methodology needed for their course requirements. All students are developing a range of relevant terminology, which they use effectively. Students have good research skills and use new technology to construct lively and interesting talks which they present to the group.

330 Overall, the teaching is good. The teachers' expert subject knowledge underpins discussion and lends clarity to the explanations provided. When teaching is good, as in a Year 12 AVCE lesson on investigating the advantages and disadvantages of the single European currency for United Kingdom businesses, the lesson is well planned, with clear links to previous work. In this lesson, students had to research arguments for and against, using a CD-ROM produced by a national bank and then undertake a class debate. A good framework was provided which enabled students to make further progress. Oral feedback was given at the end of the lesson to

reinforce the learning. However, in a Year 13 AVCE lesson, the teaching was only just satisfactory. In a lesson on interview techniques, the teacher did not communicate to students the learning outcomes expected by the end of the lesson, and the task set was not sufficiently well structured for all students to succeed. The same staff teach almost all the AVCE business, A/AS economics, GCSE economics and GCSE business studies courses.

- 331 Students' response to learning is good. They show good levels of interest and concentrate productively on tasks. Relationships are excellent. Students treat their peers with warmth and respect: they are mature and conscientious young adults in lessons.
- 332 This is a well-managed department. There is a commitment to building on what has already been achieved and to improving standards further. There is a strong sense of purpose and determination that the students do well. Student retention rates are good. The subject now benefits from a dedicated teaching room.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

- 333 Information and communication technology was not inspected.
- 334 A small number of lessons was observed. Students are taking the AVCE course in ICT for the first time. They are enthusiastic, confident and independent users of ICT. They have demonstrated good standards when researching and designing databases for real situations with local businesses. Their coursework is of a good standard: some is very good. When using Key Skills, students respond well to the demands of more complex situations required for Level 3 work.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

- 335 No subject in this curriculum area was inspected.
- 336 The travel and tourism AVCE course was sampled. The current Year 13 group will be the first examined. Two lessons were observed and in both the teaching was good. In the Year 13 lesson, students had gained a good understanding of the Thomas Cook customer service policy and had compared the policy with the practice by visiting branches in Coventry, Leamington and Warwick. One Year 12 lesson of AS physical education was observed. The teaching was satisfactory and student's knowledge of the respiratory system is in line with that normally seen for this stage of the course.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

- 337 Overall, the quality of provision for health and social care is satisfactory.

Strengths

- Teaching is good: lessons are well structured with an appropriate range of activities.
- Students' develop confidence and increase their knowledge.
- Work placements are well managed and enable students to develop practical skills.
- The social skills, maturity and personal development of the students is good.

Areas for improvement

- Co-ordination and leadership of the teaching team.
- Greater cohesion: three teachers cover different study units concurrently.

- Standards on the AVCE course, which attracts a small number of students.
- Ready access to a wider range of resources.

- 338 In 2001, four students entered the advanced GNVQ double award and two gained a distinction but two did not complete the course. In 2000, of the four students on the intermediate GNVQ course, one student gained a merit, two gained passes and one did not complete. The course attracts a small number of students, with only four currently in Year 13. Five are studying for the AVCE single award in Year 12.
- 339 The standards of current students are average in Year 13. In Year 12, they are below average. In light of their GCSE results, this represents satisfactory achievement for some students but it is unsatisfactory for others. The demands of the AVCE course are high for students who have the minimum GCSE grades on entering the course. Two students in Year 12 have SEN and are completing a third year in the sixth form. Although their knowledge and understanding of care terminology is satisfactory, their analytical and evaluative skills are very limited.
- 340 In Years 12 and 13, AVCE students are being taught together for 4 periods. Three different teachers work in the department, each working with students on different units. The allocation of different course units to separate teachers results in a fragmented course. Students often fail to understand the relationships between the topics covered in different units. However, teaching is good overall. In Year 13, work is well planned to allow students at different levels of attainment to make good progress. For example, in one lesson in Year 13, students were looking at the role of chance in the inheritance of genetic conditions. They used a coin-tossing activity to demonstrate how genes are inherited. The students kept a tally chart to record their results. Skilled questioning by the teacher enabled them to develop a sound level of understanding which stimulated discussion. In another Year 13 lesson, the students presented the key features of legislation to the group. They covered Race, Sex and Disability Discrimination Acts. However, standards in research, analysis and presentation vary considerably among the students. Overall, teachers have a good knowledge of the syllabus and use this with students, encouraging them to incorporate features into their work that will take their performance into a higher category.
- 341 In Year 12, students respond well, but they need to be pushed harder to develop sharper analytical skills. An example of this was in a lesson where students were going over a past unit paper. There were significant differences in the students' level of understanding of key points. Although the teaching had good features, progress was slow. The students had not previously been taught how to tease out answers for themselves and they found it difficult to think laterally. As a result, they provided few and weak responses in the brainstorming activity. The teacher had to use a great deal of skilful questioning to elicit the answers she was seeking. The student's lack of confidence slowed the lesson considerably.
- 342 The accommodation creates constraints. Lack of designated teaching space for GNVQ/AVCE health and social care limits students' access to supporting texts and references. Although the individual units are well managed, no teacher of the subject has overall responsibility for health and social care. Opportunities for joint planning, monitoring of teaching and learning, and sharing good practice are currently limited.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

- 343 The focus of the inspection was drama and theatre studies. The school also offers art and design and music to advanced level accreditation in the sixth form. In art and design, students' performance has been close to the national average over the past

three years, apart from the lack of the highest grades. During the inspection, three lessons were observed and the quality of teaching was good. In music, the last students entered A-level examinations in 2000. The results of a very small, unrepresentative group were lower than average. Currently, the teaching of music is shared with another local school in an arrangement that works well. One lesson was seen during the inspection. The quality of teaching was in line with the high standards observed in Years 10 and 11. Sixth-form students make a significant contribution to extra-curricular music-making activities.

- 344 Overall, provision in drama and theatre studies is very good.

Strengths

- The quality of teaching and learning is very high, seen particularly in course work.
- Results have been on a rising trend over the last five years.
- The enthusiasm and commitment of the students.
- Creative and rigorous management of the subject.
- Extra-curricular and enrichment experiences of live theatre.
- Excellent working relationships between students and staff.

Areas for improvement

- Addressing the recruitment of students onto the drama course.
- Library reference books and play texts to support advanced courses.

- 345 Overall, standards in A-level drama in the sixth form are good. For the past five years results had been on a rising trend. They dipped to a little below average in 2001 from the very good results in 2000. Results at AS level in 2001 were sound. There is some fluctuation in numbers over the two-year course and this can result in small groups. The current Year 13 has only two students; this creates problems in restricting practical coursework opportunities. Sharing of ideas is limited. Students use the two periods of supported self-study profitably and are extremely responsible in using the time. Teachers do their best to compensate this small group and good, joint arrangements are made with the larger Year 12 group to provide extended performance opportunities.
- 346 Students in Year 13 have a good knowledge and understanding of drama theory and can apply it to text study and practical work. This was seen well in the Year 13 lesson on 'Our Country's Good' when students could talk very maturely about role interpretation during a dramatic reading from Act 1. In Year 12, students show very good standards of practical work, particularly performing tightly in ensemble pieces. Both year groups demonstrate excellent drama discipline and can sustain roles very well. Written work in Year 13 shows that the theoretical components of the course have been learned effectively over the two-year course. Students are able to apply theory appropriately to practical drama work and performance analysis.
- 347 The quality of specialist teaching in drama is a strength. Teachers have very secure subject knowledge which informs the creative and rigorous learning strategies employed during classwork. The teaching team is enthusiastic and committed to drama, often leading by example, as in the energetic warm-up sessions in Year 12. Lessons demonstrate very good planning and organisation which contribute significantly to the interest and pace of activities. Teachers have high expectations of students, and they work hard to help them do well. Lessons are characterised by excellent working relationships between staff and students. Assessment of students' work is a strength. It is rooted in a secure understanding of drama assessment. Marking is encouraging and it uses developmental comments, verbal and written, to indicate how to improve.
- 348 The attitudes of students are excellent. They clearly enjoy drama, finding the activities stimulating and providing many creative opportunities for their own ideas.

Students rise to the challenges of the course, appreciating the practical and theoretical content. Collaborative group work is strong, with mature listening and discussion skills shown. There is very effective group support and trust which enable students to perform with confidence and to experiment with ideas. In return, students are sensitive and responsive to each other. They are able to organise themselves and respond quickly and imaginatively to difficult tasks. This was seen in a Year 12 lesson when the students, given a relatively brief timeline, produced very effective choral speaking performances from 'A Midsummer-Night's Dream'. They emphasised a romantic interpretation followed by an anti-romantic version. While the students enjoy their drama work, they are also very serious about performance, and often, emotionally moving drama work results.

- 349 The recently-appointed head of department provides very good leadership to the team and the post-16 drama curriculum. She is enthusiastic and ambitious for drama to be a successful and creative area of the curriculum. The close link with English is a positive feature, with good use made of drama as a teaching methodology in English to explore texts that deepen understanding of character and plot. The subject makes very good provision for extra-curricular experience of theatre, including putting on very successful school productions. Good links have been made with the neighbouring 'Play Box Theatre-Company'. The provision of studio space is good, including the use of rehearsal space in the 'Dream Factory' theatre complex.
- 350 Improvements have been made to examination entry requirements as recommended in previous inspection report. Student retention rates are good in Year 12. Drama staff are aware of the need to increase recruitment to the course and to retain students for a second year.

HUMANITIES

- 351 The inspection focused on geography and psychology. Lessons in history were sampled. In 2001, history A-level results were well above average. Two lessons were observed in which the quality of teaching was good and very good. Students made effective use of historical sources to provide different interpretations of events. Results in A-level sociology were average in 2001. Two lessons were observed during the inspection: the teaching was satisfactory and attainment was average.

GEOGRAPHY

- 352 Overall, provision for geography is very good.

Strengths

- Standards are above average.
- Excellent subject leadership and management.
- Very high standard of teaching in lessons.
- Well-planned courses which provide challenge and interest.
- Students achieve well, including individual studies and field work.
- Good monitoring of the progress of individual students.

Area for improvement

- Continued development of the Key Skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT.

- 353 Standards are improving and A-level results in 2001 were above average. All students passed, most with good grades, although none of the students gained a grade A. All the students entered for AS examinations gained a pass grade, and

most gained the higher grades. Boys and girls do equally well. Most students achieve well: in the past three years, many have done better in geography than in their other subjects.

- 354 Work seen in students' folders and in lessons indicates that they are currently working at standards a little above average. They have a good understanding of a range of issues globally, including environmental and climatic hazards, and of the challenges which face people in countries at different stages of development. For example, work in Year 12 gives the students a good understanding of the causes of poverty in the villages of central Italy. Work in Year 13 helps students to understand the complexities of weather forecasting. Students work very well on their own, and this is evident in the quality of their individual studies and fieldwork projects. They have good investigative skills; collecting and analysing information with confidence, and making carefully-thought-out conclusions. They make good use of a range of resources including specialist journals, and write well-structured essays. They have well-developed skills of statistical analysis and make good use of map and graphical techniques. For example, their use of a wide range of methods to analyse the impact of tourist development on the south coast of England is excellent. ICT is also used well, both to research information from the Internet and to present their work.
- 355 The standard of teaching is very good. Students' folders show there is a well-planned approach throughout. There is a good balance between teacher-led work and work which encourages students to develop their individual skills as learners. For example, in Year 12, the teacher who led the work on the study of coasts had provided a thorough grounding in the main ideas and principles. Students were then able to apply their understanding in a case study of the Holderness coast of eastern England. Their work had been marked very well, identifying strengths and weaknesses, and giving very clear guidance on how to improve. In another Year 12 lesson, the teacher had a very good understanding of volcanoes. She used this to lead a very thoughtful discussion with the students, and to demonstrate some complex ideas about the formation of volcanoes in different parts of the world. She provided a very carefully-structured assignment sheet which enabled the students to work through the topic, but to still retain a degree of independence. The students valued this support, and worked with commitment and concentration. As a result, they all gained an understanding of volcanic theory and the ability to apply this to an analysis of global patterns.
- 356 Students learn very well. They are attentive and co-operative in lessons and work particularly hard on homework and coursework. This was seen in a Year 13 lesson on weather recording and forecasting. All the students listened carefully to the teacher as he explained the advantages and disadvantages of different methods. They took part confidently and valued each others' questions. They evaluated information provided very carefully and patiently. As a result, they made good progress in developing their skills of interpreting resources and their understanding of ideas and concepts.
- 357 The leadership and management of the subject are excellent. There is a very carefully planned scheme of work, which complies with the examination syllabus and builds on the work students did for GCSE. The students benefit from a very carefully planned programme of assessment that enables them to set targets for improvement. Student retention rates are good.

PSYCHOLOGY

- 358 Overall, the quality of provision is good.

Strengths

- Planning and preparation are very effective.
- A firm link is made between teaching and learning objectives in the scheme of work for each unit and plans for individual lessons.
- Students have very positive attitudes to, and interest in, the subject.
- Numbers taking the subject are very healthy.

Area for improvement

- Re-assessment of internal grades to ensure they are in line with the standard expected for accreditation.

- 359 Psychology is being offered for the first time at AS level from September 2001. Overall, the standard of the work seen is in line with expectation. Students who are achieving well show an evaluative and interrogative approach to their studies. They can identify shortcomings in research, key features from different theories or models are contrasted or linked, and they can see how to apply what they have learned. They have developed their writing skills well and reveal a personal perspective in their understanding. Students working in the middle range of attainment have acquired detailed knowledge and learned skills of interpretation. They communicate clearly and can produce a balanced argument, although there is a tendency to summarise and restate facts. A small number has insufficient awareness of the relevance of what they have learned. When students produce low standards of work, central points lack detail: there is little evidence to justify judgements reached, and opinion is used rather than analysis.
- 360 The group as a whole is making good progress for this stage in Year 12. Their skills in writing essays are improving, although weaker students show inconsistency and need support to avoid basic errors in spelling and grammar. Most students are succeeding in getting to grips with the methodology of the subject, developing hypotheses and beginning to work from evidence in a competent and confident manner. For example, students have extended their theoretical understanding of short-term and long-term memory through experimental testing. Full and well-organised notes record an appropriate breadth of research, and the Internet is used routinely by all students to access a variety of sources of information.
- 361 Teaching is good, with a particular strength in planning. This has ensured that the course has begun well. It includes clear objectives that are well suited to the group and teaching approaches which are designed to encourage and support a variety of styles of learning. For example, a weekly programme of tutorial teaching in small groups has been introduced to allow the class to be divided into four sub-groups, each with a different focus. One group, for example, is looking at essay structure to improve the organisation and presentation of work, whilst another is identifying ways to help talented students to extend and deepen their investigations. This tutorial approach has been very well received by students who value it as a way of overcoming the disadvantages of being part of a large class. Individuals can follow up points that require further explanation, everyone generates and shares ideas more fully, and personal views and experiences can be explored more thoroughly. This was seen in work on stress: students' diaries recording stress levels provoked discussion on what gave rise to stressed behaviour and what had helped to reduce or avoid it. Lessons have a clear structure and are also carefully planned, with varied activities and relevant materials. This ensures that students are interested and aware of what they will be doing. Regular recapping and short time limits for tasks ensure that a good pace is sustained. This is reflected in the good quantity of independent work that has been completed outside lesson time. Teaching is prepared thoroughly and conscientiously. It provides a firm base of subject knowledge, secure exposition and detailed guidance. These have quickly earned students' confidence and trust. Learning skills have been given priority and have been woven into the content of the subject. Enthusiasm and expectations are high. The relationships between teacher and students are excellent and achieve a balance

between challenge and assistance.

- 362 Students are intrigued with the content of the course and are generally coping well with the acquisition of new skills. They are putting effort into working, are attentive and co-operative, and respond well to the varied demands. In lessons, students offer constructive help to each other when working in pairs or groups. This was observed when students were introduced to Holme and Rahe model of stress. They exchanged assessments of the impact of life events in a mature manner. Through applying a rating scale sensitively they identified correctly the shortcomings of the research. Students are developing the ability to work independently and have competent ICT skills. They are able to locate, select and interpret information effectively, and their notes produce clear, full and well-organised records. Students hold the course in high regard. Many have opted to study psychology for positive reasons: interest, a link to other subjects studied or to a career intention. They feel that they were well prepared during the induction process and are pleased with their studies and progress. They value the depth of thinking required and the new perspectives that they have gained on important issues that affect people and their lives.
- 363 Good management has been effective in setting up the course. Very good subject expertise has been backed by hard work. Thoughtful planning and good organisational skills have produced a clear curricular plan and there is a strong commitment to building up what has been achieved. The student retention rate is good. Currently, the range of available resources is too narrow and professional contacts within the local community are limited. There is a good understanding of what is working well and what needs to be improved. Assessment procedures are sound, although there is a tendency to be too generous in judgements made for work in the middle range. It is important that standardisation is achieved and exemplar material acquired.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

- 364 The inspection focused on English and German. French was also sampled, although it is studied by only a small number of students. Results in recent years have been very variable and the small numbers who have taken French make a comparison with the national average unrealistic. Two French lessons were observed: teaching was satisfactory in one and good in the other.

ENGLISH

- 365 Overall, provision in English is very good.

Strengths

- Results achieved at AS, A2 and S-level.
- Teaching and learning is very good.
- Very good quality of marking and assessment of coursework.
- Strong leadership and management.
- Excellent working relationships between students and teachers.

Area for improvement

- Continue to develop strategies to encourage more boys to take English in the 6th form.

- 366 Standards in English are high, with very good examination results in 2001. At AS level, students in Year 12 gained more A and B grades than predicted. In Year 13, all students passed A-level at grades A to D, with an increase in A grade passes. Five students were entered for S-level English, in which they achieved four merits and a

distinction. These very good results are the culmination of a rising trend.

- 367 For current students, the quality of coursework written responses is very good. Essays are well structured, with accurate grammar, punctuation and spelling. The content of the written work is securely rooted in a good knowledge of the texts studied. Students write at length and with an enthusiasm that gives vigour to their responses to the books being studied. They develop good literary, comprehension skills and employ noting and brainstorming strategies for organising ideas. Quotation is used effectively. Students can discuss texts maturely with an appreciation of character and the subtleties of narrative. They develop growing confidence in discussing texts and they are willing to read widely. In a Year 12 lesson in which students were reading 'The Handmaid's Tale', they had a very good knowledge of the text. This was used to develop cogent and insightful points during the group discussions and in response to challenging questions from the teacher. Students are also good at presenting their ideas and work to others. This was exemplified well in the Year 13 lesson on First World War literary extracts. Two girls presented a most moving reading of a piece from Vera Britain's 'Testament of Youth', set against appropriate classical music.
- 368 The quality of specialist teaching in English is a strength, with teacher knowledge and understanding of the course content and examination processes very secure. Very good planning and lesson organisation contributes significantly to the interest and pace of activities. Teachers have high expectations of students' commitment and application, challenging them to think for themselves and valuing the students' personal responses. A key skill that the teachers have developed is the use of sharp questioning which pushes students to develop answers rather than be told information. Excellent teaching and learning strategies are used, including drama techniques to help students understand texts and characterisation at a deeper level. These were observed in a Year 12 lesson on 'Hamlet', focusing on the duel between Hamlet and Laertes. By 'staging' and reading through the scene, students were enabled to appreciate critical actions, reactions and placements of characters, thereby heightening their understanding of this critical scene. The marking and assessment of students' work is a strength. It is rooted in a secure understanding of English assessment. Marking is encouraging and uses developmental comment, both verbal and written, to indicate what students need to do to improve. Targets are set effectively and progress is monitored well.
- 369 Students have excellent attitudes towards their studies in English. They have a sharp focus on work in class, showing a high level of concentration and application. Though the texts are often found to be initially challenging, such as 'The Handmaid's Tale' or 'The Duchess of Malfi', students persevere and find them stimulating. The current Year 12 students expressed how much they were enjoying the AS level course for this reason. Students respond well to the challenges posed by the course and by the teachers, who work hard to ensure that the students do well. Collaborative group working is emphasised as an effective learning strategy, and students develop mature listening and discussion skills. They are prepared to learn from each other and build on each other's ideas. Lessons are characterised by excellent working relationships between students and teachers.
- 370 The head of department provides very good leadership to a strong sixth form teaching team. Their work is characterised by a shared enthusiasm for literature and a culture that strives for improvement. Links with the drama department through shared staffing give an added dimension to the sixth-form teaching. A-level literature study is supported well by an effective reference section in the library. There is also good extra-curricular enrichment through theatre visits and attendance at study conferences. Student retention rates are good. Very good progress has been made since the previous inspection. Results have continued to improve. The department has prepared well for the challenges posed by the new post-16 examination courses.

GERMAN

- 371 The quality of provision is good.

Strengths

- Very good teaching.
- A thoroughly planned course.
- Assessment and the quality of feedback to students on their performance.
- Improved numbers in Year 12.

Area for improvement

- Increasing opportunities for students to speak confidently in open conversation.

- 372 In recent years, few students have chosen to study German, and A-level results have fluctuated widely. The small numbers make it unrealistic to compare results with the national average but students have achieved lower grades in German than in their other subjects overall. No students took A-level in 2001.
- 373 There are no students in the current Year 13, but in Year 12 there is a group of seven students. They have made a good start to their studies, and standards are above average for this early stage in the course. Comprehension skills are good and students are rapidly improving their previously shaky grasp of grammar. They know the correct forms of a long list of regular and irregular verbs in present, future and two past tenses. They can speak and write with reasonable accuracy, using a good range of expressions. Most make minor mistakes of word order and endings but their pronunciation and intonation are very good, following the good model set by the teacher. They are able to speak intelligently and express their opinions about subjects covered, for example about health risks and good diets and how they intend to improve theirs. Confidence in speaking routinely is less secure but that is not surprising at this stage of the course. Students are making good progress in developing their comprehension skills; they can manipulate the language with increasing accuracy, applying rules, not perfectly, but with considerable confidence. They know what is correct and are gaining fluency. The most-able students have a wide range of expression and achieve a high level of accuracy. The others are improving well, whatever their ability.
- 374 Teaching of German in Year 12 is consistently very good. The carefully-planned sequence of activities and strong pace of learning ensure that students make rapid progress. Students' weaknesses have been clearly identified. They are guided skilfully through controlled practice of verb forms towards more open-ended speaking. Questions are pitched at the right level to support and challenge as needed. The resources, such as worksheets and transparencies, are clear and well matched to the tasks and the requirements of the examination. Activities appropriately lead towards producing such things as brochures or adverts, reinforcing in students' minds that language is for an audience, not just a process. A card activity observed gave students not only a practical way of improving their understanding and speaking but a way of helping them to assess how well they are learning. A further step is to increase their independence. This is needed in use of language and in the ability to cope with unfamiliar contexts.
- 375 Students are very positive in their approach to learning. They apply themselves diligently and with good humour, benefiting from the carefully structured, clear steps in learning offered. All are keen to make good progress. They are dedicated and mature in approach. Students respond well in lessons. They make the most of the teacher's keen awareness of how well they are doing and what the next step in learning is for them as individuals.

- 376 The German course is very well planned and organised. The student retention rate is good. At present, there is no language assistant or exchange visit to help the students to improve their fluency and no video equipment in the department to increase the students' range of listening and cultural understanding.