

INSPECTION REPORT

ST PETERS CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Solihull, West Midlands

LEA area: Solihull

Unique reference number: 104119

Headteacher: Mrs F McGarry

Reporting inspector: Mr David Oakley

Dates of inspection: 18 - 22 March 2002

Inspection number: 194309

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	11 - 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
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Date of previous inspection:	December 1996

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	7 - 12
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	
Pupils' 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	13 - 16
PART B: COMMENTARY	
WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL	17 - 26
WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED	26
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	26
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	27 - 33
PART D: THE SIXTH FORM	
RESULTS AND STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS	34 - 35
STUDENTS' ATTITUDES, VALUES AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT	35
TEACHING AND LEARNING	35 - 37
CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS	37 - 39
THE SCHOOL'S CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS	39
THE EFFECTIVENESS OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT IN THE SIXTH FORM	40 - 42
PART E: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM	43 - 74

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Saint Peter's Catholic School is a mixed comprehensive school for pupils aged 11 to 18. The school and the sixth form are both larger than average. A more detailed inspection of sixth form provision was carried out. This is reported in the annexe to this summary. There are 1199 pupils on roll, 587 boys and 612 girls, including 218 students in the sixth form. The school is over-subscribed. Pupils come to the school, which is situated in the centre of Solihull, from a wide surrounding area. Most are from relatively advantaged circumstances and almost all are from homes where the Catholic faith is practised. Ten per cent of places in the sixth form are reserved for pupils from other denominations and faiths. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, 3.1%, is well below the national average. Most pupils stay on at age 16 and most move into further or higher education at age 18. Very few pupils (1%), are of minority ethnic origin and the very few speaking English as an additional language are bilingual. The school admits pupils of all abilities, but overall attainment on entry is above average. The proportion of pupils having special educational needs, including statements, is, at 8.8%, below the national average. Most of them have learning difficulties.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Saint Peter's School is a very good school. For several years, standards of attainment have risen each year at ages 14 and 16 faster than nationally. Standards in the sixth form are in line with the national average and are improving. Pupils enter with above average standards of attainment. They make good progress and improve on these standards in national tests and examinations at ages 14 and 16. Standards are well above the national average and the average for schools with a similar proportion of pupils taking free school meals. High standards are achieved and maintained as a result of very good relationships, very good teaching, the impact of effective training of staff and good leadership and management. Pupils show very good attitudes to learning. There is an ethos of high expectations. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress. The cost of educating a pupil at the school is average; pupils enter the school with above average attainment, and well above average results are achieved in the main school. It therefore gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- Leadership and management are good. Performance management has been implemented very successfully and has had a positive impact on standards of attainment and school management.
- Relationships are particularly good. This, combined with very good pastoral care, creates an ethos of self-esteem and high expectations for all.
- Pupils attain well above average results at ages 14 and 16 and show good achievement in relation to their prior attainment.
- The school has very strong links with parents.
- Teaching is very good or excellent in a high proportion of lessons.
- Sixth form provision is good.

What could be improved

- There are no significant weaknesses in the main school.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Good improvement has taken place since the previous inspection in 1996. Standards at 14 and 16 have improved faster than nationally and are well above the national average at ages 14 and 16. Standards in the sixth form are now improving. The quality of teaching has improved overall. Provision of information and communication technology (ICT) has improved significantly and there have been many improvements in accommodation. The quality of personal, social and health education (PSHE) provision has improved and more time is devoted to it. Ways of accrediting ICT at Key Stage 4 are still being trialled. The timetabling has been improved to reduce the number of single periods and the management of the curriculum has been improved.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1999	2000	2001	2001	
GCSE examinations	A	A	A	A	well above average A above average B average C below average D
A-levels/AS-levels	C	C	C		well below average E

The attainment of pupils on entry to the school is above average and has been rising steadily over recent years. Pupils make good progress between ages 11 and 14. Standards of attainment by age 14 are well above average. Attainment in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science in the national tests at age 14 has been well above the national average for the last four years. Average points score for English was close to that of the highest 5% of schools nationally in 2001. Results have improved at a faster rate than nationally at ages 14 and 16. Pupils maintain very high standards at age 16. GCSE results are consistently well above average for five or more grades A*-C, five or more grades A*-G and in the highest 5% of schools nationally for one or more grades A*-G. The number of pupils obtaining five or more A* or A grades at GCSE is high. In 2001, 50 of the 190 pupils entered gained five or more grades A* or A. Overall, pupils of all abilities are achieving well in their work in all subjects as a result of the ethos of high expectations, a high proportion of very good teaching, very good relationships and the very high standards of care. The standards seen during the inspection reflect the high standards that pupils achieve in examinations. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress throughout the school. Girls in the school outperform girls nationally by a greater margin than boys

outperform boys nationally. The school has strategies in place to raise the attainment of boys.

Results in the sixth form have been consistently in line with the national average. Average total points scores attained by sixth formers in 2001 were in line with the national average. The AS-level results of Year 12 students in 2001 were above the national average. The improvements seen in results in Year 12 have continued into Year 13, where improved standards of attainment were apparent during the inspection.

The school has received two national School Achievement awards for improvement in results for 1999-2000 and 2000-2001. The school has met the challenging targets it has set for tests and examinations at ages 14, 16 and 17.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils like coming to school. They are well motivated and enthusiastic.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Behaviour is very good in lessons and around the school. It has a positive impact on learning. The rate of exclusions is very low.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils receive very good guidance and advice. Relationships are very good. Pupils show respect for one another and their teachers. Likewise teachers treat pupils with respect and are excellent role models. The quality of relationships is a strength of the school.
Attendance	Very good. Attendance is well above the national average in the school and very high in the sixth form.

The very positive attitudes, high standards of behaviour and relationships and high rate of attendance of the pupils make significant contributions to the high standards of attainment that are achieved. Monitoring of attendance is not efficient enough in the sixth form. Use of ICT to improve the monitoring of attendance is at an advanced stage of planning.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11	Years 12 – 13
Quality of teaching	Very good	Very 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.

The teaching and learning seen in the school were good overall. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. A high proportion of teaching was very good or excellent - half the lessons in Years 7 to 9, four in ten of lessons seen in Years 10 and 11 and one third of the lessons seen in the sixth form. Excellent teaching was seen in lessons in several subjects. In these lessons

teachers used a very good range of activities to stimulate pupils' interest and motivate them to learn in different ways. Questioning was used skilfully to build on and challenge pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. Objectives were shared and reviewed to check how successfully pupils had acquired new knowledge, understanding or skills. The very good relationships and behaviour, along with teachers' knowledge of their pupils' attainments, enable very good progress to be made. The quality of teaching observed in English was very good. Seven out of ten lessons were very good or excellent. The quality of teaching observed in mathematics was good overall and very good in four out of ten lessons. In science the quality of teaching overall was very good. In half the lessons seen it was very good or excellent.

Standards of teaching literacy skills are good across subjects, with teachers implementing techniques that are part of the National Literacy Strategy. Numeracy skills are well taught in the context of mathematics and science lessons. ICT is being used well in subjects and good examples of its use were seen in French and science. The school meets the needs of all pupils well. Both high attaining pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress. Effective monitoring of pupils' progress against their targets enables early intervention and support when pupils are not doing as well as they should. A clearer overview of patterns of progress in the sixth form is needed.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The curriculum is broad, appropriately matched to pupils' needs and enhanced by activities before and after the school day.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress. Management of the provision is excellent. Support staff are creatively and effectively deployed.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Many opportunities are provided for pupils and students to reflect on spiritual, moral and social issues. There are also some good opportunities to appreciate the diversity of their own and other cultures.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. Pupils and students are given individual guidance and support. Their welfare is of paramount importance to staff. Academic and personal development are monitored very effectively, particularly up to the age of 16.

The curriculum meets statutory requirements. The arrangements for the teaching of art and design, design and technology and ICT in rotation in Year 7 leads to big gaps between pupils' experience in these subjects and this hinders their progress. The creative use of disapplication of some pupils from the National Curriculum in modern languages or design and technology enables them to follow alternative provision that is more appropriate to their needs. There are opportunities for study before and after school. Staff give unstintingly of their time to support pupils in and out of lessons. The very high standard of care which pupils receive is a strength of the school.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. School development planning and review, performance management, professional development of staff and the way in which initiatives are embraced are all well managed to bring about school improvement. The headteacher's strong and sensitive leadership is well supported by the governors and complemented by the talented senior staff. The heads of upper and lower school play a key role in oversight of pupils' academic and pastoral development and the development of the curriculum. The school's values are explicit in all aspects of its work.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body fulfils its responsibilities well. Governors are hardworking, committed and well informed about the work of the school. They play an active role in evaluating developments.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school's evaluation of its performance is good. It is not complacent. Strategies for development are identified through increasingly rigorous self review, using the line management structure and performance management. Objective external advice and support are used very well.
The strategic use of resources	Strategies to achieve the school's priorities are costed and expenditure is monitored and evaluated. Funds are spent to the advantage of the pupils currently in the school. The use of resources is good.

The curriculum is fully staffed by well qualified teachers with strong coverage of specialist subjects in the sixth form. Accommodation continues to be improved and is good overall, art and design being the exception. Learning resources are good. The school, through good financial management, continues to give good value for money. The aim to provide for the pupils currently in the school is met. The school takes decisions in line with the principles of best value. The line management structure is effectively promoting improvement through performance management.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The high standards achieved. • The attitudes and values promoted by the school. • The expectation that pupils will work hard. • The welcoming approach of the school. • Teaching is good. • The school helps pupils and students to become mature and responsible. • All pupils and students make good progress. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of homework. • How the school works with parents. • The information that they receive about their children. • Pupils' behaviour.

Parents are very strongly supportive of the school. The inspection confirms the strengths identified by parents. Homework was found to be set regularly and to enhance the work going on in the classroom. The work with parents is of very high quality and a strength of the school. There are many opportunities for parents to make their views known and many examples of the ways in which the school takes account of parents' wishes. The school reports to parents beyond the statutory requirement for a single annual report. During the inspection, behaviour in lessons and around the school was very good and contributed positively to learning. There are strong systems in place to promote good behaviour and correct poor behaviour. The school acts quickly to deal with problems on buses bringing pupils to and from school.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

There are 218 students in this relatively large sixth form. Of these, 95 are male and 123 female. Most of these students continued into the sixth form from Year 11 in this school. Approximately 10% of students join the sixth form from other local schools. The majority of students are from families of practising Catholics, but 10% of places are for students of other denominations or faiths. Students are drawn from a relatively large area in and around Solihull. The majority of students come from households that are relatively advantaged. The overall standard of attainment of students on entry into Year 12 is above average. Five students are on the register of special educational needs and one has a statement. There are no students who are not fluent English speakers. The sixth form provides mainly AS and A-level courses, with a supportive key skills and enrichment programme. There are intermediate and advanced vocational courses in business. More students wish to join the sixth form than there are places for. All applicants are interviewed for a place.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form is good and improving. Students benefit from good teaching that enables them to learn well. The standard of attainment at A-level from 1996 to 2001 has consistently been close to the national average, but results in AS-level examinations in Year 12 in 2001 were of a higher standard. The courses provided meet the needs of the students currently studying in the sixth form well. Those students requiring a fuller range of vocational courses are appropriately advised to enrol with other local post-16 providers who have the capacity to meet their needs. Students attend well and have a very positive attitude towards their studies. Almost all of them complete their courses. The sixth form is well led and managed and is housed in an attractive, purpose-built block. The provision is cost-effective and provides good value for money.

Strengths

- High standards of attainment at AS-level in 2001 in Year 12, sustained in Year 13 and in the current Year 12.
- The very positive attitudes to study of students, and the very good relationships within the sixth form.
- The very high retention rate of students on both one and two year courses. A high proportion of Year 13 students go on to higher education.
- Good overall quality of teaching, with approximately a third of teaching that is very good or excellent.
- A comprehensive range of AS and A-level courses which match the needs of students well.
- Good advice, guidance and support within a very friendly ethos.
- Good leadership and management that has led to improvement since the last inspection.

What could be improved

- Strategies to ensure that recent improvements in attainment and progress are sustained.
- Spreading the features of the good and very good teaching to the minority of lessons where teaching is no more than satisfactory.
- Systems for the monitoring and reporting of students' progress.

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. Students make good progress and achieve well in relation to their attainment on entry into Year 12, although A-level results are below the national average. Teachers are very committed to ensuring that their students gain confidence and succeed, but there is scope for a wider use of ICT.
biology	Good. A-level results have risen to be above the national average and AS-level attainment is high. Teaching is good, and sometimes very good. Assessment arrangements are a particular strength.
chemistry	Very good. A-level results are above the national average and AS-level attainment is high. Teaching is very good, with examples of excellence. Students' progress is carefully monitored, with the findings being shared with the students.
physics	Good. A-level results have risen to match the national average in 2001 and AS-level results are high. Teaching is good and relationships between teachers and students are very good. ICT is used well. There is scope for challenging the most able students further.
business	Good. A-level results are above the national average. Increasing numbers of students are taking the subject, which is putting pressure on the ICT resources available. There are many interesting opportunities for learning, supported by good teaching.
economics	Satisfactory. Relatively small numbers of students take the subject: generally results are below the national average. Students are willing to learn. Teaching is well informed and structured, but tends to leave students too often as rather passive receivers of information.
art and design	Good. A-level results are in line with the national average, but the first AS-level results are higher than this. Students make good progress and are well supported by good teaching. At present there are considerable accommodation constraints and there is a need to use ICT more.

theatre studies	Very good. A-level results are above average, with a high proportion of A and B grades. Very good teaching captivates students and encourages them to be very enthusiastic and committed. Valuable extra-curricular opportunities broaden the learning experience still further.
geography	Good. The A and AS-level results are above average. Students are especially strong in using statistical and graphical techniques and in conducting investigations. Teaching is good, though there is sometimes an over-emphasis on note making and ICT could be used more productively.
history	Good. A-level results are above average, with a high proportion of A and B grades. Teaching is good, with cases where it is very good or excellent, especially in European history. There is a need to ensure a consistently high quality of provision across all courses.
psychology	Good. Students progress well and the most recent A-level results have exceeded the national average. Students are especially good at interpreting research data. Teaching is good, supporting productive independent learning. There is scope for using ICT more fully and for using technical vocabulary more accurately.
English	Good. Recent A-level results have been in line with the national average, whilst the new AS-level results have been outstanding. Teaching is good and relationships are very good. There is scope for ensuring a greater consistency between teachers, especially in the way that work is marked.
French	Very good. Results at A-level are close to the national average, whilst the new AS-level results are high. Teaching is very good, involving the imaginative use of many resources, including ICT. Students' progress is assessed very accurately.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Good. Students are well advised about which subjects to study, how to learn effectively, and how to apply to university. High quality careers advice is available. Students lack detailed information about how well they are progressing. Year 12 students would benefit from earlier information about opportunities in higher education.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Good. The sixth form is successfully led and managed as an integral part of the whole school. Improvement initiatives have equally benefited the main school and the sixth form. New and improved management arrangements for Years 12 and 13 have been established.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The range and choice of courses. • The very friendly and supportive ethos. • Very good arrangements to help new members of the sixth form to settle in. • Good teaching that challenges students to do their best. • Good opportunities for independent learning. • Work is helpfully marked and assessed. • Students are treated as responsible young adults. • Students enjoy being in the sixth form and would warmly recommend it to others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More advice on how to study in the sixth form. • More detailed information about progress throughout each year. • Earlier advice on opportunities beyond Year 13. • A better range of activities (especially sporting) outside the main subjects. • More response to the views of sixth formers.

The inspection endorsed all of the aspects that students like. Inspectors agree that more frequent and detailed advice on how well each student is progressing is required. Advice on how to study is offered in the first weeks of the Year 12 tutorial programme, but this advice needs to be backed up across all subjects and continued throughout the year. Information about university life and courses is not provided sufficiently early in Year 12. Access to sporting and recreational opportunities is insufficient. There is an active sixth form council which is listened to by senior managers.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Leadership and management are good. Performance management has been implemented very successfully.

1. The school achieves its mission *to educate pupils in a Catholic atmosphere, to develop their full academic and personal potential and grow in their faith*. The school's aims and mission statement are evident in all aspects of its work.
2. The headteacher provides strong and sensitive leadership. She has effectively managed improvement in a school that was already doing well. She unites governors, staff, pupils and students in the pursuit of high standards of attainment within an ethos of care and respect. She is well supported by the deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher. Their strengths complement those of the headteacher to produce a team that has a very good overview of how the school is performing and where improvements can be made. The heads of upper and lower school play a key role in leading Key Stages 3 and 4. Their leadership role in academic, pastoral and curriculum matters helps to promote the consistency of approach that underpins all aspects of school life. The quality of leadership and management of the sixth form is good. The headteacher continues to have a very influential role in the organisation of the sixth form and monitors the quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form. The head of sixth form has been very successful in establishing a good climate for learning and an ethos of good relationships. The post of head of sixth form has been redefined from January 2002 with a stronger emphasis on sustaining improvements in standards of students' attainment. The individual strengths and areas of responsibility of senior managers add a further tier of experience and expertise to make the senior management team a powerful force in steering policy and practice.
3. The roles of the senior managers are complementary and include helping staff make better use of pupil and student performance data, induction of new staff, curriculum planning for PSHE and citizenship, management of the piloting of the national Key Stage 3 strategy, performance management and the professional development of staff. Roles have been effectively adapted to give clear leadership of new initiatives.
4. Performance management of teaching staff has been implemented very successfully. The school had strong foundations to build on. The appraisal system in place was a strength of the school, recognised by the local education authority as a model of good practice. The award of *Investor in People* acknowledges the high quality of the systems for professional development of all staff in the school, teaching and non-teaching. Introduction of performance management was carefully planned, with consultation on the policy to be adopted and extensive training for staff. The role of the team leader was developed particularly well, with training on the setting of objectives, lesson observation, review and feedback. The line management structure was used to identify team leaders and the staff that they mentor. The combination of team leader training and mentoring by senior managers has helped to strengthen the role of middle managers. For example, support in developing the role of the middle manager in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning in their subject has been provided by

use of local education authority advisers. The local education authority advisory services were used well to provide professional development for team leaders in lesson observation, target setting and curriculum development. This training has had a positive impact on the quality of teaching and standards of attainment. Middle managers have successfully identified objectives for development using pupil performance data. For example, the proportion of pupils gaining Level 6 at Key Stage 3 in science became a focus for members of the science department with the result that the percentage increased in 2001. Some of the improvements in students' performance at AS and A-level also resulted from being the focus of performance management objectives. Subjects benefiting from focussed objectives and targeted professional development include music and design and technology. The threshold application process was managed as an integral part of the school's performance management arrangements. The external assessment of the school's approach to the implementation of performance management by threshold assessors and *Investor in People* assessors has been that it is of the highest quality. The school received its second School Improvement award in March 2002, an acknowledgement that already high standards are being improved on.

5. The work of the governing body is very good. The governing body fulfils its responsibilities well. Governors are hardworking, committed and well informed about the work of the school. They play an active role in evaluating developments. They bring valuable management expertise to their work, particularly in the fields of finance, personnel, buildings and community involvement. They consult well and involve members of the teaching staff in their meetings. Parents are well represented on the governing body; they also act as foundation governors. Governors understand their role in identifying and supporting priorities for development. Careful financial planning has enabled the governing body to fund 15 building or refurbishment projects since the previous inspection, transforming several areas of the school. The chair of finance committee has played a key role in overseeing planning for this and attracting additional funding. Appointment of the school finance officer during this period further supported the process. The school carries only a modest contingency fund, an indication of its insistence on spending the funds available to the benefit of the pupils currently in the school. This policy has a positive impact on the learning environment, staffing and resources.
6. The school's improvement plan clearly identifies priorities in the context of national requirements and school needs. The headteacher, deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher each take responsibility for leading the main priorities:-
 - communicating their mission as a Catholic school in partnership with the wider community;
 - implementing Curriculum 2000;
 - promoting continuous improvement and innovation in teaching and learning;
 - maintaining and enhancing a safe, secure, clean, pleasant and stimulating environment conducive to learning, work and recreation.
7. Actions to be taken and monitoring responsibilities are clearly identified; and the plan is subject to regular reviews of progress. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have undertaken training in all aspects of the process of school self review and are

successfully developing the skills needed in other senior staff. The cycle of school self-review includes a programme of lesson observation using explicit criteria. The monitoring of samples of pupils' work is not yet systematically used to provide additional information about the effectiveness of specific school improvement strategies. Part of the review is to analyse the comparative data on pupil and student performance available nationally, and provided locally by the local education authority, to identify aspects of performance that need improving. Any comparison in which the school is categorised as 'average' rather than above average, well above average or in the top 5% of schools, is identified as an area to be improved. This analysis is part of the systematic approach to the use by staff of pupil performance data in the planning and assessment of teaching and learning. It is possible to follow how issues identified have been targeted for improvement and strategies devised to bring about improvement by managing individual staff performance. The findings of school self-review are used to steer departmental improvement plans and the school improvement plan. Performance management is linked clearly to school improvement strategies.

8. The school also reviews its practice by polling parents and pupils. Parents attending the Years 6 to 7 transition meeting are asked how the school can best help pupils transfer and what their concerns are about the process. Pupils in Year 6 are asked what their concerns are. The school then identifies actions to respond to pupils' and parents' needs, for example by producing information booklets, holding assemblies with a particular focus, making staff available to give advice and introducing 'Circle Time' at which pupils can express their feelings about concerns. Pupils in Year 9 are also asked about their feelings about transfer to Key Stage 4. The questionnaires are produced with guidance from the local education authority's psychology services self-esteem project group and are used to explore both concerns and positive aspects of transfer, for example '*What are you looking forward to most in Year 10 and 11?*' Pupils' responses help to inform the Year 10 induction day programme. There are also similarly effective arrangements to help pupils transfer from Years 11 to 12.
9. As part of the pilot of the Key Stage 3 strategy, pupils' attitude to the curriculum is also investigated by questionnaire in Years 7 and 8. They were asked, *how they found the work in subjects, did they feel they were making progress, what had helped them make progress, what hindered progress and ideas that would improve their progress?* Year 7 pupils came up with ideas for visits to help their understanding of the Romans, after-school learning classes, clearer numbering of classrooms, leaving text books in a particular place and several others which the school has been able to take note of. The school is successfully exploring an aspect of self-review which few other schools have attempted. The school councils play a key part in involving pupils and students in the life of the school

Relationships are particularly good. This, combined with very good pastoral care, creates an ethos of self-esteem and high expectations for all.

10. The relationships between pupils, students and staff are very good. Mutual respect is a feature of all aspects of school life. Members of staff are committed to the Christian ethos of the school and in their dealings with each other and with pupils and students are excellent role models. Several staff send their own children to the school, an

indication of their regard for the education and ethos of the school. Many staff are practising Catholics and almost all pupils and students are from families where the Catholic faith is practised. Ten per cent of places in the sixth form are reserved for students of other denominations and faiths. Christian values are evident in the work of the school. Assemblies play an important part in illustrating how relationships are fundamental to a Christian way of life; and this philosophy is reinforced in lessons and extracurricular activities and events. The work of the school and sixth form councils provides good examples of the maturity of the discussions that take place between pupils and students and staff.

11. The sixth form students undertake many roles where they help the younger pupils in the school. They act as sensitive and effective mentors to Year 7 pupils who require extra help with their spelling, reading and mathematics; they take a lead in Masses and fund-raising for charities including CAFOD (Catholic Aid for Overseas Development). Year 11 pupils organise extracurricular events such as a Womens' Day of Prayer and public speaking competitions; and act as counsellors. Pupils in Year 11 also act as prefects, conscientiously carrying out various duties around the school. Pupils in Year 9 also take turns to be on duty in the reception area of the school and this helps to develop their interpersonal skills well. There are elected form captains, who act as representatives on the school council which has a budget that pupils can spend on items, footballs and chess sets being recent purchases. The sixth form has its own council to enable its views to be expressed. The school takes note of the opinions of pupils and students.
12. Pupils and students work very well collaboratively in lessons, discussing their work sensibly and listening to the views of others. Support for one another is strong in and out of lessons. They behave very well, which results in very productive atmosphere in lessons. The consistency with which staff deal with misdemeanours is a strength of the school. The detailed and constructive *Discipline for Learning* policy is effectively implemented and results in early intervention to correct poor behaviour. The policy has been the subject of extensive review and refinement and has a constructive approach to behaviour management. Rewards for good behaviour and attainment are valued by pupils and parents. Positive reinforcement for good behaviour and work helps to foster the very good relationships in the school. Corrective actions are dealt with from the point of view of support rather than punishment. Pupils and students are valued as individuals. The respect that they are given by teachers and each other helps to give them good self-esteem, which builds the confidence that supports good achievement. Because of very good relationships, instances of bullying are very rare. Swift and effective action is taken to deal with bullying or other forms of harassment.
13. Pupils and students are very well cared for and supported by staff through the very strong pastoral system. The heads of school manage the system extremely effectively. Their additional roles in overseeing pupils' academic progress, pupil performance data and the PSHE curriculum adds considerable strength to the very successful pastoral care. The head of lower school also manages the pilot national Key Stage 3 strategy very effectively, ably supported by the special educational needs coordinator (SENCO). Heads of year and form tutors deliver the well integrated system of the oversight of pupils' academic and personal development very effectively. Staff move through the school with their forms giving very good continuity of care. Heads of upper and lower

school also rotate their roles. Staff give unstintingly of their time outside of lessons, to support individual pupils and to provide clubs and extra tuition during lunchtime and before and after school. The strong corporate spirit of the school extends to the non-teaching staff who are very much part of the caring ethos of the school. The school chaplain provides excellent support for pupils' and students' spiritual needs. Year 11 requested a special Mass before mock examinations last term, showing the importance in which they hold their spiritual development. The 'Leavers' Prom' has a reconciliation and reflection theme and is linked to a special Mass before examination leave starts.

14. Pupils' academic progress is closely monitored by subject staff, form tutors, heads of year and heads of school. Pupils are set individual targets using their performance in national and standardised tests. Teachers have very good information on pupils' prior attainment. They use it to check on progress and to plan their lessons to meet the needs of individual pupils. If performance falls below what is predicted, pupils are given extra support. Parents can ask for extra help for their children if they have concerns and the school is happy to respond to such requests. Support can take the form of mentoring by senior members of staff who work with a small group of pupils, or referral to the pupil support unit run by non-teaching staff who are trained counsellors. Mentoring is a strategy being used to raise the attainment of boys. Interim reports part way through the year provide information to parents about current progress. There are additional checks on progress which are also communicated to parents if pupils are doing particularly well or in need of extra support. The pupil journal is also valued by parents as a way of communication between themselves and the school about homework and progress.
15. Arrangements to smooth the transition of pupils and students from primary school to secondary school, from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 4 to the sixth form are extremely good and a very distinctive feature of the school. Liaison with primary schools is very good. All primary schools are visited and the information gained is used to put pupils into teaching and tutor groups. The SENCO meets half termly with staff from the five main primary schools sending pupils to the school and attends review meetings for Year 6 pupils. She also meets their parents. This gives the school full information on pupils with special educational needs before they arrive in the school. Pupils are very happy with the induction arrangements. Pupils from primary schools enjoy the visit to St Peter's in the summer term to meet their prospective teachers. The day for preparations for the transition between Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 helps pupils to understand the requirements of study to GCSE and GNVQ level. Similarly, Year 11 pupils are encouraged to reflect on their experience at Key Stage 4 as part of preparations for sixth form study. Parents, pupils and students have been consulted on the best format for these transition events and parents are invited to attend them.
16. The school successfully promotes pupils' personal development. There are many opportunities for pupils to take responsibility. Several Year 11 pupils have been trained as drugs counsellors. Pupils and students support charitable events and good causes. Sixth formers have work experience to help to expose them to occupations that they wish to prepare for at university; medicine or veterinary science for example. They also take part in community service, which adds considerably to their personal development. Parents believe that the school promotes good attitudes and values and helps their

children to become mature and responsible. The inspection confirms this view.

17. Pupils' and students' welfare is very well looked after. Health and safety procedures are very thorough. In-service training takes place on nut allergy and asthma for example. There is regular monitoring of the school site; and risk assessments are carried out for potential hazards in the teaching of science, design and technology and physical education for example. Staff have also been trained in child protection issues. On the first day of term staff new to the school are made aware of the procedures by the very experienced child protection officer.

Pupils attain well above average results at ages 14 and 16 and show good achievement in relation to their prior attainment.

18. Pupils attain above average results at the ages of 14 and 16 when compared with all schools nationally and those serving pupils from similar backgrounds. The latter comparison is with schools that have up to 5% of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, that is, the most advantaged schools nationally.
19. Pupils make good progress throughout Key Stage 3 and sustain it through Key Stage 4. Standards have been rising steadily since the previous inspection at a rate faster than the national trend. On entry to the school at age 11, pupils' standard of attainment is above the national average overall, but pupils of all levels of attainment, including pupils with special educational needs, are represented. The level of attainment of pupils entering the school is rising. Comparison of pupils' results in national tests at Key Stage 2 with their results in the tests at Key Stage 3 shows that they perform better than typically expected. This represents good value-added. From 1998 to 2001, when compared with all schools nationally, pupils at age 14 were well above average for average points score, for gaining the benchmark Level 5 and above and for gaining Level 6 and above. When compared with similar schools in 2001, pupils performed best in English where they were well above average for Levels 5 plus and 6 plus. In mathematics pupils were above average in both categories and in science they performed well above average at Level 5 plus and above average at Level 6 plus.
20. Pupils continue to make good progress at Key Stage 4, but performance at GCSE is closer to national averages than at Key Stage 3. Between 1999 and 2001 pupils' results were well above the national averages in all categories - five or more grades A*-C, five or more grades A*-G, one or more grades A*-G and average total points score. Girls do better than boys and the school is using a system of mentors and 'academic tutors' to help boys to develop their potential more fully. This is having some success. In 2001, 50 pupils out of the 190 entered gained five or more A* or A grades, a considerable achievement. All subjects perform significantly above national averages with the exception of business studies. The proportion of A* grades are well above the national averages except in mathematics and geography; and the number of A or A* grades are well above the national averages except in design and technology.
21. The high standards in national tests and examinations are reflected in the quality of work seen in the inspection. The standards that pupils achieve are linked to;
 - very good teaching;
 - the ethos of high expectations;
 - the confidence that pupils are given by the very good care that they receive;

- the very good relationships in the school;
- the very good knowledge that staff have of pupils' attainment and the future performance that this attainment predicts.

The school has very strong links with parents.

22. Parents are very strongly supportive of the school. They are happy with the standards achieved, the attitudes and values promoted by the school, the school's high expectations, the welcome they receive from the school, the good teaching and progress and the development of their children into mature and responsible young adults. The inspection confirms these positive views. The school has a policy for partnership with parents which guides its work with them very well. The policy includes ways of checking its effectiveness. The parent-teacher association is strong and acts as a 'sounding board' on aspects of school policy. Parents are well represented on the governing body. Several are foundation governors. Individual parents help to give students interview preparation and careers advice; and some provide placements for work experience and community service. This helps the school to forge links with the local community. Regular newsletters keep parents well informed about school events. Four out of five parents who responded to the questionnaire were satisfied with the ways in which the school works with them. Although there was therefore some dissatisfaction, inspection evidence shows that this aspect of the work of the school is very strong compared with most secondary schools.
23. The school regularly consults parents, on homework and the Home-School agreement for example, and responds to their views. The timing of Year 10 parents' evening was changed to fit in with parents' wishes for example. They have also been consulted on what they think should be covered on the transition days for pupils transferring to the school and into the sixth form and are invited to attend those sessions. Regular 'surgeries' are held by senior staff to which parents are offered open invitations to attend. Parents can request extra support for their children if they have concerns and the school is happy to meet these requests. Extra support for coursework for Year 11 pupils and preparation for Year 13 examinations are examples. Parents value the home-school liaison journal in which they are able to make comments to the school. Regular reports are produced which give parents information on the curriculum that pupils and students are following. This information is not as detailed in the sixth form reports. There are systems in place to alert parents to problems with progress between reports and also to inform them of particularly good work or good progress that their children are making. Reports are not yet used to reinforce the target setting that is effectively helping pupils to achieve their potential.
24. Parents appreciate the hard work put in by staff on extracurricular activities, extra lessons put on for GCSE revision and early starts to enable some A and AS-level subjects to be fitted in to the curriculum. They value the efforts the school makes to re-integrate pupils who have been absent. The attendance at parents' meetings, at above 95%, is very high. The annual governors' meeting for parents is less well attended.

Teaching is very good or excellent in a high proportion of lessons.

25. Teaching and learning are good overall. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. The

quality of teaching in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 is very good and it is good in the sixth form. Very good or excellent lessons were observed in half of the lessons seen at Key Stage 3, four in ten at Key Stage 4 and in a third of lessons in the sixth form. All the teaching at Key Stage 4 was at least good. The school has made improvement in teaching a school priority for the last two years. This initiative has been effectively led by the deputy headteacher, well supported by other senior staff. Increased use of ICT was one of the objectives of the focus on teaching and learning. Good examples of ICT being used in French, geography, English, science, information and communication technology and chemistry were seen during the inspection. The adoption of the pilot Key Stage 3 strategy has also focussed attention on teaching and learning. Examples of techniques introduced as part of the Key Stage 3 strategy being used at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form were seen during the inspection.

26. Increased use of pupil performance data has improved the way in which staff match teaching to pupils' attainment and has also helped them to assess pupils' progress better. Targets are set by the use of nationally available information which enables pupils' attainment to be predicted, based on their performance in national tests at age 11, 14 and 16. The school also makes use of commercial schemes called YELLIS (Year 11 Information System) and ALIS (A-level Information System) to give a good picture of what pupils and students should be capable of attaining in the national tests at age 14, GCSE at age 16 and A/AS-level at ages 17 and 18. Teachers have high expectations of pupils. Students and pupils have good awareness of what levels or grades are expected of them and how they are performing in relation to their targets. The system enables good sharing by teachers with pupils and students of the criteria against which they are to be assessed. For example in a Year 9 science lesson about the reaction between magnesium and oxygen, pupils assessed their conclusions using a checklist of the criteria required to meet National Curriculum Levels 5, 6 and 7. Most were able to write word equations and explain them, which meant that they met one of the criteria for Level 6 (above average), some were starting to write equations using chemical symbols which is a Level 7 requirement (well above average). Staff awareness of pupils' attainment is very good. Staff provided inspectors with briefing notes on the numbers of pupils in a class working at different levels of attainment and the levels that were being targeted. Test results are converted to grades and levels and the information is used to check pupils' progress. Grade and level criteria are not consistently used when marking work or on reports home in order to reinforce pupils' progress towards their targets.
27. Lessons are well planned, well structured and well paced. Teachers' subject knowledge and understanding are very good, and contribute to their explanations and answers to pupils' questions. Staff use a very good range of techniques as part of their teaching. This enables them to cater well for pupils who learn in different ways. Pupils are aware of the different ways of learning and welcome opportunities to do things differently. The very good relationships and behaviour in the school mean that teachers are free to experiment with different techniques, knowing that pupils will respond positively. Levels of motivation and enthusiasm are very high. Pupils are eager to learn. Their very high attendance rate is a further illustration that they enjoy coming to school.
28. In the best lessons, pupils are stimulated to think for themselves by a variety of activities which challenge and inspire them. An excellent Year 11 geography lesson

used a technique called a ‘marketplace’. Pupils, working in groups of four, were given clear criteria and excellent resources to prepare a display on the causes and effects of, and possible solutions to, global warming, acid deposition and damage to the ozone layer. A time limit was set to help pupils to organise their work and promote pace. One pupil then remained with each display to explain it to others in the class who moved to other groups to find out about the particular topic from the pupil remaining behind. They took notes and asked questions so that they could brief the member of their group that had remained with the display. Pupils were motivated by the task to learn for themselves. One of them remarked “*This is challenging*” and another “*Oh, I’m going to be a teacher!*”. There were 29 pupils in the group in a small classroom and the exercise was accomplished successfully without any fuss. The technique had been part of a ‘*Thinking Skills*’ in-service training session. In an excellent Year 9 science lesson from the CASE project (Cognitive Acceleration in Science Education) on varying two conditions at once in an investigation, planning was very well structured; there were clear visual aids; a very effective demonstration experiment involved pupils and the teacher asked challenging questions. Pupils had to work out a pattern of results and then make predictions. This they did very well despite the difficulty of the concept. They were able to understand the thinking skills involved. Demanding timescales were set and intervention by the teacher during group work constantly probed pupils’ understanding on an individual basis and as a class during the end of lesson review. Pupils acknowledged that thinking was ‘hard work’ but they took a pride in having understood the objective of the lesson.

29. A Year 7 English lesson on *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* produced an excellent response from pupils, when visual interpretations by the teacher helped pupils to write instructions for actors, brought the learning alive and inspired pupils to apply intellectual, physical and creative effort. The task was challenging and immediately engaged their interest. In an excellent Year 8 English lesson with a lower attaining group, pupils worked independently to learn how to use a thesaurus on the computer, guided by clear explanation, high expectations and encouragement from the teacher and unobtrusive support from the learning support assistant. Having successfully mastered the ‘repetition rule’ a boy was encouraged to read it aloud and explain it to the rest of the class. The teacher’s excellent knowledge of ICT led to excellent learning by low attainers who were working towards Level 4. An excellent Year 7 physical education lesson on circuit training, as part of a course on health-related fitness, employed literacy and numeracy strategies, a variety of teaching techniques, excellent questioning techniques, very good feedback to pupils about their performance, pupil self evaluation and analysis of their activities all contributed to excellent response, learning and motivation.
30. Classroom management is very good. Lessons are structured for variety, so that pupils may work in various sized groups or independently or move around classrooms to various focuses. Staff are aware of the theories about how children learn and put these theories into action. Moving pupils to a different focus from time to time is thought to help refresh their concentration for example. Some staff use ‘mind maps’ or ‘spider diagrams’ which are thought to mimic the way the brain works when remembering things. ‘Concept cartoons’ were used very successfully in a Year 7 science lesson. These gave alternative explanations about the flow of electricity through a circuit, which pupils had to speculate on and then test by experimental practical work. This

made pupils think for themselves and discuss their theories with other members of the group of four in which they were working, before putting their ideas to the test.

31. The training that staff have had is having a positive impact on the quality of teaching throughout the school. Very good teaching combined with very good relationships and behaviour result in the high standards that they achieve and the good progress that they make.

Sixth form provision is good.

32. There is a comprehensive range of AS and A-level courses on offer which matches the needs of students well. Almost all students on one and two year courses complete their courses and a high proportion of Year 13 students go on to higher education. There were high standards of attainment at AS-level in 2001 by Year 12 students. This is being sustained in Year 13 and repeated by the students currently in Year 12. Students have very positive attitudes to study and the relationships in the sixth form are very good. The school offers its students good advice, guidance and support within a very friendly ethos. Part D of the sixth form annex provides more detail about these features.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

33. There are no significant weaknesses in the main school. Marking could be improved to help pupils at Key Stage 3 to know how to meet the criteria on which their targets for National Curriculum levels are based. Marking is currently thorough and conscientious, but insufficiently consistent in commenting on subject knowledge, understanding and skills and how to improve these.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

Main school

34. There are no significant weaknesses in the main school. The school is successfully identifying areas for improvement through the process of school self-review. It is devising effective strategies for bringing about improvements through the school improvement planning cycle and performance management.

Sixth form

35. In order to improve this good sixth form further, governors senior managers and members of staff should:
 - implement systematic strategies to ensure that recent improvements in attainment and progress are sustained;
(see paragraphs 37, 39, 63, 65, 69)
 - spread the features of the good and very good teaching to the minority of lessons where teaching is no more than satisfactory;
(see paragraphs 46, 47, 68, 80, 84, 100, 102, 103, 107, 110, 116, 123, 139, 149, 152, 160, 164, 165, 176)
 - improve the systems for the monitoring and reporting of students' progress.
(see paragraphs 55, 56, 59, 117, 124, 142, 150, 164, 165).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	39
	Sixth form	56
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		78

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
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Years 7 – 11

Number	7	11	17	4	0	0	0
Percentage	18	28	44	10	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting the percentages for enter Years 7 – 11 as each lesson represents more than 2 percentage points..

Sixth form

Number	4	14	27	11	0	0	0
Percentage	7	25	48	20	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Y7 - Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	981	218
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	30	

Special educational needs

	Y7 - Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	3	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	106	5

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	9

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	6
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	30

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.8
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001	92	92	184

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	85	82	84
	Girls	87	76	80
	Total	172	158	164
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	93 (94)	86 (89)	89 (84)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	68 (69)	65 (70)	54 (47)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	78	84	73
	Girls	80	80	64
	Total	158	164	137
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	86 (92)	90 (90)	75 (75)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	45 (66)	69 (71)	48 (46)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	95	96	191

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	56	93	95
	Girls	85	95	96
	Total	141	188	191
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	74 (76)	98 (99)	100 (99)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	50.9
	National	39.0

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 pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	2
	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
	2001	35	57	92

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	38	59	97
	Average point score per candidate	14.7	16.3	15.8
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	18	17.5

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	35	57	92	3	3	6
	Average point score per candidate	15.6	16.7	16.3	4	6.7	5.3
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.9	17.4	9.8	11.4	10.6

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	4
Black – other	0
Indian	2
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	3
White	1186
Any other minority ethnic group	2

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	1	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	44	1
Other minority ethnic groups	1	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	69.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.3

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	18.0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	383

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	75
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Financial information

Financial year	2000/1
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	£
Total income	2914794
Total expenditure	2886422
Expenditure per pupil	2440
Balance brought forward from previous year	18806
Balance carried forward to next year	28372

Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	26.1
Key Stage 4	23.9

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	15.4
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	14.0
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	4.6
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	1199
Number of questionnaires returned	236

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	42	46	9	3	0
My child is making good progress in school.	46	44	7	2	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	26	53	11	5	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	31	49	15	5	1
The teaching is good.	36	57	4	1	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	41	41	12	5	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	53	39	4	4	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	63	34	2	1	0
The school works closely with parents.	27	50	17	4	2
The school is well led and managed.	33	54	6	4	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	42	50	4	1	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	30	53	9	4	4

PART D: THE SIXTH FORM

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

36. The standard of attainment of Year 13 students in A-level examinations has remained close to the national average from the time of the last inspection to 2001 without any significant rise. The standard achieved by Year 12 students in the new AS-level examination in 2001 was, however, high. From the evidence of work seen during the inspection, this improved standard has been carried forward into Year 13 work by these students and is also being repeated by the current Year 12 students. A small number of students follow intermediate and advanced vocational courses in business. Students achieved results that were in line with their predicted performance based upon their GCSE results at the end of Year 11. This means that the majority of students made satisfactory progress. In recent years male students gained higher average total point scores than female students. The proportion of students gaining at least an E grade has been high, and most students who had been expected to gain an A or B grade successfully did so. Some students who were expected to gain C or D grade results did not meet their targets. In 2001 the A-level results were above the national average in biology, business, chemistry, general studies, geography, history, physics and physical education. The general studies results were notably high. Students elected to take this subject largely in addition to their other courses, working independently with tutorial support.
37. In 2001 the average point scores per subject for Year 12 students in AS-level examinations were high. This high standard was judged by inspectors to have been carried forward into Year 13, where a significant number of students were seen to be on course to achieve A-level grades better than those predicted by their Year 11 GCSE results. The work seen in lessons indicates that the improved standard of attainment seen in the 2001 AS-level results is likely to be repeated by the current Year 12 students in summer 2002 examinations. Students in both Year 12 and Year 13 are now making good progress.
38. Two particularly important factors have been responsible for this recent improvement in performance. The students in this school have responded well to the more precise and shorter-term targets in modular AS and A2 courses. They have also benefited considerably from the impact of recent whole-school initiatives on raising the quality of teaching. This has led to most teachers matching their teaching well to individual students' learning needs and targets. Other contributory factors include high attendance rates, high quality pastoral care and relationships and the fact that a high proportion of students follow courses that were their first choices.
39. All Year 12 students take at least one key skills course from a pool of three. All students attend lessons in ICT skills. Most are working effectively towards a Level 2 award, whilst some are on track to reach a Level 3 award. Those students who are not studying English at AS-level follow a communications key skills course. The majority of these students are expected to reach Level 3. The numeracy key skills course is aimed at those students who have gained a GCSE grade B or higher in mathematics.

Over half of those who started the course were still continuing with it and all are working towards a Level 3 award. A small number of students are receiving good tuition to help them gain a GCSE C grade in mathematics.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

40. Students' attitudes and values are very good. They quickly develop into mature and responsible young adults. The sixth form is very friendly and welcoming. Relationships between students and with their teachers are very good. Students behave very well and are good role models for pupils in the main school. Students have very positive attitudes to their learning and are willing to work independently Year 13 students completing their A2 assignments make exceptional efforts to produce high quality coursework. Students who have joined Year 12 from other schools comment very favourably about the induction arrangements and the way in which they had quickly become accepted within the common room and in lessons. Many students act as learning mentors to Year 7 pupils who require additional help with developing their reading and numeracy skills. They also train as drugs counsellors. Many students participate in charitable work and campaign for ethical causes such as Amnesty International. Some students also take a lead in Masses and also in other whole-school activities. There is an active sixth form council that is becoming increasingly influential in securing improvements to sixth form provision.
41. The attendance rate of Year 12 students is very good and that of Year 13 students is good. Between September 2001 and March 2002 the overall attendance rate was 93.4% for Year 12 and 91.5% for Year 13. One Year 12 tutor group achieved a figure of 97.6% during this period, which is remarkably high. The systems for recording attendance in the sixth form are, however, currently inefficient. Most students are punctual for their lessons and remain on site throughout the working day. Tutors are vigilant to spot any attendance problems, and follow up unexplained absences effectively.
42. The very positive attitudes that students have, the friendly and supportive ethos of the sixth form, very good pastoral care, the high levels of attendance and punctuality all contribute significantly to the standards of attainment and the quality of learning.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

43. The overall quality of teaching in the sixth form is good and has improved since the last inspection. Recent initiatives to enhance professional development opportunities for teachers, linked to performance management and better school self-review, have been important contributory factors to improvement. In approximately half of the lessons seen, the quality of teaching was good, and in nearly a third of lessons it was very good and occasionally excellent. In the remaining fifth of lessons, the quality of teaching was satisfactory. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen.
44. The great majority of students consider that they are taught well and are challenged to do their best. They also consider that they are enthusiastically encouraged to study and research topics independently, using the library and ICT resources of the school. Most students think that their work is thoroughly assessed and so can see how to improve

their performance further. Teachers are regarded as being friendly and accessible by students, especially if they experience difficulties with their work.

45. High attaining students are given scope to exercise their thinking and reasoning skills to a high level. Lower attaining students are frequently given considerable support to ensure that they reach at least pass standard in their courses. A few average students who work hard and complete their work on time, find some aspects of their studies conceptually very difficult and sometimes require more help from teachers. Students who are not performing as well as expected are identified for individual support. Parents who have concerns about their children are able to ask for support from the school and this is readily given.
46. In the lessons seen where teaching was very good or excellent, individual students' learning needs were met, opportunities for demanding and creative thinking were provided, students were enabled to undertake investigative enquiry work, learning objectives were challenging and frequently referred to. In many cases ICT or visual resources were used to good effect. In such lessons students of all levels of attainment make very good progress. There are many examples of such good practice, for example:-
- In a Year 12 GCSE mathematics resit lesson, enthusiastic teaching that combined individual help and group explanation enabled relatively weak students to make good personal progress.
 - In an ICT key skills lesson, high quality individual tuition both by the teacher and the ICT technician moved students forward quickly in using spreadsheets.
 - Excellent teaching in a business lesson led to rich and thoughtful dialogue about the merits and weaknesses of different management styles.
 - In a French lesson, two teachers worked very well together to combine their strengths to extend students' learning opportunities.
 - In a physics lesson, students' understanding of medical physics was accelerated through the teacher's knowledge of accurate technical detail linked to evaluative discussion.
 - In a psychology lesson the teacher provided the inspiration and organisation necessary for students to design original investigations.
 - In a chemistry lesson about kinetics the pace was excellent and students made very rapid gains in understanding.
 - Excellent teaching in a European history lesson drew superbly upon the teacher's outstanding knowledge of Bolshevik power.
 - In Year 13, a well organised revision programme in both biology and physics greatly assisted students in their examination preparation.
 - Very good teaching in chemistry encouraged students to undertake some very high quality practical work.
 - In a French lesson, the imaginative use of a range of spoken and visual resources linked to imaginative tasks both supported lower attaining students and challenged higher attaining students.

- Very good teaching in a European history lesson on the collapse of the USSR encouraged much individual research and thinking.
47. In the instances where the quality of teaching was satisfactory (approximately one in five lessons), students made adequate progress, but not as much as they were capable of. Their progress was sometimes impeded by the over-use of instructional approaches that left them as relatively passive recipients of information, even though that information was usually accurate and well presented. In such instances, the same information was often conveyed to the whole class at the same pace and in the same way, regardless of individual students' capabilities or preferred learning styles. Opportunities for students to debate issues, give extended and reasoned answers or to synthesise their new learning were too few. In a few instances the teacher was hesitant about aspects of factual detail or course content. Occasionally the teaching was rather laboured and the lesson was as a consequence rather dull and humourless. In a few cases the learning objectives were not fully explained to the students or the new learning reviewed at the end of the lesson. The many examples of established good practice are insufficiently well shared across the sixth form.

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

48. The overall quality and range of the curriculum provision in the sixth form are good. As at the time of the previous inspection, a broad range of subjects is offered to advanced level. The new AS and A-level modular courses with their more precise, shorter-term attainment targets are proving to be well suited to the needs of students at St Peter's. Most Year 12 students study four subjects to AS-level. The school guarantees that these students will be able to take their first two subject choices and many are able to take all four of their preferred courses. A successful key skills programme was introduced in September 2000 to replace a series of non-examination enrichment courses that were reported as not being fully valued by students at the time of the previous inspection. A Christian living course provides all students with designated time to consider religious, personal, social and health issues. A general studies course is offered on an optional basis and some Year 13 students volunteer to take this course as an extra qualification. Students opting for general studies write good essays readily, can undertake independent research well and enjoy tutorial discussions. Results have been very good. Since September 2001 some Year 12 students have selected general studies as their fourth AS-level subject.
49. The vocational course element of the curriculum is confined to business with courses at Advanced Certificate in Education and intermediate General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) level. This is mainly because the sixth form is over-subscribed with students who wish to follow a two year advanced level programme whilst there is already a good provision for vocational courses in local post-16 colleges. Expansion of vocational provision is planned. An intermediate GNVQ science course is planned for Year 10 in September 2002 that will continue into Year 12 in September 2004.
50. The sixth form curriculum provision is cost-effective and provides good value for money. Operating costs are paid for from the income for sixth form students, without any subsidy from the 11-16 provision. Courses with small numbers of students

(typically under eight) are subsidised from other sixth form courses with greater student numbers. Courses with small numbers of students include AS-level courses in music and physical education and A-level courses in economics, German, and music. Further mathematics is taught by teachers who have volunteered to use some of their designated non-contact time for the purpose, starting at 8.30 in the morning. Music continues to be taught to small numbers of students in both Years 12 and 13 because of the subject's cultural importance in the life of the school. Some popular courses have relatively large numbers of students, the most extreme example being art and design where the studio is too small to accommodate adequately all of the students on the course. A few students study Italian and Spanish at Solihull Sixth Form College. A teacher from another school teaches aspects of design. There are currently no other shared arrangements with other local post-16 providers though governors are alert to the possibilities of this providing better cost-effectiveness in some subjects.

51. There is a successful Year 12 tutorial programme that covers the first twelve weeks of the course. Tutorial time is also used well for helping students to select the universities that they wish to apply for and in giving support for the writing of individual statements in Year 13. At other periods of the year, the time allocated for tutorial work is not used in a systematic way for a taught programme, although it does provide valuable space for individual discussions between tutors and students. There are no planned facilities for sport or recreation for sixth formers. This is a cause of concern for a sizeable number of students. Some Year 12 students have timetabled sessions with Year 7 pupils where they act as individual tutors to pupils who are working towards Level 4 in English or mathematics. This is a very successful venture that benefits both the Year 7 pupils and their sixth form mentors.
52. Key skills courses are made available to all students in Year 12. The provision is good and meets the current national guidelines well. All students take an ICT qualification to Level 2 or 3. Those students who already possess a GCSE grade between A* and B in mathematics are encouraged to take a key skills numeracy qualification to Level 2 or 3. Those not exempted from communications by taking AS-level English go on to take communications to Level 3. The take-up of courses is high. Retention rate in the ICT and communications courses has been high, but nearly half of those taking the numeracy have decided to leave the course.
53. The great majority of students who were consulted considered that the choice of courses available allowed them to follow a programme that was well suited to their talents and career aspirations. Most thought that the printed information about courses and subjects in the sixth form was clear, accurate and helpful and that they were given good advice on which subjects to study before they joined Year 12. Suitable arrangements are in place to enable any students who wish to change courses in the first term of Year 12 to do so after careful consideration of all of the implications.
54. There are many valuable, but often uncoordinated, opportunities for the promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in lessons. Such opportunities were seen to be used to good effect by inspectors in some business, Christian living, geography, history and psychology lessons. Moral and ethical issues are frequently discussed in tutorial sessions and in relation to the work of the sixth form council. Students have a well developed sense of fairness and justice which is often

focussed on charitable and ethical causes. Students' attitudes, behaviour, relationships and levels of personal responsibility are all very good, reflecting the positive impact of approaches to supporting their personal development throughout their schooling at St Peter's. They generally use their private study time profitably and keep a study diary, which can be monitored by their tutor.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

55. The overall quality of the use of assessment information as a means of advising students about their progress is satisfactory. Students are aware of their predicted grades in all subjects and courses. In some subjects (such as in art and design, biology, chemistry, ICT and history) they know the standard that they are currently working at. However, some teachers are not making specific reference to students' personal learning targets and what they need to do to reach or exceed them in lessons or in the marking of work. The central system for recording students' progress is limited to an analysis of performance in mock examinations compared with predicted grades. There are insufficient systematic arrangements in place to track the continuing progress of all students throughout Years 12 and 13. This means that tutors do not get frequently updated information on how well each person in their care is doing.
56. Tutors are adept at identifying students who need additional help and those who are performing at a high level. They sometimes find it harder to spot examples of average-attaining students who work hard, but who may be experiencing some difficulties with concepts or the organisation of their work. The lack of detailed information on the progress of each student makes it hard for sixth form managers to track the progress of different cohorts, such as middle attaining female students, those doing predominantly science subjects, or those who are making different rates of progress in different subjects. Twenty nine per cent of students who replied to the questionnaire consider that they are not kept sufficiently well informed about the progress that they are making. These students want more precise feedback from tutors and teachers about their progress towards their target grades and the effectiveness of their study approaches. The current system for recording students' progress is unsatisfactory. Practice in the main school is better.
57. The overall quality of the advice, support and guidance given to students is good. Students are well advised about courses before they enter Year 12. The Year 12 tutorial programme is well structured and is very relevant in the first two terms. Year 13 students are given good advice about university applications. When available, careers advice from the Connexions Service is very effective. Some students said that they would appreciate more advice at the start of Year 12 about opportunities after Year 13 so that they could set more precise personal goals for themselves.
58. There is strong support for students who experience difficulties in their work, especially those who struggle to reach pass standard. Students usually get the grades that they are aiming for to enter their preferred higher education courses. Over 90% of students who replied to the questionnaire considered that they were helped to settle in well to Year 12 work. The same high proportion of students enjoy being in the sixth form at St Peter's and would recommend others to join this sixth form. Systems for recording students' attendance are currently insufficiently rigorous.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS AND STUDENTS

59. Parents and students are generally well satisfied with the range of opportunities offered in the sixth form. Pupils in Year 11 who are considering joining the sixth form and their parents are able to participate in very helpful arrangements that enable them to select the most appropriate post-16 pathway from the choices available in school and local colleges. The sixth form prospectus is well produced and is very informative. Parents and students receive a brief interim progress report in November and a well produced annual progress reports in February/March in both Year 12 and Year 13. There is a high attendance at the annual parents' consultation meetings that follow the publication of the main reports in the spring term. Parents are thus provided with regular information, but say that they would value more frequent feedback on the progress that their children are making throughout their course. Shortcomings in recording students' progress reduces the value of these reports somewhat. Some parents provide very valuable help with mock interviews and work experience placements.
60. A Higher Education information evening held for parents and students in December is well attended and highly valued. Specific information is given that is relevant to both Year 12 and Year 13 students.
61. Students value the sixth form provision highly. They are very committed to their studies and to service within the school and the wider community. Many have a strongly held faith which is expressed through considerate work for others. The students who have been at St Peter's since Year 7 make those who join the sixth form from other schools very welcome from the outset. All students show a strong sense of belonging and loyalty to the school. Very few students leave or change courses once they have committed themselves to them. Very friendly relationships between students and staff enable useful suggestions to be taken up readily. For example, students requested that study leave prior to examinations should be replaced by normal lessons so that teachers could play a more direct part in the final stages of revision.

HOW WELL IS THE SIXTH FORM LED AND MANAGED?

62. The overall quality of both the leadership and management of the sixth form is good. The sixth form provision has improved since the last inspection, particularly in the last 18 months with the successful introduction of new courses and the impact of major initiatives aimed at improving further the quality of teaching. Good leadership and management, especially from the headteacher and senior managers, have made this happen. The aims and values of the school are very evident in the work of the sixth form. Christian values are evident in the daily life and work of the sixth form community. Many aspects of the work of the sixth form are managed as part of a successful Year 7 to 13 strategy. Whole school initiatives (such as performance management and improved teaching approaches) have had a positive impact in the sixth form along with the rest of the school. Sixth form students play a significant part in creating a conducive environment for their own learning and personal development.

63. The headteacher plays a very direct and significant part in the leadership and organisation of the sixth form. In her previous role as a deputy headteacher she played a key role in setting up, and later consolidating, the sixth form in the school. She helped to design the sixth form block and then to establish policies and procedures for post-16 education within the school. She retains a very keen involvement in the work of the sixth form, especially in the organisation of the curriculum and in monitoring the quality of the teaching. The well respected head of sixth form has been very successful in establishing a good climate for learning in the sixth form and fostering an ethos of good relationships. The post of head of sixth form has been redefined from January 2002 with an emphasis on securing sustained improvement in the standard of attainment of students. An additional new post of senior tutor will become operational from April 2002. The post holder will take a direct role in ensuring that students' progress is closely and accurately monitored and that all teachers and tutors use sixth form performance data as constructively as possible.
64. Governors are knowledgeable about the strengths and development needs of the sixth form. They bring valuable management expertise, particularly in the areas of finance, personnel, buildings and community involvement. This expertise is used well to help shape the direction of the sixth form. Governors are very pleased with the many areas of success within the sixth form, particularly the good accommodation, the popularity of the provision with students and parents and the good relationships.
65. Governors share with senior managers a desire of achieving an average A/AS-level point score of over 18.0 points for students aged 18. The most recent figure is 16.3. They recognise that the very significant rates of progress made by pupils from Years 7 to 11 are not currently being maintained in the sixth form. The widely held aspiration of raising the standard of attainment of Year 13 students has not, however, been converted into a specific strategy for improvement within the school's development plan, with action points, time scales, lines of responsibility, success criteria, costings or training specifications. Inspection evidence and recent assessment data indicate that the standard of attainment in both Years 12 and 13 is rising. The school development plan identifies a series of actions that relate to all year groups in the school, including Year 12 and 13. Action taken to raise the quality of teaching, for example, has benefited the sixth form significantly. The current plan does not, however, identify specific strategies for raising standards of attainment further in the sixth form.
66. The sixth form is cost-effective, and financial resources are deployed well to support teaching, learning and attainment. The best value principles of challenge, consultation and competition have been used well to secure this cost-effectiveness, though not always in an explicit way. Consultation about the best way of using finite resources to achieve ambitious outcomes is a particular strength of the school. In the context of the sixth form, the best value principle of comparison has been harder to apply because of the variations in the way in which 11 to 18 schools are funded. The patterns of current spending and the forecasts for future spending match the academic and social needs of sixth formers well.
67. The accommodation (with the exception of that for art and design, for which plans for improvement exist) is good, and provides a very pleasant environment for learning and personal development. The library and ICT facilities are good, enabling students to

work independently before, between and after their timetabled lessons. Many students make good use of these facilities. This is a contributory factor to the improving standard of attainment.

68. Teachers are dedicated and experienced, and often spend a great deal of personal energy in meeting the needs of individual students. Teachers and support staff are deployed well and are imaginatively trained to undertake sixth form teaching, even when they may spend the majority of their working week with pupils in Years 7 to 11. There are many areas of strength in the work of teachers in the sixth form, but arrangements for sharing examples of good practice in teaching, assessment and lesson design need to be extended further to ensure that all students experience consistently good teaching in all subjects.
69. Good leadership and management have ensured that this is an effective and improving sixth form with many strengths. It offers good value for money. There is a collective recognition amongst governors, senior managers and teachers that there is still scope for further improvement. There is the capacity within the school to secure this improvement, whilst at the same time safeguarding the many positive features of a good sixth form that is well integrated into the life of the whole school and which reflects the Christian values of the school.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE THE SIXTH FORM FURTHER?

70. In order to improve this good sixth form further, governors, senior managers and members of staff should:
 - implement systematic strategies to ensure that recent improvements in attainment and progress are sustained;
(see paragraphs 37, 39, 63, 65, 69)
 - spread the features of the good and very good teaching to the minority of lessons where teaching is no more than satisfactory;
(see paragraphs 46, 47, 68, 80, 84, 100, 102, 103, 107, 110, 116, 123, 139, 149, 152, 160, 164, 165, 176)
 - improve the systems for the monitoring and reporting of students' progress.
(see paragraphs 55, 56, 59, 117, 124, 142, 150, 164, 165).

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

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

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

GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
French	1	100	89	0	39	6.00	5.70
Mathematics	3	33.3	62	0	15	0.3	1.51
Religious studies	1	100	85	100	26	5.00	2.38

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
Art and design	12	83	96	50	46	5.67	6.57
Biology	25	92	88	36	34	5.36	5.25
Business studies	27	100	92	33	32	5.85	5.50
Chemistry	16	100	90	44	43	6.13	5.90
Communication studies (Drama)	17	88	93	24	31	5.06	5.53
Computer Studies	3	100	86	0	23	5.33	4.62
Economics	4	100	89	0	36	4.00	5.52
English language	13	62	91	0	30	1.85	5.27
English literature	34	94	95	44	37	5.94	5.91
French	7	86	89	0	38	4.00	5.59
Full design and technology	9	100	91	33	30	5.78	5.38
General studies	12	92	85	33	30	6.50	4.91
Geography	15	100	92	33	38	6.27	5.74
German	3	100	91	0	40	5.33	5.81
History	17	88	88	35	35	6.12	5.45

Mathematics	21	86	87	29	43	4.67	5.80
Music	3	33	93	0	35	2.00	5.74
Other languages	2	100	93	50	56	7.00	6.84
Other social studies	12	100	87	25	34	5.00	5.30
Physics	6	100	88	50	40	6.00	5.67
Religious studies	7	100	92	14	38	4.00	5.84
Spanish	1	100	89	0	39	6.00	5.70
Sports / PE Studies	8	100	92	50	25	6.75	5.09
Business Studies Post-16VQ	6	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	4.00	10.45

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Students achieve results that are in line with, and often better than, those predicted from their GCSE grades.
- Students focus well on their work and are attentive, interested and involved.
- Teachers are very committed to their students, which gives them the confidence to succeed to the best of their ability.
- The teaching is good overall. Consequently students are well motivated and respond earnestly.
- The department is efficiently led and managed.

Areas for improvement

- The provision for and the use of information and communication technology is presently inadequate.
- Schemes of work require further development to be brought to the standard of the best examples within the department.
- Students would benefit from an increased emphasis on basic techniques in pure mathematics.

71. The inspection focussed on the A and AS-level work, and six lessons were sampled in addition to the scrutiny of students' work and interviews with representative students. Here, students undertake a combination of modules in pure mathematics, statistics and mechanics. The school also provides the opportunity for the study of A-level further mathematics and for the re-sitting of GCSE mathematics.

Standards and Achievement

72. The pass rate at A-level has been below the national average over the past three years, with the percentage of A and B grades also below national average and low in comparison to other subjects in the school. The average points score in the 2001 AS-level papers was low in comparison to most other subjects. However, the prediction system used by the school indicates that the range of ability of the students is wide and they are achieving results which are in line with or better than expectation based on their previous achievements.
73. Overall the standard of work seen in lessons and students' files is broadly in line with average national standards. Standards of attainment on entry to the sixth form have fluctuated with the year group but presently are generally in line with or a little below the national average. Students are expected to achieve at least Grade B in GCSE at the end of Year 11 to gain entry to the AS-level course but some may have followed the intermediate and not the higher level GCSE course and so will not have covered some topics. In a very carefully planned lesson, introducing dynamics to Year 12, a video programme was used well; all pupils worked hard and successfully to understand the application of Newton's Laws of Motion and they were able to make effective use of past work on the equations of motion. A Year 13 group, through carefully led discussion, became more confident in their knowledge of circle equations and the solution of differential equations, although they were hesitant when using basic algebra. Lesson observations and the work scrutiny in both year groups showed a steady improvement over time and standards that were good in relation to the ability of the students. Students re-sitting their GCSE mathematics course work hard with their teacher and try their best to succeed. Little evidence was seen of the use of ICT. The potential benefits of its increased use are recognised but the provision, especially of suitable software, is poor at present.
74. In all the lessons seen in the sixth form, students were well focussed on their work; they were attentive, interested, involved and many were able to follow instructions well and attempt to think through problems. They could enter into constructive discussions when this was required, in mechanics especially, but could also concentrate and work independently, with a determination to achieve their targets. This commitment of students to their work, their respect for their teachers and their earnest application are all factors in their success during term time and the standards of work they achieve. Their concentration and determination are very evident. Their relationships with each other and their teachers are very good. A Year 12 mechanics group sustained their concentration through a double lesson on connected particles moving on a horizontal or an inclined plane which was well illustrated by references to cars and caravans. Both a Year 12 and a Year 13 group revising pure mathematics had some difficulty in remembering basic terms such as *perpendicular bisector* and algebraic manipulations such as factorising, expanding brackets, fractions and finding the equations of a line given the co-ordinates of two points.

Quality of Education

75. The quality of teaching overall is good, enabling students on all courses to learn their work as successfully as their ability allows. Six lessons were observed, two at AS-level, two at A-level, one of further mathematics and one of GCSE retake work. Discussions were held with the head of department and other members of staff. Samples of work from pupils of different levels of ability in each year group were scrutinised and discussions were also held with pupils.
76. Teaching was very good in half the lessons observed, good or very good in two thirds of the lessons and no lessons were unsatisfactory. The students are fortunate to be taught by experienced and well-qualified teachers who know their capabilities and have a commitment to helping them achieving the best possible grades. The good teaching was characterised by well-structured lessons, the use of challenging questions and the development of thinking skills in the students. There was careful progression from very good introductions when learning objectives were clearly expressed and key words emphasised. The members of the department have a depth of mathematical knowledge and understanding which enables good support to be given to less able students. This secure knowledge base also enables them to use familiar examples and bring problems alive. Students' queries are taken seriously and answers explained carefully, increasing their confidence and helping them to understand and therefore learn successfully. The teaching of the GCSE group is lively and enthusiastic, very clearly planned to retain interest and give opportunities for learning and reinforcement.
77. The largely effective teaching leads to the students' acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding being good overall for their level of ability. In lessons, the majority of students make a good intellectual effort. They are willing to tackle questions, to volunteer answers and to think aloud. Their comments on their self-assessment forms and the targets they set themselves were mature and sensible. They appreciate the extra time given to them by their teachers and have a great respect for them. Overall their productivity and pace of working are good, especially when well guided by direct teaching. They are aware of their own capabilities and respond to the good teaching. They acknowledge that they were warned that they would find difficulty with parts of the course. In a very good AS lesson in Year 12, the very good relationships and very clear explanations linked to real life examples consolidated the students' good understanding of Newton's Laws of Motion. The GCSE group worked with a will, appreciating the clear guidance and help given to them.
78. Teachers know their students well and use this knowledge to encourage them and give them confidence. The diagnosis of and provision for individual learning needs is satisfactory. Staff ensure that the more able students have extension work. Small teaching groups enable unobtrusive help to be given to individual students, such as one with dyslexia and another whose home language is not English. Members of the department have worked well together to provide a pleasant and stimulating classroom environment; key facts and formulae are posted on the walls. Students respond well to the enthusiasm of their teachers and to the patient care and consideration they are given in and out of lessons. They feel well cared for and know that advice and guidance are readily available, in and out of lessons.

Leadership and Management

79. The management and leadership of the department are efficient; systems are securely in place. The head of department has other responsibilities in the sixth form; and there is good delegation and involvement of other members of the department. Schemes of work vary in detail and effectiveness and some do not have detailed references to the attainment levels required to reach different grades.. Statistics is a good example of cross-referencing to previous work and other texts. The school's aims and values are well reflected in the department. Assessment and record keeping are thorough and effective. Procedures for monitoring students' progress are good, effective use of assessments, predicted grades, and students' self assessments. The information gained is used to give parents information about students' present attainment levels in addition to predictions for grades and targets.

Changes since the last inspection

80. The improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Results remain broadly the same. The department has adapted its planning and re-organised the sequence in which topics are taught in order to try to improve the grades achieved. There is much more emphasis on individual students attaining their targets. There is an increased awareness of the specific needs of those students who are accepted on to mathematics courses with less background and underlying ability than others; teachers make every effort to raise their confidence and performance. There has been relatively little innovation in the use of ICT to support learning in the subject. Teachers are justly proud of the achievements of past students who have successfully completed degree courses at prestigious universities.

Biology

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

Strengths

- Recent results have been above the national average.
- Teaching is good overall, some is very good, with good planning and a variety of techniques designed to assist students' learning.
- Relationship between students, and between students and staff, are positive.
- Assessment of students' work gives them good feedback about their achievement.
- The subject is well resourced and the accommodation is excellent.
- The teaching staff receive excellent technical support from the laboratory technician.

Areas for improvement

- Lack of effective sharing of good practice results in some inconsistency in the quality of teaching.

81. Students in Year 12 study two modules entitled *Molecules, Cells and Systems* and *Making use of Biology*. In Year 13 two further modules are studied, entitled *Inheritance, Evolution and the Ecosystem* and *Physiology and the Environment*. Four lessons were sampled, in addition to the scrutiny of students' work and interviews with representative students.

Standards and Achievement

82. Between 1998 and 2000, results at A-level continued to improve, but were below the national average. The pass rates for A-level, and the new AS-level results in 2001, were both above the national average. At A-level in 2001, 36% of students achieved a grade A or B and 92% achieved grades A to E (which is above the national average). Since 1998, male students have achieved higher average point scores than females. Of the 25 students entered for the A-level examination for 2001, eight were male and 17 female. This imbalance limits the range of views that students bring to the subject. Of the 34 students entered for AS-level in 2001, 18% achieved grade A or B and 91% achieved grades A to E. Analysis of students' progress using the Advanced Level Information System (ALIS) reveals positive gains during the period from September 2001 to March 2002.
83. The standard of attainment of current students at this stage in their courses is high. In Year 12 there is evidence of some very good progress, for example in concept mapping of DNA and RNA and in building up knowledge of genetic technology. Year 13 students have a good working knowledge of nervous communication, including synaptic transmission, unidirectionality, summation and inhibition. Presentations by Year 13 students using *PowerPoint* demonstrated a high standard of knowledge of sugars, polysaccharides, nucleic acids, hydrolysis and condensation in biological models, and phospholipids.

Quality of Education

84. The overall quality of teaching is good and students learn well as a result. Of the four lessons seen, in one the teaching was satisfactory and the objectives set were achieved; in two the teaching was good, and in the other lesson it was very good. A Year 12 lesson measuring cardiac output and pulmonary ventilation revealed students' enthusiasm, and the teacher's expertise and humour, resulting in satisfactory progress throughout. A Year 13 lesson, which began with precise aims relating to the concepts involved, resulted in students researching how synapses worked. Information packs were provided, including excellent details from the internet and standard A-level textbooks, together with advanced material on nervous communication. Students were encouraged to work independently, for example when mapping out ideas related to synaptic transmission. Students worked quickly, and in most cases accurately, whilst being encouraged and advised by the teacher. Students were aware of their ALIS predicted grade, mock examination results and their target grade for the subject. In one Year 12 lesson, the teacher was able to gauge students' needs particularly well and to ensure that these were being met.
85. Students are hardworking and well motivated and concentrate carefully in class. A pleasant, co-operative relationship exists between students, and a feeling of mutual respect between students and staff is evident. Students' written work is in the form of notes, assignments and practical work that are carefully marked by teachers. This enables a constructive dialogue between teachers and students to take place about ways to improve individual performance further. Students often carry out individual or group research, which leads to presentations to the rest of the class using a variety of resources, including ICT. These presentations enhance students' key skills in communication very well.

Leadership and Management

86. The administration and management of the subject are good. Teachers have a good subject knowledge and show distinct enthusiasm. The organisation of schemes of work for Years 12 and 13 is good, with appropriate reference to text books, websites and CD-ROMs. Assessment systems, starting from analysis of GCSE results, through modules and mock examination results, are in place, and are fully implemented. The department receives excellent support from the laboratory technician. The subject is well resourced and the accommodation is excellent. Course evaluation takes place at the end of Year 12 and 13; this provides the department with a series of opinions from the students based on their individual experiences of the subject over the year. In the immediate past this evaluation has led to the purchase of new textbooks and of six lap top computers. Guidance for students in their application to higher education is well supported by staff. Of the 28 students in Year 13 who took a combination of science subjects in 2000-2001, one left for employment, two left for a 'gap year', one had deferred entrance to university for 2002, and 24 left for university.

Changes since the last inspection

87. The improvement since the last inspection has been good. A-level results have improved and the new AS-level course has been successfully introduced with good initial results. The department has made significant progress since 1996 in developing its teaching techniques. The encouragement of individual learning, which includes devising presentations and concept mapping, now feature strongly within lessons. Both these areas have led to the increased use of ICT, which usefully enhances the key skill of communication. The school's new social inclusion policy is suitably reflected within the work of the department, for example through the students' co-operative behaviour, in their pleasant day-to-day relationships with each other and their teachers. It is also highlighted by the positive experiences of the two students from ethnic minority backgrounds and the one student with special educational needs, who find the staff supportive and their peers friendly.

Chemistry

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

Strengths

- The most recent A/AS-level results are above the national average.
- Teaching is very good overall, with some that is excellent,
- Good lesson planning leads to a high level of student participation in a variety of activities that are imaginatively designed to assist learning.
- There are positive relationships between students, and between students and staff.
- The assessment of students' work identifies achievement well, allowing effective feedback.
- Resources for learning are very good and accommodation is excellent.
- The teaching staff receive excellent technical support from the laboratory technician.

Areas for improvement

- No significant areas.

88. The Year 12 course involves the study of three modules which are examined to AS-level. The Year 13 course involves the study of two further modules in more detail, leading to a full A-level award. Four lessons were sampled, in addition to the scrutiny of students' work and interviews with representative students.

Standards and Achievement

89. Between 1998 and 2000, results at A-level continued to improve, but remained around the national average. The pass rates and average point scores for both A-level and the new AS-level in 2001 were above the national average. At A-level 44% of students results achieved grades A or B, and 100% achieved grades A to E (which is above average). Since 1998, the department has achieved a 100% pass rate for grades A to E. During the years 1998 to 2000, male students gained higher average point scores than females. However, results for 2001 show that female students achieved higher grades than their male counterparts. Of the 16 students entered, 11 were female and five male. Of the 16 students entered for AS-level in 2001, 50% achieved grades A or B and 94% achieved grades A to E. An analysis of the progress made by individual students from the start of Year 12 to the end of Year 13 shows that most students made better than predicted progress, given their prior achievements.
90. The standard of attainment of current students seen in lessons and from a scrutiny of their work was very high. In Year 12 there was evidence of excellent progress. This was explicitly revealed in a series of student presentations about the extraction of metals. These were confidently expressed, contained excellent illustrations and demonstrated the use of ICT capabilities that equated to Key Skills Level 3. In addition to the extraction details a number of presentations dealt with the resulting social and moral problems. In a Year 13 practical lesson, students determined the formula of complex ions with accuracy.

Quality of Education

91. The overall quality of teaching is very good and students learn very well as a result. Of the four lessons seen, teaching was judged to be good in one, very good in another and excellent in the remaining two. The following gives an indication of the exceptionally high standard of teaching seen in the two lessons where the quality of teaching was excellent. A new module, Kinetics, was introduced to Year 12 students, using an excellently prepared practical demonstration on the decomposition of hydrogen peroxide. Results of this were projected in graphical form. During the experiment, Year 11 work on rates of reaction was quickly revised and students demonstrated their knowledge of decomposition by light, valency and oxidation state very well. Collision theory was introduced via computer simulation, with students being asked to complete physical factors affecting the rate of reaction. Completing the lesson that had maintained an excellent pace, students were then introduced to activation energy and energy diagrams. Remaining on task throughout 55 minutes, students demonstrated enthusiasm for, and knowledge of the subject, together with personal resilience.
92. Students are hardworking, well motivated, and concentrate well in class. A pleasant co-operative relationship exists between students, and between students and staff. Students appreciate the variety of learning experiences provided within the department

and respond positively to the challenge of the subject. Students' written work is in the form of notes, assignments and practical work that are constructively marked by teachers. Students carry out a wide variety of practical work which they particularly value. Research leading to individual or small group presentations involves the use of a variety of resources including ICT. This approach enhances students' key skills in communication well.

Leadership and Management

93. The administration and management of the subject are very good. The organisation of schemes of work on a daily basis for Year 12 and 13 is good. The subject action plan, relating to all sixth form science, highlights relevant development points for 2001–2002 well. Evaluation from students' feedback on their courses in Years 12 and 13 resulted in an improved text book provision for Year 13, the development of a greater use of ICT to encourage independent learning and the wider use of *PowerPoint* presentations for key topics. Effective marking and assessment policies are in place and appear to be fully implemented. Teachers and students receive excellent support from the laboratory technician. Learning resources are good and the accommodation is excellent. Guidance for students in their application for higher education is well supported by staff.

Changes since the last inspection

94. The improvement since the last inspection has been good. A-level results have improved and the new AS-level course has been successfully introduced with good initial results. Significant progress has been made since 1996 in developing a wider range of teaching techniques, such as better monitoring of students' work, greater use of ICT to encourage independent learning and the presentation of key topics using *PowerPoint*. As in biology, the school's new social inclusion policy is suitably reflected within the work of the department.

Physics

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

Strengths

- A and AS-level results are improving, and exceeded the national average in 2001.
- Students work hard and make good progress.
- Very good relationships in the classroom greatly assist learning.
- Teaching is good.
- ICT is used effectively to support learning.
- Accommodation for teaching advanced physics is excellent.

Areas for improvement

- The provision of more challenging work, especially for the most able students.
- Extra-curricular experience to widen students' knowledge of the scientific world.

95. Year 12 students study two modules and a topic and these are examined at AS-level.

Year 13 students go on to study two further modules that lead to a full A-level award. Four lessons were sampled, in addition to the scrutiny of students' work and interviews with representative students.

Standards and Achievement

96. A-level examination results in 2001 showed a marked improvement over those for previous years and for the first time were above the national average in the subject. Over the years the number of students entered has been relatively small making statistical analysis unreliable. However, in the years 1998 to 2000, the proportion of students obtaining higher grades A and B was about one in five but rose to one in two in 2001. Over those years about forty per cent gained grades A or B nationally. In 2001 no student failed to gain a grade, though since 1998 no female student has yet been awarded a higher grade. The improvement in standards looks set to continue since the AS-level results in 2001 showed a proportion of about one in three students gaining higher grades.
97. The overall standard of work seen in lessons was above average. Year 13 students were working well and were making good progress. When solving problems they chose and rearranged appropriate equations, substituted numerical values and calculated a result correctly. Given previously unseen material on a scientific topic, for instance an article about lightning, they analysed content, abstracted relevant information and synthesised a systematic response well. In practical work they were methodical and careful, acquiring new skills and working dextrously with sensitive apparatus such as a bifilar pendulum. They co-operated very well when working in groups and shared ideas freely and openly with their fellow students.
98. Students in Year 12 have adapted to the increased pressure of advanced study and are coping well. They have learned new ICT skills. Working in pairs, they researched and produced *PowerPoint* presentations on aspects of their studies in medical physics. This was demonstrated well in a lesson that was characterised by confident speaking linked to imaginatively produced slides that kept everyone interested and which provided useful factual information. At the end of the session, each group copied all the presentations for their own further studies, saving time and making good use of each other's knowledge.
99. For both year groups the standard of graph drawing could be improved. Graph lines are too thick, axes sometimes unlabelled or without units and anomalous points allowed to distort the graph line, despite compelling evidence that they should be ignored.

Quality of teaching

100. The overall quality of teaching is good. The best lessons are well planned, brisk and varied. Students make valuable contributions and show they can follow a reasoned argument to a conclusion. Good use is made of ICT to simulate difficult demonstrations, to log data in practical work or for student presentations. Teachers use questions well to keep students involved or as a lead into new or hypothetical situations, testing students' ability to apply knowledge and reason logically. In some activities, teachers control students' work very closely and this restricts scope for originality.

Similarly, some lessons give the most able students little challenge and constrain them to work at the same level and pace as the remainder of the group.

101. The overall quality of learning is good. Students are very well motivated and the purpose-built laboratory provides excellent accommodation for their studies. They work conscientiously on practical work, have relaxed but respectful relationships with their teachers and work unselfishly on tasks for the common good. They are happy to ask for help when they have problems and keen to make progress. Students have very little opportunity to widen their knowledge and experience of the world of science outside their formal studies. They would benefit from opportunities to visit places of scientific interest and to meet people from a range of scientific backgrounds.

Leadership and management

102. Within the complex organisation for the teaching of sciences in the sixth form the physics department is well managed. The scheme of work is efficiently organised. Work follows a logical progression and there are helpful references to textbooks and other material. Booklets of instructions guide students through the series of experiments in each module, though at times some give too little opportunity for students to think for themselves. Students' progress is well monitored and students' capabilities well documented. There is a determination in the department for students to achieve well. There is scope for sharing examples of good practice more systematically between the three AS/A-level science subjects.

Changes since the last inspection

103. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. Examination results have improved and students achieve a larger proportion of higher grades than they did previously. Teaching is good and relationships between students and teachers very good. In order to sustain the recent improvement in attainment, teachers need to provide work to extend the learning of all students (but especially the more able) and to give students more opportunities to experience the wider world of science at first hand.

BUSINESS

Business Education

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

Strengths

- Standards of attainment are above average, and achievement is good.
- Increasing numbers of students are choosing to study the subject.
- The range of learning opportunities inside and beyond the classroom enrich the curriculum.
- Students are very positive in their attitudes to learning.

Areas for improvement

- More formal arrangements for monitoring teaching and for subject development planning.
- Suitability and adequacy of teaching accommodation, including access to ICT.

104. Students in Year 12 work towards GCE AS level in business studies. Students in Year 13 are working towards the new GCE A2 level. During the inspection a double lesson and a single lesson in Year 12 and two double lessons and a single lesson in Year 13 were observed. These observations together with the scrutiny of pupils' work, discussion with the head of department and discussions with groups of Year 12 and 13 students, provide the basis for the evidence gathered.

Standards and Achievement

105. Standards of attainment have been high over recent years, never being below national averages and normally significantly above them. Over time male students have performed slightly better than females. Most students achieve well when measured against their prior performance. Retention rates are good. Numbers of students choosing business studies have grown significantly over recent years so that there are now two groups in both Year 12 and Year 13.
106. Standards of oral and written work in class reflect the levels of performance achieved in external examinations. Oral response is encouraged and most students are confident and articulate in their contributions. There is good use of appropriate terminology, and students make clear links between theory and the real business world. Year 13 students have clear perceptions of the standard at which they are working. Year 12 students demonstrated a mature approach to the analysis of management styles, could relate case study material to previously studied management theories and could distinguish between the business consequences of certain styles of management and the wider moral and ethical issues raised. Similarly Year 13 students showed considerable confidence in the technical analysis of cash flow and its significance in the decision making processes. Year 13 students could clearly draw the links between different units of work which they confidently related to their own personal business experiences.

Quality of Education

107. The overall quality of teaching is good. Teaching was satisfactory or better in all lessons seen, much of it good and some outstanding. There is a diversity of teaching styles used which complement each other and suit the allocation of units of work. Some of the teaching is student-centred and reflective, encouraging independent learning, whilst some is highly controlled, extremely focussed. The range of learning experiences is recognised and valued by students. Nevertheless, the quality of teaching could benefit even further from a more formal, structured sharing of good practice between teachers within the department.
108. All teachers have good subject knowledge and use a range of resources to good effect. In particular, the wide range of opportunities available to students beyond the classroom is exemplary. Participation in international visits to global organisations, competitions organised through the Bank of England, Young Enterprise schemes and the use of students as managers for younger students in the industry challenge, all not only motivate students but more importantly put their learning into a real context. Consequently students' responses to the subject are very positive, and their attitudes and contributions in class reflect this.

Leadership and Management

109. Teachers are largely autonomous in the management of their own teaching which they perform with professional commitment. Nevertheless, the co-ordination and management of business studies and its related subject areas was identified as an issue in the last inspection. Insufficient progress has been made.
110. The introduction of Curriculum 2000 in the main school has required the review of the curriculum in Years 12 and 13. Planning is still in its embryonic stages and needs to develop beyond the allocation of units of work to a more structured scheme of work. There is a need for structured and joint planning to identify departmental priorities and developmental requirements. More formal structures need to be in place for monitoring of teaching, the sharing of good practice and the extended use of assessment information to support student learning.
111. The resourcing of current teaching needs is adequate for text books and consumable materials but the department has been a victim of its own success and largely outgrown its accommodation. There is one relatively small base for teaching both Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form. Some groups are now too large for the teaching space available. Accommodation also limits the feasibility of using ICT during lesson time; this is an increasingly essential tool for the teaching of business studies.

Changes since the last inspection

112. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The previous inspection report commented on the successful introduction of business studies at A-level and the good initial results. This initial success has been built on further, with a consistent record of above average results since then. The numbers of students opting to study the subject has increased, necessitating two teaching sets. The new AS-level course has been successfully introduced and assessment methods have continued to be refined. ICT has been used more extensively and to good effect. However, insufficient progress has been made in restructuring the management of the subject area, which was a key issue for action in the last report.

Economics

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

Strengths

- The teacher's knowledge of the subject and the requirements of the examination are good.
- All students display a willingness to learn and are co-operative in lessons.

Areas for improvement

- The variety and range of teaching strategies and learning opportunities available to students.
- Management of the subject area, including the need to reduce its isolation from related areas of the curriculum.

113. Students in Year 12 study for the new GCE AS examination in economics and some continue in Year 13 to work towards GCE A2 level. During the inspection a double lesson in Year 12 and a double lesson in Year 13 were observed. These observations together with a scrutiny of students' work, discussion with the part-time teacher of economics and discussions with groups of Year 12 and Year 13 students provide the basis for the evidence gathered.

Standards and Achievement

114. Over recent years attainment has varied around the national average. The significance of direct comparisons with national figures is tempered by the small number of students involved. In 2000, the only year in which they were deemed significant, attainment was below the national average. There is no significant difference in attainment between male and female students. Students in the middle ability range make the best progress and generally reach their target grades. Fewer students attain the top grades than might be expected from those who entered Year 12 with high GCSE total point scores.
115. The requirements in Year 12 are very demanding for students new to this subject. They find it difficult to master all the key concepts and tools of analysis they need to address economic issues at both a macro and a micro level. Year 13 students demonstrate more confidence, armed with these skills in working at the required level. Much of the work in both years shows that students are very dependent on the teacher; but all students display a willingness to learn and are co-operative in lessons.

Quality of Education

116. A well qualified, part-time economics specialist teaches all lessons. Teaching is largely satisfactory. There is good mastery of subject knowledge and a considerable experience of teaching to this level. There is clear understanding of the standards required. Much emphasis is placed upon accurate use of terminology, precise application of analysis and the inherent links between aspects of economic theory. Lessons are teacher-dominated and need a more structured range of learning experiences to support students as independent learners. Work is marked regularly and there is careful preparation for examination requirements. Students' performance could improve further with more specific feedback that relates to the assessment criteria for the syllabus. There are shortcomings in the ways in which students' individual learning needs are diagnosed and met.

Leadership and Management

117. There are several significant weaknesses in the way that economics is managed, which means that the overall quality of leadership and management of the subject is only just satisfactory. The teaching of a minority subject by a part-time teacher poses particular management challenges. These were identified in the previous inspection and have not yet been adequately met. The subject is taught largely in isolation from both whole school management structures and systems, and from work in related subject areas. There is little opportunity for sharing good practice with other teachers, or of pooling resources. Similarly, there are few opportunities for teaching and learning strategies to be monitored and evaluated. Assessment information is not used sufficiently well as a

means of assisting students to understand how well they are progressing towards their learning targets. Curriculum planning arising from recent syllabus changes is at an embryonic stage. A managed integration of the subject area is a prerequisite to improvement.

Changes since the last inspection

118. Improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory. Although the strengths identified in the last inspection report have generally been maintained, the weaknesses related to the achievement of higher grades, the way that the subject is managed and the restricted range of teaching and learning styles employed have yet to be addressed.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Art and design

Overall the provision for art and design is **good**.

Strengths

- The standards attained at A-level in 2001 were in line with the national average.
- The standards attained at AS-level in 2001 were above the national average.
- The number of students opting for art and design is increasing and their progress is good.
- Teaching and support for students are good. They appreciate what is being done for them and respond well.
- The quality of subject leadership is good.

Areas for improvement

- The accommodation is poor and is not being managed well.
- The links between lesson objectives, syllabus requirements and students' personal learning targets are not yet strong enough.
- The use of ICT to enhance learning and raise standards is poor.

119. Year 12 students follow a course with the three elements of a controlled test, coursework and a personal study and are examined at AS-level. Year 13 students study these three elements to a greater depth and are examined at A-level. Four lessons were sampled in addition to the scrutiny of students' work and interviews with representative students.

Standards and Achievement

120. The overall standards in art and design are above average, especially at AS-level. Students study for a wide range of options in the examinations. The numbers studying have increased from year to year and standards have been consistently around the national averages for the past three years. Last year (2001) twelve students took the A-level examination and overall achieved grades around the national average; the two who failed to achieve grades were non-attenders. Twenty-four students took the AS-level, studying as one large group for the year. Their results were above the national average, achieving good grades considering their GCSE results. The art and design students were among the lowest qualified groups in the school to follow an AS-level course, four

were from other schools, and eight had not studied for a GCSE in the subject previously. This year all but two of these students are studying for A-level and they are progressing well. They have extended their work and raised their overall standard to one that is at present above the national average. The proportion of female students taking the subject has increased significantly, but there is no significant variation in achievement between male and female students.

121. The standards of work seen in lessons are high. Most of the students were completing their Special Studies for the AS or A-level examination at the time of the inspection. They are studying independently with close supervision and support from the teachers. They use their personal experiences and interests to produce written studies based on a wide range of artists and designers. They are of high quality, well presented and show personal involvement and research. Several are quite traditional, based on research from books and the internet. The most effective are the more adventurous and personal ones. For example, the research on religious icons, painted by a family member who is a monk, has produced an excellent review of the techniques and history of icons, as well as interviews and examples of his work that would not look out of place in a university context. Many are also developing their portfolios of coursework and starting the final piece for their examination. Although study from direct observation is encouraged, and there is some very good work on portraits, for example, much work is being developed from the study of photographs. This is of a high technical standard, but is copied fairly directly. With the use of the ICT facilities recently set up in the sixth form studio, these images could be manipulated on the computer, made more personal and stimulating, and then worked on. There is a good range of software, but staff and students are not confident in its use. The lack of a scanner, digitising tablet or camera in the department is limiting this development. Students' research in sketchbooks is good, but many are presentation sketchbooks for the examination, rather than workbooks showing evidence of how they are thinking and developing ideas. The better ones are extensive and detailed, show a clear commitment to the study of the subject.
122. The Year 12 and 13 students talk with confidence about what they are working on and the way their work has developed. They all listen to the comments of the teachers attentively and contribute well to the individual reviews and criticisms of work. Their knowledge and understanding of the work of other artists and designers are sometimes limited, as several have done little art and design work in Years 7 to 11. Most have taken advantage of the trips to Amsterdam, Paris and London that are arranged for them. They are expected to visit local museums in their own time, which many do, and they use these experiences well to develop their own ideas. They use a variety of techniques and approaches, and the more successful outcomes are often the more experimental ones. An example is the series of works a Year 13 student has produced based on the work of Andy Goldsworthy. He has sustained a sequence of photographs of environmental works over more than a year, and produced experimental studies using dried clay and berries to continue his ideas in the studio. The large scale work done on canvas is powerful and of a high standard, and some expressive clay modelling is developing well. However, the difficult environment presented by the art studio, with a lack of personal space and storage, is limiting the scale and range of many students' work. Students who join the course from different schools progress well and are achieving good results in their work.

Quality of Education

123. The overall quality of teaching is good. Planning and preparation are good. Each teacher takes all three groups through to AS and A-level, which ensures that students have access to a range of specialist expertise. Each of the three teachers has their own styles and strengths, and students benefit from their different approaches. The teaching methods are good, with close support for the students as they put their Special Studies and portfolios together. This is particularly evident during the regular reviews of the work in progress and the individual discussions that teachers are having with each student. The preparation for the final examination piece is very thorough, expectations are high and students given clear targets and time limits. The use of sketchbooks is encouraged and examples of good practice from previous students are shared with the groups. Activities are planned well and address the needs of the students, although few multi-cultural projects are undertaken and there are very few resources which would inform students about the diversity and range of stimuli that exist outside the western European cultural heritage.
124. Students are responding positively to the course and its teaching. Numbers have increased, and students come in to the art studio to work, and continue with projects in their own time. The teachers know the strengths and weaknesses of their students well and are able to challenge and support them effectively. Assessment is largely informal. Students know how well they are doing from continuous discussion, but there is not enough detailed analysis of how well students are progressing, either from previous assessments or during their course, to review the effectiveness of the teaching and to plan for improvements.

Leadership and Management

125. The quality of leadership is good. A newly appointed teacher has been supported well and students are very appreciative of the way the department is run. The departmental development plan needs to set priorities to move the department forward, and several issues need to be considered. These include the use of the studio, and the development of staff expertise, especially in ICT and assessment. The studio is a poor space for working in. It is untidy, disorganised and needs a review of potential risks to see if areas such as the steps to the main school need to be cleared. The sixth form area is separate from the main art and design department, and apart from at exam moderation time, there are few opportunities for the younger pupils to see the sixth form work which might extend their own ambitions and improve their standards. The use of displays and exhibitions of students' work around the school to raise the awareness of the subject in the school is being developed.

Changes since the last inspection

126. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Although the standard of attainment at A-level as measured by the average point score has not risen since the time of the last inspection, it is clear that many students make good progress in the subject, some from a relatively low starting level in Year 12. Students' personal development is very good in the subject, particularly in terms of the generation of effective learning skills. There have been considerable improvements in the ways in

which individual learning needs have been diagnosed and met, and also in the use of ICT, although this remains a weakness. At present, students work in a very cramped studio where work surfaces are small and storage space is very limited. Building plans have been approved by governors for a properly equipped studio for the near future.

Drama

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

Strengths

- A-level results in 2001 were above the national average, with a high proportion of A and B grades.
- High levels of students' commitment to the subject lead to very good progress being made.
- Very good teaching across the ability range leads to high standards of attainment.
- Extracurricular activities enhance and broaden students knowledge of theatre and the performing arts
- There is very good leadership and management of the department

Areas for improvement

- The accommodation for the large drama classes and the need for additional rehearsal space

127. Students in Years 12 and 13 work towards a theatre studies A-level. In the academic year 2000-2001 Year 12 students studied the new AS-level syllabus for the first time. During the inspection, two lessons were observed. These observations together with the scrutiny of students' work, discussion with the head of theatre studies and talks with individual students and discussions with groups of Year 12 and 13 students, provide the basis for the evidence gathered.

Standards and Achievement

128. Results in theatre studies at A-level in 2001 were above the national average, with a high proportion of A and B grades (42%). A very high proportion of students (97%) achieved a grade between A and E passes. At AS-level the results were also above the national average with 50% achieving A or B passes and 100% achieving A-D grades. Over the last three years the percentage of students gaining grades A to C in A-level theatre studies has been above national average. The current standard of work seen in Year 13 lessons and the students' AS-level performance last year indicate that the A-level results in 2002 will be high.

129. Evidence from students' folders of work in Years 12 and 13 shows that students are developing skills of responding critically to drama texts and to each other's work; observation in lessons underlined the emphasis which is placed on developing these skills. One student with special educational needs (dyslexia) showed good development throughout Year 12, heeding advice offered in action plans which followed early written assignments such as 'listen to criticism positively' and 'use additional detail in describing your evaluation of a text'. There were also outstanding

collections of work from able students who had achieved A grade standard in coursework assignments. Desktop publishing was used very effectively to enhance the presentation of this work and research was partly based on exploration via the internet (for example into epic theatre as a background to work on Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*). The great majority of students demonstrate both knowledge and understanding of the texts they write about and reveal good insight and awareness into how drama and theatre work in practice. Many students display understanding of the social and cultural context of their plays and use an appropriate theatre vocabulary.

Quality of education

130. Teaching is very good overall. Lessons are characterised by detailed planning with clear objectives explained to the students at the beginning of the lesson and reviewed in the plenary. Teachers' subject knowledge and understanding of how to get the best out of students are very good. The questioning is well focussed on achieving the learning objectives for the lesson and contributes to the excellent pace. Throughout lessons students are constantly encouraged to develop their own skills of self-evaluation and reflection and this too contributes to the progress they make. Relationships with students are extremely positive and based on a clear understanding that learning is the central focus of the lesson.
131. Students expressed very positive opinions about drama and the quality of teaching they enjoyed; they felt they were fortunate to have such supportive and effective teaching. A small number of students have not studied drama at GCSE; and these are well catered for and do well in the A-level examinations. Students' written work is marked to a very high standard with detailed advice offered on how to improve and with the strengths of students' work clearly identified.
132. There is a pressure on space for rehearsals and teaching, as the one drama room cannot cope with the large classes and requirement for practice space. The hall is unsuitable: it has poor acoustics and is noisy.

Leadership and Management

133. Leadership and management are both very good. The course is extremely well organised by an experienced manager who keeps professionally recharged through her own professional development. The department's development plan includes appropriate sixth form issues; and the move to modular A-levels has been successfully managed. Students are monitored effectively. Examination results are carefully analysed and evaluative reports are periodically submitted to the school's senior management team. These identify successful practice and areas for further improvement. The extra-curricular provision is highly valued by the students and includes theatre trips around the East Midlands and further afield. The drama curriculum is extended through involvement in debating and public speaking competitions.

Changes since the last inspection

134. Improvement since the time of the last inspection has been good. The subject was not

reported on in the 1996 report, but since then standards of attainment have risen to above average. There are currently very considerable strengths in the quality of teaching, leadership and management in the subject.

HUMANITIES

Geography

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

Strengths

- The standard of attainment at both AS and A-level is above average.
- Students use a wide range of statistical and graphical techniques, and develop their numeracy skills especially well through the subject.
- Students achieve well; their independent investigations are of a good standard.
- Students are committed and work productively.
- Field studies are used effectively to develop strong investigation and research skills.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning is good.

Areas for improvement

- ICT is not used sufficiently to enhance learning.
- There is an over-emphasis on note taking in some lessons.
- Marking and target setting are insufficiently precise.

135. Year 12 students study a three module course that is examined at AS-level. Year 13 students study two further modules and undertake an investigation, and are examined at A-level. Four lessons were sampled, in addition to the scrutiny of students' work and interviews with representative students.

Standards and Achievement

136. There are currently over forty students following courses at AS and A-level. Results in the GCE A-level examination are consistently above the national average. In the last three years students' point scores have been above average and all obtained at least a pass grade, although in the last two years the percentage attaining the higher grades, A and B, has been broadly average. Results in the AS-level examination in 2001 were above average for the highest grades with all but one student gaining at least a pass grade. Male and female students generally do equally well. These standards have been maintained since the time of the last inspection.

137. The observation of students in lessons and an analysis of their work confirm that the standards achieved on the A-level course are above average. Most students achieve well in relation to predictions based on their GCSE grades, including a few with modest prior attainment. Field studies are used effectively to introduce a good range of techniques to collect and present data, which contributes to some high quality individual investigations in Year 13. In lessons students draw upon a range of information to make and justify decisions about environmental issues. Higher attaining students demonstrate good levels of understanding of the impact of their decisions. For

example, students evaluated thoughtfully a range of options to protect the habitats of migrating birds in parts of Nigeria.

138. There is clear progression in the standards achieved from the first to the second year of the A-level course in the quality of both written and oral work. Students on the AS course demonstrate good levels of understanding of physical processes, for example, they make effective use of weather maps to identify patterns of weather associated with the passage of depressions. Lower attaining students have a less secure grasp of geographical ideas and need considerable assistance to apply their prior learning, for example, to enable them to plot the position of fronts on to a weather map.

Quality of education

139. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good. Lessons are well planned and have a clear structure. Teachers' good subject knowledge and experience contribute to effective guidance for examination coursework. Relationships are very good; teachers are approachable and students feel able to ask for help, which contributes well to their learning. Students respond well to opportunities for working in groups. Discussion of tasks and interpretation of information contributed well to students' learning in lessons. A weakness in some lessons is that teachers provide too much information in the form of dictated notes or duplicated sheets, so that students are less actively involved in their learning, and opportunities for analysis and interpretation are limited. Work is marked fairly regularly and some written comments by the teacher provide useful guidance about how to improve the work. Other comments offer praise but are less useful as a guide to how to keep improving.
140. Students learn well. They develop effective study skills and work productively both in lessons and in private study time. They use resources well to research topics, including some use of the internet. They make good use of hypotheses to focus their investigations. Year 13 students discuss confidently the effectiveness of the methods used and the geographical ideas that underpin their research. The subject makes an effective contribution to the delivery of key skills, especially numeracy skills. Students use a good range of statistical and graphical techniques to compare data as part of their coursework. However, opportunities to promote skills in ICT are underdeveloped. Students' positive attitudes to work, their well sustained efforts in lessons and their well developed skills as independent learners contribute greatly to their good levels of attainment.

Leadership and Management

141. The head of the geography department is newly in post. Documentation is clear and schemes of work provide useful guidance for teachers. The work of the subject team fully reflects the school's aims and values. Professional development opportunities have been used well to extend the effectiveness of the teachers in enabling students to do well in newly introduced courses. There is a shared commitment to the further improvement of the work of the team. The quality of subject development planning is good, and geography teachers share resources and ideas well.

Changes since the last inspection

142. Improvement since the time of the last inspection has been satisfactory. The high standard of attainment has been maintained, and this is a very important strength. Students continue to make good progress, think critically and work well both within lessons and when studying independently. The geography team has successfully introduced the new AS-level course and the subject now makes an effective contribution to the teaching of key skills. However, the inadequate use of ICT mentioned in the previous report has not yet been tackled, although there are plans to improve provision. Schemes of work do not yet identify how ICT will contribute more fully to students' learning of geography. Assessment is not yet contributing sufficiently to the process of raising attainment for all students. Although students are aware of their predicted grades in the examinations, targets for improvement are not yet sharply enough focussed on specific learning goals that are regularly monitored.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- The consistently high standard of attainment.
- The quality of teaching, which is almost always good, very good or excellent.
- The way students demonstrate good knowledge and understanding, particularly in their written work.
- The good relationships between teachers and students, which greatly encourage positive attitudes to the subject.
- The good support and guidance that students receive.
- The good leadership of the subject.

Areas for improvement

- The need to further develop teachers' subject knowledge as the new course becomes better established.
- Shared schemes of work that include a range of teaching and learning ideas, that will support the existing long and short-term planning.
- A consistent programme of monitoring of classroom practice.

143. Year 12 students study three modules relating to Russian and British history and are examined to AS-level standard. Year 13 students take a further three modules and receive a full A-level award. Four lessons were sampled, in addition to the scrutiny of students' work and interviews with representative students.

Standards and Achievement

144. In 2001 a third of students achieved an A-level grade A or B with 88% gaining a grade between A and E. These results were in line with the national average and significantly better than the previous year's results. The department's average points score of 6.12 points was higher than the national average point score of 5.43 points, demonstrating that students' grades were built on the firm foundations laid in Years 7 to 11. There

was no significant difference between the numbers of males and females gaining the higher grades although, overall, males slightly outperformed females. The standard of work in lessons and in students' folders indicates that results should continue to rise and that the department's ambitious targets, of a 100% pass rate with around 60% of students gaining the higher grades, are within its grasp.

145. In both AS and A2-level lessons, the majority of students are articulate speakers who are able to discuss issues in depth, for example whether *Glasnost* was the most important reason for the collapse of the Soviet Union and how the Labour government's Acts of 1945 – 51 benefited different social groups. Students receive a secure chronological grounding, as in a lesson on Home Rule where students were asked to make a timeline of events during the late 19th century. Most students have a clear understanding of how political, economic, social, cultural and religious factors affect events in history. They can explain the differences between each factor; and many recognise that they are inextricably linked. The nature of the course lends itself well to the study of individuals and their impact on society. Students confidently use a range of primary and secondary sources to make informed historical judgements about historical figures such as Brezhnev and Gorbachev.
146. Evidence from students' written work shows that the analysis, evaluation and interpretation of different sources of evidence are major strengths. There is good evidence that the majority will achieve the higher grades of A and B at both AS and A2-level. Even students who were initially predicted to obtain a lower grade now produce full written answers, demonstrating good skills that have developed as a result of good teaching at earlier key stages. Students' written work also provides good evidence of a wide range of reading. Quotes within essays are attributed securely and demonstrate that students are exposed to a wide range of historiographical material. In some AS-level lessons, students predicted to achieve a D or E grade are struggling with the range and complexity of new terminology, concepts and language, for example the need to understand the subtle differences between *catholic* as an adjective and *Roman Catholic* as a faith. These students would benefit from further work in this area.

The quality of education

147. Students make good progress in history. This is due to the largely good quality of teaching, which is sometimes very good or excellent. The best teaching occurs when lessons are planned to include a range of stimulating tasks that are varied and well judged. Such tasks and activities include mind-mapping; card-sorting exercises to prioritise important factors, for example the impact of War Communism on the consolidation of Bolshevik power; group work; discussion; argument; spider diagrams; and shared prioritisation of the 'big issues'. Where teaching is at its best, questions are carefully judged to 'tease out' students' own background knowledge and then encourage them to speculate about the events and people that they are studying. Good teaching also occurs when students are encouraged to 'sift out' important information for themselves and to apply their knowledge accordingly, as in an A2 lesson where students were deciding how the Labour government's 1945 to 1951 Welfare Acts would impact on different social groups.

148. Further characteristics of good teaching within the department include:
- lively explanations that are delivered with humour; timed tasks that are set throughout each lesson, (a characteristic of all lessons observed);
 - good individual support when students are struggling with complex reading material;
 - the good use of carefully selected sources to support the range of abilities within the group.
149. Where teaching is less secure, teachers' superficial subject knowledge of some particular topics leads occasionally to superficial explanations that do not stretch the students sufficiently.
150. History is a popular subject at the school and students feel that it offers a fascination that cannot be matched by other subjects. They recognise the intellectual challenges it offers in terms of source analysis, evaluation and interpretation and the scope to link past events with current situations, as in the former Soviet Union's conflict with Afghanistan. Attitudes are almost always very good or excellent. Students value the good relationships, and the support that is given to them both individually and as a cohort, in particular the history handbook that provides ample guidance on study skills, course expectations, book lists, internet sites, and sample mark schemes. Work is organised in ring binders. Whilst students receive detailed and constructive comments on their essays, short answers and tests, they do not receive advice on how to organise the day-to-day notes, lists, timelines, diagrams, quick answers, discussion points etc. that appear in their ring binders. More monitoring of this and guidance from staff would make revision easier.

Leadership and Management

151. The position of head of sixth form history is a recent appointment in a very successful department. Within a short time, the post holder has strengthened yet further this aspect of the teaching and learning of history at the school and shows good leadership. There is a sound development plan, the handbook has been completely overhauled, new resources purchased for the introduction of AS and A2-level courses, and useful strategies to support individual learning have been put in place. The department has a straightforward and effective way to record past results and future predictions. It uses ALIS scores, GCSE prior attainment and regular tests and essays to challenge low expectations; and monitors students' progress on a regular basis. The twice yearly reports include student's own self-evaluations; and targeted areas for improvement are agreed between students and staff. The department has maintained the high standards identified in the last inspection and has increased the profile of the subject so that history has become one of the most popular subject at AS and A2-level.

Changes since the last inspection

152. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. High standards of attainment have been maintained since the time of the last inspection, and the department is on track to achieve still higher standards. Some of the teaching, especially in the European history course, is of a very high quality, and students are responding accordingly. Whilst students are encouraged to use ICT for their own research it is not as yet

embedded into departmental practice and is an area for development. At present, there are aspects of the ways in which the British and European history courses are managed that lack consistency. There is scope for more pooling of expertise in the writing of schemes of work, sharing teaching strategies and enriching each others' subject knowledge within this experienced and knowledgeable team.

Psychology

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

Strengths

- Students' good progress. They are now working to a standard that is above the national average both in Year 12 and Year 13.
- The good quality of the teaching, which accelerates students at the start of the course and sustains them well thereafter.
- The high quality of analysis and interpretation of research data.
- The independence of students in the carrying out of investigations.
- Good relationships between staff and students.
- Very good leadership and management of the subject.

Areas for improvement

- More effective use of the internet in the classroom to extend and enrich learning.
- The more accurate use of psychology-specific technical vocabulary.

153. Year 12 students study three modules and are examined to AS-level standard. Year 13 students take a further three modules, one of which involves coursework, and receive a full A-level award. Five lessons were sampled, in addition to the scrutiny of students' work and interviews with representative students.

Standards and Achievement

154. Between 1998 and 2001 the average point score achieved by students taking A-level psychology has fluctuated from being above the national average in 1998 and 1999 to in line with it in 2000 and 2001. Most students have passed in the last four years and many obtained one of the top grades. Male and female students have performed equally well over the whole grade range. Females have out-performed males in gaining A and B grades.

155. Standards of work seen in psychology during the inspection were above average in both Years 12 and 13. These standards are achieved because the teaching is good. The courses, supported by good schemes of work, provide a range of learning experiences which allows students to consolidate their previous learning and progress further in psychology. As a result students' achievements overall, in relation to their standards when they began in Year 12, are good. Retention rates from Year 12 to Year 13 are good.

156. Standards of current work in Year 12 are above average. Students are aware that psychology is the scientific study of human and animal behaviour and experience.

Students have good knowledge of the key approaches and the development of psychology in an historical context through key figures such as Lamb, Schaffer, Popper, Fishbein and Rogers. Students enjoy their biological studies covering evolution, physiological psychology and inheritance and behaviour. A Year 12 group evaluated the 'Strange Situation' recalling its eight stages from a previous lesson. With support, students are able to gain a critical understanding of quantitative and qualitative methods employed in psychological research. The higher attaining students are able to represent and describe data with ease. Some students are not using technical vocabulary frequently enough, or with sufficient accuracy.

157. Standards in Year 13 are above average. Female students, particularly, grasp the impact of culture and gender on psychological phenomena. They access, via the internet, the increasing body of research on these topics. Both male and female students are aware of the major advances that have been made in the use of PET, MRI and CAT technologies to study the neurological processes in learning, memory, sensation and perception as well as in psychopathology. A very good Year 13 class examined the Verbal Deprivation Theory developed by Bernstein. Students were able to analyse the theory in depth. All students were able to read actively and spot the main ideas and relevance of the theory.

The quality of education

158. The quality of teaching is good. The teacher presents a comprehensive and scholarly overview of psychology in an engaging manner. The higher attaining students are provided with extension work to retain their interest. Students are led to question whether psychology is social development, personality or intelligence. Students are required to research whether the main determinants of a phenomenon are biological or due to learning. The teacher explained clearly that the answer to this question is typically both; and she helped students to understand the complex inter-play of nature and nurture in producing most psychological phenomena. Students consequently understand the dynamics between nature and nurture in psychology. The teacher's frequent cross-referencing to current research illuminates topics for students. The introduction of diagrams illustrates psychology concepts well. These graphs and charts catch the imagination of students, and introduce them to and develop their number skills. The teacher provides a clear statement of learning outcomes at the start of each lesson; and at the end of a lesson there is either a summary or a quick revision exercise or exercises, progressively tiered, from simple to challenging. The quality of students' writing, and the amount of preparation undertaken for essays or reports, are variable.

Leadership and Management

159. Leadership and management are both very good. The teacher shares the monitoring of standards with students. The issues that are continually addressed are the late submission of work by students, their frequent failure to complete that work to the highest standard possible and the continuity of attendance. A variety of strategies are used to monitor the quality of students' learning in the classrooms. These include informed classroom observation, sampling student work and the close moderation of assignments. The subject leader is aware of the developments taking place in psychology. Planning is good and effective. High expectations are communicated to

all students. There is a cycle of meetings to review students' progress and the meeting of targets. These meetings reach decisions on any changes that are required on content or the method of delivery. These arrangements are effective in promoting higher standards.

Changes since the last inspection

160. There has been good progress since the last inspection. The strengths identified then have been built on further. Standards of attainment are rising. Lessons are taught in a simple, straightforward style and, where appropriate, theory and knowledge are supported with well produced visual material. A greater use of the internet in classrooms would bring current research immediately into the lesson where it should be. Exercises are now tiered according to the degree of difficulty and integrated case studies are used as extension material. Psychology is well presented and academic material is used to help students to learn. Comprehensive lessons explain complex ideas using clear and understandable language. However, students often show a measure of uncertainty in their use of technical language relevant to psychology.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English

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

Strengths

- The improving results as teachers become familiar with the new modular A-level syllabus.
- The good teaching, particularly teachers' knowledge and experience.
- The very good relationships with students.

Areas for improvement

- Monitoring of sixth form provision to disseminate good practice, including that in marking students' work, across the department.
- Introducing a wider range of teaching approaches in sixth form lessons.

161. Students in Years 12 and 13 work towards GCE A-level in English language and literature. During the academic year 2000-2001 Year 12 students studied the new AS-levels. During the inspection, four literature and two language lessons were observed. These observations together with the scrutiny of students' work, discussion with the head of English and talks with individual students and discussions with groups of Year 12 and 13 students, provide the basis for the evidence gathered.

Standards and Achievement

162. Results in English literature at A-level in 2001 were at the national average with a good proportion of A and B grades; at AS-level the literature results were outstanding with over 70% of students gaining A or B grades. The English language results were well below national averages in the A-level examination in 2001 and no student achieved A

or B grades. These unusually poor results were not unexpected; and grade predictions for this group were reflected in the actual results. The overall AS-level English language results were at the national average although there was still a low proportion of A and B grades. Over the last three years, the percentage of students gaining grades between A and C in literature has been in line with national averages; in language there has been a marked decrease in the percentage of students gaining A to C grades although indications from the AS-level results and scrutiny of current Year 13 work suggest this trend will be reversed in 2002. Overall, students make the anticipated progress towards their expected grades.

163. Evidence from the portfolios of students in Years 12 and 13 indicate that current standards are high. Students are able to analyse texts and are comfortable with the technical vocabulary of both language and literature. Able students were able to write clearly about the power of language: one student, for example, used knowledge of linguistics to deconstruct the power struggle in an interview between Jeremy Paxman and Michael Howard with close reference to social relationships, grammatical structure and lexis. This was perceptive and imaginative work. Another student scrutinised the writing of a young dyslexic writer and identified and analysed common mistakes made across three years. By the end of Year 13, the majority of students are using appropriate terminology, both in their writing and during discussions in class.

Quality of education

164. The overall quality of teaching is good. All lessons are characterised by a very supportive ethos; and relationships between students and teachers are very good. Lessons are well prepared although not all teachers explain clearly to students what the central focus for learning is to be. Teachers' knowledge is very good and teachers work hard to make their lessons as interesting as possible, using a wide range of media and resources. There was some very successful teacher-questioning in sessions observed, where teachers probed and developed students' understanding of key concepts and themes. The students were keen to participate and were interested and well motivated. The most successful lessons were ones where students' participation was encouraged and planned for. Marking of students' work was usually very good, but there were a small number of cases of very general comments which did not explain how students could improve the work. Students expressed the opinions that they enjoyed English lessons and felt they made good progress and were well taught.

Leadership and Management

165. Overall, the management of sixth form English is satisfactory. The head of English is very new in post and has overall responsibility for Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 as well as the sixth form. Currently there is a lack of monitoring of the impact of the sixth form provision in English, and quality assurance procedures are not in place. The department does not have a secure knowledge of what the wide range of students who opt for English are being taught (based on the scheme of work) or how well the planned lessons are being taught to cater for the mixed ability classes. There is good practice to be disseminated across the department, but currently there are no structures to allow such dissemination to occur other than on an *ad hoc* basis. Closer liaison with the theatre studies department would facilitate the exchange of good practice and allow

teachers to exchange active approaches to texts. A draft departmental development plan has been produced and there are plans to review the oversight of sixth form English.

Changes since the last inspection

166. There has been satisfactory progress since the last inspection. Since 1996 the standard of attainment in A-level English language has fluctuated from being well above average in 1999 to well below the national average in 2001. The standard of attainment in English literature has also varied greatly, from being well above average in 1998 and 2000, to being in line with the national average in 2001 and below it in 1999. At present, judged by the work seen in lessons, the standard of attainment is rising. The strengths in teaching that were reported on in the last inspection have been maintained. There has been relatively little work undertaken to match the subject provision to the specific learning needs of students of all ability levels and of both genders, so that they all make the best possible progress towards ambitious personal attainment targets.

Modern foreign languages

French

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

Strengths:

- Very good teaching, which is carefully and collaboratively planned by well qualified and experienced subject specialists.
- Effective monitoring and assessment of students' progress, associated with simple and clearly understood target setting.
- Effective leadership and management, which provides a strong supportive framework within which the students progress well.
- Good accommodation, resources and use of ICT.

Areas for improvement:

- Some strengthening is needed of strategies to develop students' advanced listening skills earlier during the two-year course.
- In lessons, some further challenge, pace and intensity with oral work would help to develop students' greater confidence, recall and fluency.

167. The focus was on French, but German was also sampled. AS and A2-level courses are offered in both languages, and the numbers choosing to take them have increased. In French this year there is a group of 19 students in the AS-level class, which is well above the norm for similar schools. Two full lessons of French were observed. These observations, together with scrutiny of data, a review of selections of students' work, discussion with a number of students, with the course leader for French and with one of the other two specialist French teachers provide the basis for the evidence used to compile this report. One German A-level lesson was also observed.

Standards and Achievement

168. The standard of attainment in A-level French over the last four years has, on average, been in line with the national average. The highest results in terms of average point scores were gained in 1998. A-level results have shown some improvements during the last three years, particularly in the proportion of students gaining higher grades. Statistically this measure is still below the national average for the percentage of A and B grades obtained, but much less markedly than previously. In 2001, the 13 AS-level students all passed well, with five attaining A or B grades, six candidates passed with a C or D grade. Although this was below the national average, the individual results represented sound progress in relation to students' prior attainment and expectation. Standards in German are high, with results above average at A-level and more recently at AS-level too.
169. The majority of students progress well over the two years of the course. Year 12 students start with some inherited gaps in their understanding and part-mastered skills from their GCSE course, but make good progress during the first two terms of the course. For example, weaknesses in a grasp of key points of grammar, that are very evident in much of the early work in Year 12, are mostly ironed out by the end of that year. Students' written work becomes more complex and accurate as the course progresses, with students by the end of Year 12 producing good pieces with competent use of idiom and a reasonable range of style, register and vocabulary. The standard being achieved by the current Year 13 group suggests that A-level results will match the national average this year. The grades at AS-level in 2001 support this prognosis. Value-added measures (principally based upon ALIS assessments and predictions) confirm that students generally match expectations in relation to their prior attainment. There are variations, with some students exceeding expectation by a margin and some falling short, but overall it is a picture which reflects good progress and indicates an improving trend. Male students, although in a minority in both years, perform at least as well as female students.
170. Some students show weaknesses in dealing with extended listening texts, but their reading skills are fairly good. Some also display relative weaknesses in their pronunciation, but have a growing grasp of grammar and range of expression. Writing skills are at an appropriate level. By half way through Year 13, most have developed a good grasp of essential structure and idiom, showing evidence of progress since Year 12. Reading skills remain relatively stronger than listening. In speaking, there is a range of quality in the group. The most able speak with reasonable fluency and range, but some others have less confidence and mastery and tend to restrict what they say to a relatively safe and well-rehearsed utterance. Accents are satisfactory.
171. Cultural knowledge and understanding has progressed well from Year 12 levels. Students show a competent level of knowledge about key aspects of modern French society, as a result of the resources and materials available to them, and of the expectation by teachers that they research to an extent independently on a range of topics.

Quality of education

172. Teaching is very good. Each group is taught jointly by two qualified specialists, and a strength is that the work is carefully planned and monitored by each pair of teachers. This ensures coherence and continuity, which together have a positive impact on the attitudes, progress and learning of the students. Teachers have realistic, but suitably high, expectations of the students, and transmit their expectations clearly to the groups. This helps the students not only to understand what is required of them, but also to feel confident to work at the subject, in the knowledge that their teachers will support and guide them well.
173. A strength within the French teaching is that students' progress is regularly monitored and assessed, with students receiving helpful feedback and advice. The criteria used for assessment are clearly understood by both the teacher and learner, which allows for suitable targets to be set and a meaningful dialogue to occur.
174. The quality of teachers' subject knowledge is high. The teachers' very good linguistic fluency acts as a stimulating and challenging model for the students in class. A strong grasp of how to teach the foreign language effectively to younger people ensures that students can be confident of making good progress if they do what they are asked. And this they indeed do. In classes, they concentrate hard and persist with tasks, and are prepared to participate and contribute, knowing that their teacher will help, encourage and support when needed, as well as praise and congratulate judiciously.
175. The resources and materials chosen, and often created specifically, by the teachers have a positive impact on the learning. Recent and highly topical reading items, for example taken from foreign language internet sites, lend added focus and relevance to the exploitation of a particular grammar point or vocabulary area. Live and recorded foreign language television broadcasts are often used to good effect. They are exploited and built upon with a range of associated tasks and activities, capably led by teachers who are skilful in their questioning and good at varying the nature of interaction with individual students according to their different needs. Relationships in classrooms are positive, students collaborate well with each other and teachers and students often share moments of good humour together. These features assist the making of good progress. As the course progresses over the two years, so does the students' capacity to take initiative and undertake appropriate independent research and learning: this is the result of a deliberate and structured subject policy, which has good effect.
176. Whilst high quality work is the order of the day in French classrooms, there are a few occasions when a slight lack of challenge and pace occurs. This tends to happen mostly during oral work when opportunities are allowed to slip past which could bolster and enhance the key skill of fluent speaking in the language.

Leadership and management

177. The subject is very well led, with an experienced and very capable team of three specialist teachers planning and delivering the AS and A-level courses. Schemes of work have been developed effectively and appropriately to ensure a successful transition to the new specifications and requirements brought about by the Curriculum

2000 changes. Course planning is very good. It is focussed and detailed, resulting from effective consultation and collaboration. Subject performance is effectively monitored, and the evidence gathered through the good procedures for assessment of students' progress. The detailed analysis of performance data is used to influence not only short-term decisions about teaching but also longer term strategic planning. There is a positive, shared ethos amongst the teaching team, based on high expectation and good relationships. The principal effects of the very good collaborative leadership are to give a clear and consistent sense of direction and level of expectation for students and staff; to promote and support effective teaching; and to give strong encouragement and support for students' learning and progress.

178. Accommodation for the subject is good, although the main specialist room is a little short on storage and staff working area. There is good access to a suitable range and variety of relevant materials and resources. ICT is used well, particularly the internet and live satellite television in the foreign language. Some further enhancement to listening facilities is planned.

Changes since the last inspection

179. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection. There is now a rising trend in results and increasing numbers of students are opting to study French and German. Strengths in the teaching reported upon in 1996 have been developed further. ICT is now being used much more fully to enrich and enhance learning. Modern foreign languages in the sixth form are very well led and managed. There is a very strong sense of teamwork, which provides a good capacity to improve further.