

INSPECTION REPORT

WINCHMORE SECONDARY SCHOOL

Winchmore Hill, London

LEA area: Enfield

Unique reference number: 102045

Headteacher: Lesley Mansbridge

Reporting inspector: Terry Parish
15465

Dates of inspection: 10th – 13th September 2001

Inspection number: 194334

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: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 - 19

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Laburnum Grove
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London

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr. Peter Cox

Date of previous inspection: 4th September 1996

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is much bigger than average with 1408 boys and girls on roll. It is fully comprehensive with a full range of ability though, overall, attainment on entry is a little below average. Pupils come from a wide cultural mix; the largest group is of Turkish origin and there are significant numbers of pupils of Greek Cypriot, Caribbean and African heritage. There is a large sixth form of around 200 students. Some students from other schools attend Winchmore part time as part of the Enfield collegiate system. Though the proportion of pupils having special educational needs is above average, the number with statements is below. A very high proportion of pupils is designated as having English as an additional language – another language is most often spoken at home. However, many of these pupils are bilingual and experience little difficulty with English. Pupils who need it are well provided with language support.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school that is full of very pleasant pupils from a wide range of cultures who get on extraordinarily well together. It is a vibrant school that offers new teachers opportunities to develop within an interesting and rewarding environment. Pupils make good progress until the age of 16 and those who stay on make satisfactory progress in the sixth form. Standards of work are average by the end of Year 11. In 2001 more students have very good GCSE results, when starting in the sixth form, than has been the case in recent Years. Standards in Year 13 are below average. Pupils' attendance is above average; their attitudes are good and their behaviour satisfactory overall, with much exemplary behaviour in the classroom. Teaching is good across the school. Leadership and management is very good and taking the school forward. All staff are working hard to ensure considerable changes succeed and help pupils do even better. Though more expensive than most, the school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language are supported very well.
- Pupils from different cultures and backgrounds are well integrated into a harmonious community.
- Standards in art and music are high and they enrich the life of the school.
- All staff are committed to making the school better.

What could be improved

- Standards in information communication technology and the general use of computers by pupils.
- Standards in design and technology.
- Accommodation for classrooms, computers, the library and teachers.
- The role of leadership and management in the sixth form so that provision can be more rigorously evaluated.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in November 1996. A new headteacher was appointed in January 2001, since when improvement has been good. Behaviour has improved; GCSE standards show signs of significant improvement. Science was particularly weak at the time of the last report and is markedly better in 2001. The numbers of computers and the whole school networking which supports them has just been completed. New accommodation for

design and technology, art and the sixth form will soon be completed, though this will not address many other accommodation problems.

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			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
GCSE examinations	D	C	D	B
A-levels/AS-levels	D	E	E	

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

In 2000 standards at the end of Year 9, based on test results, were below average in English, average in mathematics and well below average in science. Trends in test results until 2000 were below the national trend of improvement. Inspection evidence shows pupils' work is currently just below average in English, a little above average in mathematics and above average in science. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT), the use of computers, are well below average and in design and technology below average. Overall, standards of pupils' work across the school are average and pupils achieve well. Girls achieve better than boys but no more than nationally.

GCSE results in 2000 were about average with significant weaknesses in science and design and technology, and strengths in English language, art and history. Though no national comparison can yet be made, overall GCSE results in 2001 have improved significantly. Science results are much better. The school's targets for improvement in GCSE in 2000 and 2001 were appropriate and were exceeded. Inspection of pupils' work confirms standards are at least average, a little above in English and in science. Standards in ICT remain well below average and in aspects of design and technology below average. Overall, pupils achieve well between the end of Year 9 and the end of Year 11. Girls do better than boys by the end of Year 11, but not significantly more than they do nationally.

Students' attainment when they enter the sixth form has been below or well below average in recent years but due to allowing students with relatively weak academic standards to enter the sixth form, students make satisfactory progress overall.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	These are good. The school values all pupils and they respond accordingly.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory overall as, though many behave in an exemplary fashion, a significant minority has been excluded from time to time. The behaviour of some boys in Year 9 is unsatisfactory. Narrow corridors and present building work foster some boisterous behaviour when pupils move between classes.
Personal development and relationships	On balance, satisfactory. Relationships between pupils are excellent; different ethnic groups work well together and individuals offer support to others. Pupils and teachers show respect for each other. Pupils' abilities to plan and organise their own work and learn independently are limited and difficult to develop; a serious shortage of classroom space renders new computer systems difficult to access and the library area is far too small and under equipped.
Attendance	Above average despite too many holidays taken in school time. Punctuality to lessons is adversely affected by the practical difficulties of moving through crowded corridors.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Around two thirds of teachers were seen during this short inspection, many only once. Most subjects received brief visits. However, it is possible to judge that the teaching of English, mathematics and science is good in Years 7 – 11. Relative strengths in teaching are teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subjects, which ensure pupils generally acquire appropriate skills and knowledge; teachers' planning and pace of work that enable pupils to do a lot of work in lessons and maintain the interest of most of them. Teachers also manage pupils well so that, most of the time, pupils are able to work in a good atmosphere. Teachers' expectations do not always match the abilities of the pupils in front of them and, though recognition of gifted and talented pupils is being made, more action is needed in the classroom. Pupils are not good enough at working on their own and seeking good answers to questions and problems. In particular they are not able to use computers as well as they should. The particular needs of pupils with special educational needs are well met when they are supported by classroom assistants; at other times teachers provide what help they can and pupils' needs are at least satisfactorily met. A very high proportion of pupils are designated as having English as an additional language though many of these are bilingual and have few language difficulties. Those who need support are well provided for and progress as well as their peers.

Literacy is well taught within English and well supported within other subjects. National strategies to improve literacy have been well adopted. Numeracy is satisfactorily taught; new methods are currently in their infancy.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Due to the inadequate use of computers, learning opportunities are unsatisfactory. New computers and the new school network are unable to be appropriately used due to the serious shortage of classrooms and private study space. Otherwise a good range of subjects is offered in Years 10 and 11, though not all the current Year 10 are offered statutory design and technology due to staffing and accommodation difficulties.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. The work of the department is very well co-ordinated and very good use is made of the resources available.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Very good overall. Excellent individual support by specialist staff was observed during the inspection.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall with significant strengths in art and music. Choral work in music is inspirational and pupils have contributed to performances at public halls. Pupils have very good experiences of French through native speakers and cultural experiences.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school works hard, effectively, and successfully to stop any kind of bullying. Good attendance and behaviour are promoted.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher has acted decisively in the two terms since she was appointed. Consequently many necessary changes have taken place or are underway. Senior managers and heads of faculty fully support her and, overall, management is very good.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors know the school well and understand the nature of both its strengths and weaknesses. They have the interests of school pupils and students at heart and have taken appropriate actions to improve their quality of education.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good overall, but very sharp since January 2001 and analysis of data and closer monitoring of teaching and learning should soon begin to improve the school further.
The strategic use of resources	Expenditure is well related to school improvement. Financial management by the bursar is first class and helps the work of the school immensely. Best value is always sought.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children like school• Teaching• Progress children make• High expectations• Comfortable with questions or problems• Well managed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Behaviour• Homework• Information about pupils' progress• Closer work with parents• Increased range of activities outside lessons

Well under ten percent of parents replied to the questionnaire and few attended the parents' evening. Valuable though comments are, they have little statistical weight. Inspectors generally agree with the positive points above though think that higher expectations would lead to improved standards. Behaviour was most often good and sometimes exemplary in lessons. It was satisfactory outside classrooms with a minority taking advantage of cramped corridors to be silly. Inspectors could gather little evidence about homework in the second week of term. Reports to parents about pupils' work are satisfactory and plans for future parents' meetings appear sound. There is scope for more activities – for example, clubs; the shortened dinner hour due to difficulties associated with building works has temporarily curtailed some.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form of this large ethnically diverse 11-18 comprehensive school has 210 students currently on roll and is expanding. About two thirds of students are bilingual. A very small number has special educational needs. The school provides a wide range of A-level courses and three vocational courses. Most students who join the sixth form are those continuing from Year 11. A small but growing number of students joins from other schools within the local borough. Joint arrangements with these schools enable a broad range of courses to be offered. Entry to the sixth form enables a wide ability range to begin advanced level and vocational courses. Most students in the past have followed a two-year programme leading to advanced level. The introduction of further vocational courses is proving popular.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

Students' achievement is satisfactory overall and for those following fewer than 2 A- levels it is good. The sixth form caters for a wide range of student abilities and the modest standards required for entry are reflected in the examination results that are well below the national average in many subjects. Students are very mature in their outlook and their attitudes to work are very good. Relationships between themselves and between students and teachers are very good. All students enjoy full equality of access to opportunities made available to them. This includes provision of a key skills course to all. Teaching is good. The sixth form is cost effective.

Strengths

- Standards in Art and design

What could be improved

- The nature of the role of leadership and management so that provision can be more rigorously evaluated and improvement quickened.
- Accommodation and resources to support independent learning.

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

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	Satisfactory. Whilst some students make satisfactory or better progress based upon their performance at GCSE a significant number fails to make appropriate progress. Standards are improving. The quality of teaching and learning seen was satisfactory or better.
Physics	Satisfactory. Standards are improving; they are average in Year12. Students achieve well due to very good teaching. Independent learning is underdeveloped.
Biology	Good. The subject is well taught by competent staff. Standards and learning seen in lessons are better than those reflected in the examination results, which were below national average in 2000.
Business	Good. Students are achieving a range of skills and competencies relevant to business. Teaching is good with well-planned methodology suited to material and lessons.
Computing	Satisfactory. 2000 results in computing were well below average but improved slightly in 2001. Teaching is competent but lesson planning and assessment are underdeveloped.
Art	Good. 2000 results were uncharacteristically below average but improved dramatically in 2001. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, plan thoroughly and, as a result, learning is good. AS level students achieved well based upon their performance at GCSE.
Psychology	Good. The teaching of psychology is professional and scholarly. Students achieve a good understanding of their studies and demonstrate enthusiasm
English	Good. A challenging curriculum enables students to achieve well in relation to their performance at GCSE. A level results are well below average reflecting the policy of open access to the course.
French	Good. French is well taught and managed. The small numbers of students benefit from intensive and individual teaching, achieving average to good A level results

In other subjects work was sampled. Teaching is at least satisfactory and most often good. It was good in theatre studies, film studies, chemistry, GNVQ IT and geography. In a Year 13 drama lesson teaching was very good. Drama is one of the stronger subjects in the sixth form.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Personal support and guidance for students is good but it is insufficiently focused to ensure that all students make measurable and satisfying academic progress. Discussion and guidance in class supplement the academic tutorial, in which attainment and progress are assessed. Tutored study sessions are to be introduced this year. However, a significant minority of students feel that they do not have sufficient information about the progress that they make. Many students choose to do private study, between lessons, outside school, in part because there is very little planned study space in the common room or elsewhere. Monitoring of their whereabouts is vague and time spent out of school reduces the time for contact, guidance and support from teachers. This has an adverse impact on the development of study skills of many students and particularly affects those academically weaker. Careers advice and information on higher education are satisfactory.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Day to day leadership and management of the sixth form is satisfactory with a strong commitment to good relationships. Leadership is not sufficiently focused on regular monitoring and evaluation to set appropriate targets for all subject leaders.

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"> • Choices of courses available. • Teaching is good. • Support for personal problems. • They enjoy it and recommend it to others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information about their progress. • Advice about future options. • The range of activities available outside lessons.

A minority of students, talking to inspectors and in the response to the student questionnaire, felt that they had not been given sufficient information about the progress that they made. Inspectors felt this was justified. Personal advice and support is strong but some students need extra help to know how to learn independently and make steady progress.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

Provision in the sixth form is satisfactory.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language are supported well

1. The special education needs co-ordinator and her colleagues ensure that procedures accord well with the Code of Practice. There is sufficient qualified teaching staff to provide beneficial individual and small group support for pupils with diverse needs. The quality of the learning support they give is excellent. Pupils in their care grow rapidly in confidence and capability. Targets on individual education plans are clear and precise, and the progress of individual pupils is carefully monitored. The special needs teaching base is centrally located in a bright, spacious and welcoming area. Teaching accommodation is currently being extended to improve further the range of support available. Additionally, the department offers whole class teaching including a stimulating and imaginative ASDAN course of pre-vocational education at Key Stage 4. External mentors guide and support the learning of individuals with particular problems, increasing their self-esteem. In a few cases, learning support continues into the 6th form. Limitations of staffing restrict the amount of withdrawal and classroom support that is available, although advice is always available for those teachers wishing to adapt work to make it accessible to pupils with special educational needs.

2. Very good support is offered to pupils who speak English as an additional language. Since many of these are effectively bilingual, the deployment of staffing is carefully organised so that appropriate attention goes to those with the greatest need. Teachers and their assistants work in close co-operation with colleagues in the special education needs and mainstream departments. They ensure that pupils arriving at the start of, or part way through the school year can access and participate in all aspects of the curriculum. Induction to the school is carefully organised and conducted on an individual basis. New pupils' needs are swiftly and perceptively analysed using existing academic records or by sympathetic testing on arrival. Teachers keep detailed records of pupils' language development and monitor their proficiency in lessons. While some limitations of understanding and self-expression persist, occasionally into the sixth form, pupils are generally appreciative of their inclusion in all aspects of school life. Most respond positively and productively to the skilled, effective and well-organised support they receive.

Pupils from different cultures and backgrounds are well integrated into a harmonious community

3. There are approximately ten different main ethnic backgrounds represented by pupils and students in the school. These include relatively high proportions from both Turkish and Greek heritage. Around one hundred and seventy five pupils are classified as having refugee or asylum status and are predominantly from Turkey.

4. The school monitors achievement by different ethnic groups and provides very good support to ensure that the needs of all are met. Partly as a consequence of this, but also as a result of the very good relationships that have been fostered over the years between pupils and between pupils and teachers, all cultural groups respect and support each other.

5. During the inspection nothing at all was seen or heard indicating any friction between groups of pupils. In discussions with pupils they affirmed that they found

themselves valued, had equal opportunities with everyone else and there was no conflict between cultural groups.

Standards in art and music are high and they enrich the life of the school

6. Standards in GCSE art have consistently been relatively high, above national standards, and this was also recognised in the last OFSTED report. Although A level results fell in 2000, they improved again in 2001 and are more typical of recent years. The department has allowed pupils relatively weak at GCSE to pursue their studies in the sixth form and does well by them; they achieve above expected results. (See also the paragraphs on A level art).

7. Impressive and colourful displays of students' work exploring the theme of 'self' and work based upon the study of expressionist painting enrich the entrance area of the school. Other displays still contain examples of outstanding work from past years and these provide both inspirations for new pupils and students and give a feeling of continuity in the life of the school.

8. A healthy number of pupils take GCSE music, twenty-three in 2000, and standards are above the national average. Many pupils are involved in performing music, particularly in choirs. The Winchmore School Junior Choir performed at the Music for Youth National Festival at the South Bank Centre, London, in July 2001. Adjudication declared their performance "uplifting, vibrant and exciting", and singing to have "spirit and enthusiasm". Also in July 2001, Winchmore School Choir provided a significant contribution to "Carmina Burana" by Carl Orff, on the same bill as the world premiere of "The City and the Stars" by David Bedford at the Royal Festival Hall. When questioned, pupils valued their experiences in such events and in their more regular practices and performances. Such work takes pupils out of themselves and those not participating appreciate the efforts and excellence of their peers.

All staff are committed to making the school better

9. This is a strength that may be common to many schools but is especially obvious at Winchmore. The inspection team was impressed by the number of staff who made a point of saying that they fully backed recent changes to the way the school was managed, they considered the school was improving because of them and that they generally felt valued and motivated.

10. Since January 2001 a system of school self-review has been introduced that includes lesson observations, work reviews and examination and performance data analysis. A faculty system, grouping subjects together, has been introduced to support a new line management system. This has provided clear job descriptions, roles and responsibilities and lines of accountability. An observation of a school improvement group meeting during the inspection, attended by all senior managers and heads of faculty, showed that there is indeed a focus on improvement; teachers know who is responsible for what and what they must do to contribute, and there is a keenness to make those contributions and be an effective person within the plan.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Standards in information communication technology and the general use of computers by pupils

11. In this short inspection, ICT was not fully inspected. The school had only started back from summer holiday the week before the inspection and systems were not fully operational or were new to staff. At the time of the last inspection standards were unsatisfactory by the end of Year 9 and average for the few who took computer options in Years 10 and 11. Nothing significant was done to improve things until recently and the situation is similar. The school has only been provided with sufficient computers and an efficient network to run them within the last three months.

12. There is insufficient time devoted to raising pupils' skills and knowledge in the use of ICT in Years 7-9. Only Year 7 has any regular time and this is part of the design and technology 'carousel' so there is likely to be an issue of continuity – pupils will use computers for a few weeks and then do something else, others will have to wait for their turn. In Years 8 and 9 the previous system, utilising certain curriculum areas to teach particular skills in ICT, remains. Geography and history teachers take it on in Year 8 and science staff in Year 9. Only the latter were seen. It is clear that there is a shortage of appropriately trained teachers. New Opportunities Fund training has been targeted at appropriate departments, but has not met the needs of teaching all the ICT knowledge and understanding required. The very significant movement of staff (around twenty new teachers started this September) may add to the training problem. Pupils' knowledge and understanding associated with control, measurement and making things happen is particularly weak. The few sensors available to the science department were unable to function with the newly acquired computers at the time of the inspection.

13. Year 10 pupils have just started a GNVQ in ICT so, theoretically, their experiences will meet requirements. However, the course does pre suppose certain skills that many pupils have not got and requires rather more time (in most schools) than that currently allocated. If sufficient time is given in the classroom then most computers will be used by the GNVQ groups and denied to other pupils. As this year's pupils enter Year 11, the use of computers by the GNVQ course will be compounded because the new Year 10 will then start. Year 11 pupils who are not following GCSE IT are not receiving their ICT entitlement and it is unclear how they can possibly do so. Pupils who follow business related courses in Year 11 do get some useful experiences but do not cover all the aspects of ICT necessary to meet the needs of the National Curriculum. Consequently pupils in Years 7-9 and many in Year 11 do not meet the requirements of the National Curriculum with regards to ICT. Year 10 pupils may do so.

14. There has been very limited monitoring and assessment of ICT standards in recent years and end of Year 9 teacher assessments are questionable given the limited evidence available. There is a new assessment record booklet available from the start of this term. However, assessment of ICT competencies does require a thorough understanding of what is required and too few teachers are likely to have it. There is no indication that recognition is given to what pupils might acquire elsewhere, for example at home. Neither are there records of what equipment is available to pupils at home. No pupils are used as mentors for others.

15. Students in the sixth form have had limited use of ICT in the past and share most resources with the rest of the school now. There is a need for dedicated resources with

appropriate software to allow them to more easily move towards what might be expected of them in employment or higher education.

Standards in design and technology

16. Standards in GCSE design and technology were well below the national average in 2000 and again in 2001. A smaller proportion of pupils took GCSE than nationally too. There was some variance between the standards of GCSE subjects contributing to design and technology, though the standards of pupils when they commenced their studies also varied. For example, the electronics option and the resistant materials (workshop) option appear particularly weak whilst food and graphics options appear better.

17. During inspection, work in Years 7- 9 and 10-11 was scrutinised and found to be, on balance, below average though there were differences between classes and subject areas. The nature of this short inspection did not permit a full analysis to be made.

18. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen in design and technology and management is aware of shortcomings and has begun to rationalise steps needed to raise standards. There are factors which have undoubtedly contributed to low standards in the past; very poor workshops; staffing difficulties; teachers leaving half way through courses; inadequate resources; accommodation being 'scattered' around the school. GCSE courses called 'half GCSEs' were also encouraged and are only just phasing out. These courses are not easily managed and can have an adverse effect on standards.

19. The current schemes of work, in Years 7-9, require a rotation of groups between contributing areas every term, for example food to graphics. Though common in many schools, this can cause problems of continuity, particularly in Year 9 when options are decided. The pace of each project within the one term block appears, upon inspection, to be insufficient and completion is sometimes rushed. The commencement of each project is sometimes too drawn out; too much attention is given to detail on presentation rather than specification, design and making. The range of attainment in each class also needs more attention. What pupils are asked to do should better reflect what they are capable of; teachers should not just look at what they have done and then decide how good they are. Work in Years 10 and 11 also suffers from a continuation of these methods of working. To some extent, exam board requirements take over and are seen as meaningless by some pupils, for example the boy who knew clearly what he was doing for his food project but had to draw a 'brainstorming' diagram to collect marks, and similarly the boy having to create several ideas for a spice storage box, though resources dictated almost exactly what would be done. The pace of work needs to be increased and more directed and controlled practical work is needed to practise skills. Work that could be done at home needs to be, and specialist resources used fully at school.

Accommodation for classrooms, computers, the library and teachers

20. Winchmore caters for more pupils than it was originally intended for. Classrooms are found for all lessons but only just. Consequently there are few times when classrooms are empty for preparation for future lessons or for teachers to work in them. Teachers share rooms and carry materials between them. This is not conducive to the development of different teaching styles. Rooms are often set out inappropriately for a lesson; laboratories used for mathematics are perhaps a significant case of this. The most serious detrimental effect on pupils' learning is the inadequacy of rooms for using modern computers and the small library. The governors have now provided modern computers but most of them are in rooms that also have to be used as general classrooms. Without a lot of movement of

pupils there are few opportunities for teachers to book these resources. The library, which contains a few computers, is well managed but can only accommodate around 40 pupils. Pupils are not encouraged to use it when it can so easily be filled. This extends to the sixth form who lack their own library area and private study base. Many subject rooms are separated from each other, making subject management more difficult and few subject managers have adequate space for planning. The staff room can just hold the staff when standing; six additional inspectors would not fit.

21. Corridors are rather narrow in many areas and a one-way traffic system that works well on staircases is defeated upon accessing the several floors of the building. The narrow corridors are a significant contribution to some deterioration in behaviour when pupils move between classes. Many children take school meals and managing the large numbers through the corridors and into inadequate hall space wastes staff time and shortens lesson time for Year 7 pupils at the start of the year.

22. A large building is currently under construction. However, when completed it will effectively provide only two new rooms. Most of it is to replace very poor workshops and rehouse art, currently in old huts. Sixth form accommodation will improve and possibly allow some rationalisation of space.

23. Although there is no simple solution to the problem it is one that, if addressed in part or completely, should have a positive impact on standards of learning, teaching and behaviour.

The role of leadership and management in the sixth form so that provision can be more rigorously evaluated

24. Please see paragraph 39 on leadership and management in the sixth form.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

25. To raise standards and improve the quality of education further the school and governors should:

- (1) Raise standards in ICT and improve the use of computers by pupils by ensuring the requirements of the National Curriculum are met and
 - making computer rooms more easily available for teachers to book;
 - ensuring teachers receive adequate training;
 - monitoring the use of computers by pupils;
 - improving resources within the library and other study areas.

Paragraphs 11-15 and 76

- (2) Raise standards in design and technology by increasing the pace of work and ensuring lesson time is used efficiently to address significant tasks. In addition, ensuring full advantage is taken of new accommodation and resources in 2002 to revise projects and schemes of work.

Paragraphs 16-19

- (3) Improve accommodation by seeking to increase the number of classrooms, suiting subject areas, increasing the size of the library, improving private

study areas for sixth formers, and increasing and improving teachers' work and rest areas.

Paragraphs 20-23, 32, 35, 40 and 48

Sixth form

- (4) Clarify and redefine the role of leadership and management so that evaluation of provision can be more rigorous and actions needed to improve it more sharply defined and assigned.

Paragraphs 39, 34, 46, 56, 86

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	58
	Sixth form	48
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		25

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7– 11							
Number	1	7	27	22	1	0	0
Percentage	2	12	47	38	2	0	0
Sixth form							
Number	1	9	26	12	0	0	0
Percentage	2	19	54	25	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 Years 7 - 11 and 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	1408	191
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	329	

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	14	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	372	7

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	914

Pupil mobility in the last school Year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	31
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	42

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.4
National comparative data	7.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	2.5
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final Year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting Year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	121	122	243

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	57	73	49
	Girls	86	80	54
	Total	143	153	103
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	59 (70)	63 (64)	42 (44)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	18 (31)	39 (31)	20 (16)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	60	76	50
	Girls	85	86	51
	Total	145	162	101
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	60 (n/a)	67 (n/a)	42 (n/a)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	23 (n/a)	30 (n/a)	15 (n/a)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final Year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting Year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	128	110	238

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	38	119	125
	Girls	63	107	107
	Total	101	226	232
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	42 (45)	95 (96)	97 (99)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6 (95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	37.1 (38.2)
	National	38.4 (38.0)

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	0
	National	N/a

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting Year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	27	53	80

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	8.9	11.5	10.6 ([])	5.3	5.3	5.3 (4.1)
National	17.7	18.6	18.2 ([])	2.6	2.9	2.7 (2.8)

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number in their final Year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	15
	National	73.2

International Baccalaureate	Number	% success rate
Number entered for the International Baccalaureate Diploma and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all they studied	School	0
	National	76.5

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school Year

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	187
Black – African heritage	100
Black – other	92
Indian	76
Pakistani	14
Bangladeshi	28
Chinese	10
White	750
Any other minority ethnic group	116

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	61	2
Black – African heritage	25	0
Black – other	21	1
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	1	0
Bangladeshi	1	0
Chinese	0	0
White	65	3
Other minority ethnic groups	9	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 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	95.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	14.6

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	15.0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	421

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	71.0
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 2	N/a
Key Stage 3	25.2
Key Stage 4	20.4

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial Year	2000
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	£
Total income	4,326,230
Total expenditure	4,282,228
Expenditure per pupil	3031
Balance brought forward from previous Year	176,952
Balance carried forward to next Year	220,954

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two Years	39.0
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two Years	40.0

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	5.0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	7.0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0.0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1400
Number of questionnaires returned	99

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	45	47	4	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	39	49	3	5	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	28	43	14	3	11
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	29	40	19	5	3
The teaching is good.	28	48	9	5	8
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	26	39	22	10	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	44	44	5	0	6
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	64	28	4	2	2
The school works closely with parents.	26	45	21	5	2
The school is well led and managed.	29	48	5	4	13
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	38	43	8	1	9
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	24	40	14	9	12

PART D: THE SIXTH FORM

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

26. In year 2000 public examinations, students were entered for some twenty-one A level subjects, two AS subjects and GNVQ Intermediate and Advanced Business. Results for A level were generally well below national averages. The average points score per student fell to 10.6. However, the entry policy for examination courses is broad and inclusive and, although many students did not achieve the higher grades in examinations, almost two thirds demonstrated satisfactory or better achievement in comparison to their GCSE performance. The 2001 results show a significant improvement in average points in comparison to 2000.

27. A level results in communication studies; economics, drama and modern languages were broadly in line with the national average. Results in chemistry and biology remained below the national average but improved in 2000, as did those in communication studies. Sixty per cent of those studying intermediate GNVQ achieved a qualification. Very small numbers of students studying AS level make comparisons unreliable.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

28. Students think the sixth form is good. They thoroughly enjoy themselves and have very good attitudes towards it. Most are keen to get down to study and to focus on work. At the time of the inspection, Year 13 students were starting to think about life after school and complete their university and college admission forms; Year 12 students, who had been in school for just three days, were starting lessons, concentrating well, enjoying the comparative freedom of the common room and being introduced to the structure of academic tutorials. Those who wish to be considered for prefects were handing in their statements. All students, including those who attend Winchmore for some of their AS choices, were relaxed and friendly with each other and at ease with sixth form tutors.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

29. The inspection began as sixth formers started back to school after their summer holidays. For Year 12 it was their first days in the sixth form. However, teachers rallied to the occasion and taught lessons as if the settling in process were complete. Forty-eight lessons were seen, twenty-four in each year. All were satisfactory or better, three quarters good or better and a fifth very good. Considering the evidence of work available too, though this was limited, inspectors considered teaching in the sixth form to be good overall. Students' learning in the classroom followed this profile closely and was helped by their very good attitudes towards hard work and endeavour. However, learning overall was judged satisfactory because students' independent learning and self-study are somewhat weaker. Few planned opportunities and lack of space and resources to help self-study significantly contribute to this.

30. Overall, teachers' knowledge, planning, management, use of time and resources are strengths. Other elements of teaching are at least satisfactory but could be even better. These include expectations, methods of teaching and ongoing assessment. All three are linked, as better use of student performance data would lead to more accurate expectations of their day to day work, and a clearer understanding of exactly where students are would allow teaching to be modified to cater better for their needs. Students

need regular, accurate information on how well they are doing so that they can direct their own, independent learning, better. A significant minority of students did indicate they would like more information.

31. Teaching in mathematics is satisfactory, sometimes good, and lacks some resources that would give it more variety. Teaching in biology is good, goes at a brisk pace and has high expectations of students. Teaching in physics is very good with the level and speed of questioning driving students to find answers and think on their feet. In economics and business studies teaching is good; assessment is well planned and work is well supported by handouts and group work. Teaching in ICT is satisfactory; good specialist knowledge is well communicated but there is over reliance on instructions to pupils and note taking and not enough involvement of pupils. In psychology teaching is good and students are intellectually challenged through theory and experimental work. Teaching in English is good, well planned with plenty of activities. French teaching is good with plenty of lively interaction and students are encouraged to research.

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

32. The sixth form curriculum is satisfactory and is strongly biased to the wide range of subjects offered at A level. Students' choices are increased by a consortium arrangement with local schools, although few Winchmore pupils choose subjects studied elsewhere. Most students feel that the flexibility and access to courses offered in school suit their aptitudes and aspirations well. The school offers a small selection of intermediate GNVQ subjects, in business and information and communication technology. The projected expansion of the vocational programme is currently restricted by the lack of accommodation and resources as well as by difficulties in recruiting specialist teachers. Students are expected to gain qualifications in key skills, and add to the range and variety of their education through a well-structured and relevant programme of extension activities. Further opportunities exist for involvement in social, cultural and sports events though a minority of students feel dissatisfied with what is on offer. Religious education is offered as an A-level subject but the limited provision for the spiritual development of the majority is insufficient. The external careers service gives sound advice to students, many of whom proceed to higher education. There is, however, no planned programme of work experience. Cramped and poorly resourced library and private study facilities provide inadequate opportunities for independent research and learning.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

Assessment

33. Monitoring of student progress in the sixth form is via a well-established tutorial system. Students' performance in subject areas is requested at regular intervals by the head of sixth form and communicated to tutors. This forms the basis of discussions and target setting with students. Each student may have three of these tutorials in any school Year. Whilst the school is using GCSE achievements as a predictor of future performance, weaknesses in monitoring contributes to almost a third under performing. Monitoring by tutors is clearly supportive of individuals and helps them set personal targets for improvement. The regularity and consistency with which subsequent performance within subject areas is followed up and monitored, is however, variable. There is potential to make sharper use of assessment systems in the pursuit of higher standards.

Advice, support and guidance

34. The personal support and guidance for students is good. Discussion and guidance in class supplement the academic tutorial, in which attainment and progress are assessed. This allows students in small subject groups to have more individual help than those who study a more popular subject. In addition, tutored study sessions are to be introduced this year. These guidance systems, which include individual target setting, are good ones but their implementation is not always satisfactory; they have not helped a minority of students who feel that they do not have sufficient information about the progress they make. Targets, which are set at tutorials, are only as effective as the thoroughness with which they are designed. Greater attention is needed to ensure that the guidance offered not only recognises the point reached in a subject but also explains clearly what steps need to be taken next, how they are to be achieved and by when. The achievement of such clearly defined targets would both be easier and act as a real measure of progress made.

35. Students are allocated time, as is usual in a sixth form, for study periods between lessons. Many choose to do this outside school, in part because there is very little planned study space in the common room or elsewhere. The time spent out of school reduces the in-house time for informal contact, guidance and support between students and staff. This has an impact on the development of study skills and dedication to work and particularly affects academically weaker students. There is currently no registration system in place that records whether a student is studying at home, on work experience or taking a subject elsewhere.

36. Students taking General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQ) undertake three weeks work experience in Years 12 or 13. However, not all sixth form students are offered the opportunity to undertake work experience. Careers advice and information on higher education are satisfactory. Students can visit universities, although there is no bursary system to help them do so, and guest speakers from universities come into school.

37. Staff take good care of students' health and welfare. Child protection procedures are satisfactory.

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

38. Students and parents are generally well informed about progress through written reports. Information evenings are used to supplement the range of information in booklets about courses and options in the sixth form. A regular newsletter is sent out to all parents. Where there are issues of concern the school contacts and involves parents. A minority of students in Year 12 had not been able to follow courses they had chosen and felt that information about AS level choices had been misleading. Typically around two thirds of parents attend sixth form parents' evenings. Parents also have the opportunity to be involved in, and contribute to, the life of the school through the parent teacher association. Letters of complaint from parents are logged and followed up.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

Leadership and management

39. Leadership and management of the sixth form on a day-to-day basis is satisfactory with a strong commitment to good relationships and equality of opportunity. Two senior staff and a team of nine tutors support the head of sixth form. Tutor groups are a mixture

of Year 12 and 13 students as a deliberate policy of integration. Clearly defined systems are in place for tutorial support and monitoring. Systems to record and manage information are in the main good but the vision is lacking of how this can be further refined and used to create a more effective and improving sixth form. Public examination results have remained low. Management is insufficiently focused on securing improvements to ensure that all students make measurable and satisfying academic progress. Thinking behind decisions about the curriculum and the financial implications of courses offered has not always been clear. There is now a development policy and a three-year plan in place to improve the sixth form. The head of sixth form is beginning to make use of pupil performance data but the sharing and use of this with heads of subject to set sharper targets for improvement is at a very early stage. There is a building programme in progress that will improve accommodation for the sixth form. The existing study area and common room is no longer put to effective use and this does not support an image of a vital and energetic sixth form focused upon personal achievement and raising standards.

Resources

40. Resources are satisfactory or better in most subjects. They are unsatisfactory in mathematics; inadequate rooms are poorly resourced with study aids and computers. Resources are particularly good in psychology where there is a good range of new books, videos and experimental equipment. In ICT the resources are satisfactory with some new textbooks but access to computer facilities for independent study is restricted, as is the case for other subjects. In art, resources are good although accommodation in three of the four rooms is poor, the subject being taught in old wooden temporary classrooms. Art will move into new accommodation next year. In business studies, access to the teaching room is unsatisfactory as teaching takes place in a computer room. In biology, chemistry and physics resources are satisfactory although much of the equipment is old fashioned and problems can arise because subjects are taught at opposite ends of the building, resulting in wasted technician time transporting equipment around.

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

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

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

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	78	0	17	1.0	1.8
Mathematics	3	33	63	0	17	0.3	1.6

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	10	90	96	20	45	4.2	6.4
Biology	9	67	88	33	34	3.8	5.3
Business Studies	8	63	91	0	30	2.0	5.3
Chemistry	7	86	89	0	42	4.0	5.9
Communication Studies	26	96	93	27	30	5.5	5.4
Computer Studies	10	40	85	0	23	0.8	4.6
Drama	8	100	99	25	36	6.3	6.5
Economics	6	83	88	17	36	5.0	5.4
English Literature	28	86	96	14	36	4.2	5.9
English Language	12	75	92	8	31	3.7	5.4
French	2	100	91	50	39	5.0	5.7
Geography	11	100	92	18	37	4.7	5.7
Graphical Applications	4	100	81	0	16	4.0	3.9
History	8	50	89	25	34	3.0	5.4
Mathematics	19	74	89	21	45	4.21	6.0
Music	1	0	93	0	35	0	5.7
Other Languages	5	100	94	60	59	7.2	7.1
Other Social Studies	17	88	88	0	35	2.7	5.3
Physics	8	63	88	13	41	3.3	5.7
Sociology	2	50	88	0	37	2.0	5.5
Sports PE Studies	4	75	91	0	25	3.0	5.0

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

41. The focus was on mathematics, biology and physics. Chemistry was sampled. In 2000, A level results in chemistry were below average but achievement was satisfactory. Two lessons of chemistry were seen. Teaching was good, standards of work above average and students displayed excellent attitudes.

Mathematics

42. Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics at 'A' level is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- 'A' level results showed an improvement this year
- Teachers have sound subject knowledge to 'A' level
- Lessons are well planned and work is regularly marked with appropriate feedback

Areas for improvement

- Attainment at AS and 'A' level
- Support structure and monitoring of student performance
- Variety of teaching styles and use of resources, including ICT to enrich teaching

43. Attainment at AS and A level is below the national average and achievement overall in the sixth form is unsatisfactory. Some students make satisfactory or better progress taking into account their previous performance at GCSE. However, a significant proportion fails to attain the 'A' level grades expected, given their GCSE performance. Many students attain disappointing results for module tests. Results in 2001 showed an improvement, although they are still below the national average. All students who took the examination this year gained a pass grade. The standard of work seen during the inspection is in line with national expectations.

44. All teaching is satisfactory and some is good. Teaching is helped by the very positive attitudes of students to each other and to their teachers and the good rapport teachers have with students. Students' behaviour is very good. Teachers have sound subject knowledge. They use questioning effectively to draw out and extend students' knowledge and understanding. The best teaching incorporates a variety of teaching styles and resources to help students to develop their thinking and analytical skills and to aid their understanding of mathematical techniques. For example, in an introduction to mathematical modelling, Year 12 students were divided into groups and given problems that they had to decide as a group how to simplify. They then had to identify the key variables required to set up a mathematical model. In a Year 13 lesson, the teacher used a graphical calculator to model the shape of exponential graphs to an individual student. This provided a powerful visual image to aid the student's understanding. Lessons are well planned and time in most lessons is used effectively. Homework tasks are set and marked regularly and students receive appropriate feedback on individual pieces of work.

45. Some otherwise satisfactory teaching lacks variety and in many cases relies on a formula of exposition by the teacher followed by exercises for the students to complete. Few resources other than textbooks are used to aid exposition and to involve students more fully in their learning process.

46. There are few opportunities for students to develop their learning skills. In Years 10 and 11 teaching is examination driven, with the result that when students enter the sixth form their ability to think for themselves mathematically is weak. There are no support mechanisms in place to help students to breach the gap from learning in Year 11 to learning in the sixth form. The minimum requirement for entry to the 'A' level course is a C grade at higher tier GCSE. However a small number of 'A' level students spend a relatively short time in the top set being exposed to the higher tier syllabus because they have moved sets in January. Despite this the department does not run a foundation course for 'A' level. This would help students who struggle with the Algebra content of the 'A' level course to make the leap from GCSE maths. Students need to know exactly what is required of them, how much work they should be doing and what their expected AS and A level results should be in light of their GCSE performance. They also need to be given targets, which are sharply focused on specific learning goals. The department has initiated this with one module of statistics work. Although teachers are available after school for help there is no timetabled tutorial support time when students can seek help with their work.

47. The department now follows the Edexcel 'A' level course and new texts have been purchased for this. There are currently few resources available for teachers and students beyond textbooks. It has not been possible in the past to have access to ICT facilities. This has now been rectified. There is a need for staff development in the use of ICT, so that all staff feel confident in using it to enhance their teaching of mathematics. There are insufficient graphical calculators and aids such as overhead projectors, both of which would improve learning and teaching.

48. Accommodation is inadequate. Most teachers do not teach in their own room, which means they are unable always to provide a suitably stimulating environment. Resources for use in lessons often have to be carried around which makes it difficult to provide beyond basic resources, such as textbooks and paper. Some lessons take place in science laboratories, which are not conducive to organising students to work in any other way than sitting in rows. Library resources are extremely limited and there has been no school provision for students to study or have access to ICT facilities outside of mathematics lessons.

49. The department benefits from strong leadership and the head of department has a clear vision for development. Teachers receive feedback on their teaching from him as part of the new system of monitoring and evaluation. Since arriving at the school the head of department has concentrated on improving performance in Years 7-11 and this has been successful. The structures put in place for tracking and improving performance then now need to be implemented for 'A' level mathematics.

BIOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good, teachers have a sound subject knowledge, lessons are well planned with a variety of activities enabling students to learn effectively.
- Small group sizes ensure that students receive maximum attention and share ideas.
- Good leadership and management, with a clear sense of direction.

Areas for improvement

- The use of target setting to help raise standards further.
- Opportunities for teachers to discuss student progress and other issues.

51. The GCSE 'A' level examination results in 2000 were below the national average but showed improvement from 1999. Results in 2001 indicate further improvement. Three quarters of students in 2001 achieved a pass, compared with two-thirds in 2000. In both years the entry numbers were small. There was no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls.

52. The standards of work seen are good, although Year 12 students were in the first week of their course during the inspection. Students show good knowledge and understanding of basic biological concepts, such as the importance of water to living organisms and the structure and properties of water, about which they constructed concept maps with little difficulty. They used microscopes efficiently to view a variety of cells and were able to identify various organelles and discuss their functions with confidence. These students are successfully building on work from their GCSE course.

53. Year 13 students are making good progress in lessons although their overall results at AS level were not as good as their GCSE grades would have indicated. During a microbiology practical lesson students competently applied sterile techniques to prepare agar plates and inoculate them from a bacterial slope using dilution techniques. In another lesson students showed good knowledge and understanding of co-ordination in the body and were able to discuss parts of the nervous system and the way it functions with confidence. They can recall and apply knowledge from previous lessons well.

54. Teaching in biology is good overall, enabling students to learn well. Teachers show good subject knowledge so that they can give clear explanations of facts. Lessons are well planned, have a brisk pace and aims and objectives are clearly stated, so that students have a clear idea of what they should know. A variety of teaching styles is used to maintain students' interest and assist learning. The lesson on water molecules in Year 12, for example, included discussion, practical work to compare properties of ethanol and water, a cutting and sticking exercise to construct a concept map, use of textbooks for reference and note-taking. Students are encouraged to share ideas and help each other, which is facilitated by their small group sizes. Expectations of teachers are high and there is rigorous questioning of students during lessons to establish and reinforce knowledge and understanding, with teachers ensuring that as many students as possible contribute to lessons. There is a pleasant working relationship between teachers and students, providing an atmosphere that is conducive to learning. Teachers have an enthusiasm for biology that is transmitted to students. Of the four lessons seen, three were good and one was very good. Homework is set on a regular basis and consists of a variety of tasks. The written work carried out by students consists of note-taking, structured questions, essay writing, past examination questions and experimental write-ups. Marking is thorough and appropriately annotated, giving clear guidance to students on areas for improvement.

55. Students learn well, are motivated and make good progress in lessons, although this has not manifested itself in examination results. They respond well in lessons and rise to challenges as shown during question and answer sessions and class discussions. They work co-operatively together, help each other and share ideas in a mature and sensible way.

56. The biology department is well led and managed. There is a clear focus on direction and a commitment to raising examination results. Resources and staff are effectively deployed so that teachers teach their own specialisms, enabling them to deliver lessons with confidence. The department has good technical support. There is, however, insufficient use of target setting, which does not take place until halfway through each year.

Teachers do not have enough time allocated to meet together as a department to discuss any problems with regard to student progress or other department issues.

PHYSICS

57. Overall, the quality of provision in physics is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- The leadership and commitment of the head of department is exemplary.
- Pupils' attitudes are first class.
- Teaching is very good.

Areas for improvement

- Better use of information and communication technology is needed.
- Assessment data needs to be used better to help plan work.

58. The numbers of students taking physics A level has never been more than ten in recent years and was only four in 2001. Entry requirements until 2001 have been low and examination results have risen and fallen in relation to the quality of the entry. The results of the eight candidates in 2000 were well below the national average. Three were unclassified and the rest achieved grades in the range A to E. The results in 2001 appear poorer, the pass rate fell from 67% to 50%, but there were only 4 candidates. However, the current Year 13 have achieved satisfactorily in their AS results, based on their GCSE performance (in 2001). Numbers in Year 12 have increased and their entry standards are good, most having A*/B grades in science and mathematics at GCSE.

59. The standards of work in Year 13 are a little below average whilst that in Year 12 is a more secure average. The sixth form began work at the same time as the inspection, which restricts evidence. However, teachers taught lessons full of appropriate learning experiences rather than introductory or induction lessons. Consequently students were able to impress either with their knowledge and understanding, recovered from work many weeks before or at least with their willingness to offer thoughtful answers to questions. In most lessons they were being made to think rapidly and hard and one answer led to another question from the teacher. They enjoyed this thoroughly and appreciated being worked hard. In one lesson on measuring acceleration students' mathematical skills were well refreshed when dealing with hundredths of a second. However, in a different lesson their good standards in mathematics were insufficiently recognised and some simple formulae about Ohm's Law took too long.

60. Students in Year 13 have weaknesses in setting up experiments, for example, to establish a relationship between distance from a light source and the strength of the light. They require direction and coaxing to control variables, such as the position of the lamp, and take on questions of accuracy, for example from where to measure. These weaknesses apparently stem from little practice when doing GCSE. They are better in experiments more closely defined by the teacher and their investigation of waveforms in a spring and stretched elastic are examples. In both experiments however, their knowledge of terms, such as waveform, node, equilibrium, and units such as newtons/kilogram are good.

61. Teaching is very good overall and one lesson seen was excellent. Students achieve well but no better as advanced level requires more independent learning, self study, than they are currently able to do or can do. Achievement and learning should improve as very

high expectations and very good teaching methods, coupled with opportunities, foster such independence and self-effort. Students already work at a very good pace in the classroom when the best teaching sets the pace and probing and questioning does not pause throughout the lesson. Students are able to work singly or in pairs and both situations are used in very good lessons to foster self-reliance where it is weak and to make students question each other's ideas about problems. One or two students have some difficulty understanding nuances of the English language when applied to physics but teachers pick this up and explain the situation in other ways until there is understanding.

62. Leadership and management are exemplary. The head of department works long hours to support physics and science in general. He has been in post only a year but has recognised what must be done to raise standards and is fully committed to ensure students do their best. He has excellent relationships with students that foster hard work by them. He has established an advanced level physics laboratory and is slowly acquiring modern resources for it. It does need more computer peripherals and software.

BUSINESS

63. The focus was on GCE 'AS'/'A' level economics and business studies. GCSE economics results have varied, A* to C results being below the national average. The A* to G results are average. The 2000 'A' level economics and business results were below average for the A-B grades. In 2001 the 'A' level results have improved. They are now above the national average for all grades. The 'AS' level results for economics and business studies are well below average as were the AVCE business results. Most students are adding value to their qualifications. Girls have outperformed boys for the top grades. The vocational awards have been very good. Eight lessons were observed. The teaching was good with varied and interesting methods used to aid learning. Textbooks and class handouts support learning needs.

Economics and Business Studies

64. Overall, the quality of provision is **good**.

Strengths

- Teachers' high expectations, planning and methodology.
- Schemes of work demonstrate a broad, balanced, relevant and differentiated curriculum.
- Links with business.

Areas for improvement

- Homework does not sufficiently reinforce weaker areas of learning.
- Testing, utilising past examination questions, is not frequent enough.
- Student files are not monitored or commented on enough.
- Students are insufficiently aware of the criteria for assessment.

65. The GCE 'AS'/'A' level examination results in 2001 showed a rise in performance. They are above national averages. All students obtained a grade. A significant minority of students, however, is not acquiring the knowledge and critical understanding of contemporary business to gain the highest grades. They are not avid readers or researchers. Females do better than male students. Most entrants complete their course. Most do as well as anticipated in relation to their GCSE results. The vocational awards have improved in performance with more completing the full award and gaining merits.

66. The standards of work of current Year 13 students are in line with their range of abilities. Most are acquiring business knowledge and they appreciate the significance of theoretical and conceptual issues in economic debate. All can reflect on their own work experiences and apply their knowledge and understanding of commerce to everyday life.

67. Students in Year 12 were observed identifying key economic vocabulary. Through this activity they were given opportunities for developing the key skill of communication. At the start of their studies students were being helped to understand the factors that shape a modern economy. Teachers presented a variety of contemporary issues to raise students' awareness of change and development.

68. Teaching is good. Schemes of work reflect a variety of business issues. Assessment is carefully planned and it is always constructive and aimed at improving standards. Information handouts support student learning and encourage better time management in lessons. Teachers make good use of visual stimulus exercises and interactive teaching. Lessons are appropriately structured and form part of a sequence and planned programme. The aims of each lesson are clear and suitable resources are available. Teachers display good command of the subject material. Pace is appropriate and methods are adapted where necessary.

69. Much of the written work produced in Year 13 provides opportunities for students to develop and apply key skills in classwork, homework and coursework. However, regular monitoring of student work, with feedback, would improve spelling, grammar and punctuation. Key skills are identified in lesson plans and worksheets. Year 12 students are just coming to terms with these skills and how to map them in their work files.

70. Most students have developed their learning skills in Year 13, particularly problem solving skills. Students can apply their skills of asking appropriate questions, make predictions and come to an informed business decision. In small group work, students are able to produce reports and spider diagrams identifying critical ideas on production methods and commercial organisation. Students are not avid independent readers. Class discussion is less rewarding than it should be. However, teachers ask in depth and detailed questions on a particular topic to aid learning about a theory or a concept. More thinking about business concepts in an abstract or original way is required. The harder working students conduct good personal research and practical investigations. Their awareness of how their work is assessed is not certain.

71. Students in Year 13 can use questionnaires, conduct interviews and evaluate their research in terms of its validity and reliability, and learn from their experience. The able students show a high level of commitment to business research and work at their independent study skills. They visit firms to seek answers to problems. This enriches and extends their business experience.

72. Teachers are committed to raising standards and combating under-achievement. The management of business studies is good. Teachers are approachable. The curriculum is well organised and an appropriate environment conducive to learning is created. Homework is set and marked according to the homework policy of the school. Additional homework could raise standards. Appropriate feedback on homework is given. These positive approaches to teaching and learning have raised standards since the last inspection.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

ICT

73. The focus was on Information Technology. Computer studies, GNVQ IT and IT key skills were also sampled. No students in Year 13 are currently studying computing. A new course and syllabus has just begun in Year 12. One lesson was sampled and teaching was satisfactory. GNVQ IT is a new intermediate course this year and students are at a very early stage of their work. One lesson was observed and teaching was good. The lesson was well planned and the teacher explained technical points clearly and checked understanding frequently which enabled students to make good progress with the task. In addition to these IT courses all students now have the opportunity to develop their key skills in IT. One lesson was observed and teaching was good with appropriate expectations for independent work.

74. This course is in its last year at the school and will be offered through consortium arrangements at a partner institution in the future.

75. Overall the quality of provision is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Teachers have specialist knowledge of and understanding about IT.
- Attitudes to the subject and other IT related courses are positive.
- The range of IT courses on offer is good and includes work related courses.

Areas for improvement

- Standards in public examinations.
- Planning and methodology of lessons to ensure that subject matter is fully developed and explained.
- Monitoring and assessment so students have regular information on what and how to improve.

76. There was no A level IT examination in 2000. Students followed a computer studies course and results were well below average in comparison to schools nationally. Courses have changed from year to year, which makes comparisons unreliable. The results for Computer Studies in 2001, the last year of the current course, were an improvement on those for 2000 although no students gained the higher A or B grades. Standards in IT generally are below expectations for many students, in part due to their lack of IT opportunities during their time in the main school.

77. The standards of work in the current Year 13 class are below average but students are achieving satisfactorily in relation to their GCSE performance. In the two lessons seen they were at the early stages of planning course assignments and were developing their work from Year 12. Attitudes were generally positive and levels of independence in the use of computers were appropriate. Students were able to draw upon their previous learning and apply this to the analysis of their current database task and make satisfactory progress. In some cases the quality of written analysis was naïve and had only dealt superficially with the problem.

78. Teaching is satisfactory overall with good specialist knowledge that is often communicated effectively in one to one discussions. There is an over reliance on instruction and note taking at the expense of more wide-ranging explanation, discussion and questioning around a topic. Opportunities are therefore missed to involve students more in the learning and improve the level of challenge and pace of lessons. For example,

in one Year 13 lesson students were not altogether clear about how their work would be judged and the emphasis that would be placed on each aspect of their coursework. The teacher had provided each student with a written outline of the requirements but missed the opportunity to explore and explain these sufficiently with the class. Students are generally self-reliant and tackle their work enthusiastically in most cases. The frequency and quality of marking and assessment does not enable them to understand how they can improve their work and be aware of the progress they have made.

79. Leadership and management of IT are satisfactory. The teacher in charge has just taken on responsibility for the courses and has already improved the supply of textbooks to support independent learning by students. There is further work to be done improving resources in the form of support materials for all courses. There is an urgent need for a scheme of work that translates the syllabus requirements into lesson plans and identifies the key learning. With responsibility for overseeing key skills and temporary responsibility for co-ordinating post 16 IT courses in general, there is a heavy load on the teacher in charge of IT.

Visual and Performing Arts and Media

80. The focus was on Advanced Level art. Drama, theatre studies and film studies were also sampled. In drama, examination results were average in comparison to schools nationally. One lesson was observed in drama. The teaching was very good and through discussion the teacher encouraged students to think about and extend their presentations. Film studies and theatre studies were not examined in 2000. In film studies the teaching was good in both lessons seen. The teacher was well versed in the interpretation of films and was able to communicate this very effectively through well-developed class discussion. Teaching in theatre studies was also good with students gaining secure understanding.

ART

81. Overall the quality of provision is **good**.

Strengths

- Results in AS examinations in 2001 are much improved on 2000 and show good progress by students.
- Students attitudes to Art
- Teaching is very good.
- Leadership of the subject is very good and promotes a strong team approach.
- The department's contribution to the school beyond the taught curriculum.

Areas for improvement

- Accommodation particularly to support a full range of three-dimensional work.

82. The GCE A level examination results in 2000 showed a big drop in comparison to the trend of previous years. Results were well below in comparison to all schools. The most recent A level examination results for 2001 are more typical of the trend over time and show considerable improvement. AS level results for 2001 indicate very good achievement by students building upon their GCSE results. The department has an inclusive policy and encourages a wide ability range to study art.

83. The standard of work seen in lessons indicates students achieving well in relation to predictions based upon the GCSE results. Students in Year 13 have made very good progress, several achieving high standards in the recent AS examinations. Impressive and colourful displays of their work exploring the theme of 'self' and work based upon the study

of expressionist painting enrich the entrance area of the school. Students' sketchbooks show good progress with confident personal responses to themes and imaginative work that employs a range of media.

84. Current Year 12 students, both boys and girls, have made a very good start to their AS studies and after just a week in school were at the early stages of a unit of work on expressionism. They were already developing their knowledge and use of specialist language in discussions of their work and beginning to explore ideas through the use of a sketchbook.

85. Teaching is a strength of the department. Specialist knowledge is well used in the planning and teaching of lessons. Expectations are high and the development of discussion skills and use of specialist language is taught well and students make good progress as a result. There is good assessment of work and students are given individual tutorials and discussion of their work that enables them to understand how to improve. Year 12, for example, had already reviewed their work as a class as part of the next stage of working and was aware of how to develop their work as a result. Whilst there is strong guidance from teachers, there is also an expectation of high quality independent research by students through the use of sketchbooks as journals to record the development of ideas.

86. Leadership of the department is very good. The head of art leads by example and has developed a strong team of specialist teachers. The department has, since the time of the last inspection, developed the use of computers both to create artwork and to plan and record the work of the department. Accommodation has continued to be poor with many lessons taught in old 'temporary' classrooms. The department has worked very hard to overcome this and to make these pleasant environments but inevitably the accommodation imposes constraints particularly on the range of three-dimensional work that can be undertaken. The new building programme should provide sufficient specialist accommodation for all classes

HUMANITIES

PSYCHOLOGY

87. The focus was on the GCE 'AS'/'A' level psychology. Recent examination results for all grades have been above average. Students performed at the level expected or better. In the past the complete range of grades at 'A' level has been below average. However, for the cohorts of students studying psychology the results have added value. Four lessons were observed. The standard of teaching was good. Students learnt about the factors that affect other peoples' behaviour and feelings.

88. Overall, the quality of provision is **good**.

Strengths

- Students are involved in planning, researching and evaluating their own work.
- Students make independent decisions and evaluations during practical and experimental work.
- The teacher has a good factual knowledge of psychology and teaches the skills of scientific investigation.

Areas for improvement

- More and earlier targeting of those whose motivation and/or performance is seemingly flagging
- More testing under examination conditions.
- Drawing of conclusions from data requires more guidance on logical structure and clear

89. The GCE 'AS/A' level results in 2001 showed an improvement over the previous year. Most students in 2000 gained a pass grade the highest of which was a grade C. In 2001 the results were higher with good A to C grades being awarded. Far more girls take psychology. However, in this Year's AS level cohort the proportion of males has increased.

90. The standard of work of the current Year 13 students is satisfactory. A majority can focus their ideas on the task and they do receive help to enable them to improve. In the lessons seen a majority of students can spell, punctuate and use rules of grammar with considerable accuracy. They also use a good range of specialist terms with facility. This was illustrated in an activity examining gender differences in physical and verbal aggression. These skills help them to formulate and state a hypothesis and devise good categories for describing behaviour. A better understanding has to be acquired of interpreting data to recognise patterns, deduce relationships between variables, critically consider data and explain variability in data.

91. Students in Year 12 are commencing their study of psychology. Their descriptions of what psychology is are accurate but limited by their inexperience. Their work, though basic, does not lack detail. It is neither muddled nor flawed. They are learning to include details of research aims, participants, procedures, conclusions and the significance of leading studies.

92. Teaching is good. There is in all lessons informed commentary. Thorough analysis of the relevant psychological theories, concepts, studies and methods is given in Years 12 and 13. Resources are used in an effective manner and interpretations of the materials used are intellectually challenging. The features of good teaching and learning are that the psychological content is accurate and detailed at an appropriate level of knowledge, description and understanding for Years 12 or 13. The organisation and structure of the psychological content is coherent. There is, in each lesson, substantial evidence of breadth, depth and a balance of theory and experimental work.

93. The best written work available for scrutiny contained psychological content that was informed and thorough in terms of analysis and interpretation of relevant psychological theories, concepts, evidence or applications. A minority of students are weak at organising their ideas as an aspect of investigative work. In Year 13 the latest research material had been used in a highly effective manner and showed evidence of appropriate selection and coherent elaboration. The marking included clear, critical commentary on misunderstandings of complex theoretical perspectives and/or methodology approaches.

94. Most students learn well. The majority of work in Year 13 is characterised by the accurate and clear expression of ideas and the precise use of a broad range of specialist terms. Some work shows minor errors in grammar, punctuation and spelling. This sometimes results in rudimentary and flawed description.

95. Psychology is taught through devising tasks appropriate to a range of abilities, aptitudes and interests. There is a regular review of student progress through observation and discussion, leading to variation in the tasks students undertake. The teacher offers support for individual work both in person and through the ready availability of resources. Students work on tasks at, or just above, their current level of attainment. Most are clear about the nature and purpose of tasks they are undertaking. This increases their confidence to make the necessary decisions on more open psychology work.

96. The management of psychology is good. There is a high level of commitment by the teacher to planning, methods and training. Close attention to the needs of students is given. There is careful monitoring of individual progress. The teacher has a deep understanding of the subject. High expectations are held of what students can achieve. Students are encouraged to think for themselves, to ask questions, to take some responsibility for their own learning and to contribute ideas. There is a variation in pace, teaching style and classroom organisation. The teacher provides a stimulating learning environment that has contributed to some progress being made since the last inspection.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

97. The focus of inspection in English in the sixth form was directed toward courses in 'A' level English language, (one lesson observed), 'A' level English literature, (two lessons observed) and the combined 'A' level in Language and Literature course, (two lessons observed). The content and structure of lessons in Year 12 was very much influenced by the timing of the inspection, with students generally being given an introduction to the courses they are about to follow.

98. In 2000 examination results were well below the national average with few students gaining A or B grades. This attainment was reflected in the lessons observed with students achieving below average standards. Students did however achieve well in lessons in relation to their prior learning and made progress in their knowledge and understanding.

English

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

Strengths

- Good teaching, which provides for students to make progress in their knowledge of the texts they read and the written work that they produce.
- Good assessment, recording and monitoring procedures that enable staff to identify students' needs and to provide them with adequate support and guidance

Areas for improvement

- Students need opportunities to engage in personal study and research.
- Ensure that all students make a full and active contribution to all aspects of English lessons.

100. Attainment at the end of Year 13 is very much influenced by the open access policy adopted by the department and the school. Whilst all of the students in the current Year 13 gained an A* - C in their GCSE studies half of them obtained only a C grade. Likewise, over half of students gained a D – U grade in their recent A/S examination. All students will go on to study for their English 'A' levels in Year 13. Examination success is very much affected by student's average ability with results in the recent 'A' level examinations being well below the national average.

101. Many students display satisfactory oral skills and are able to articulate their ideas and opinions in a confident and mature manner. A significant minority of students in both Year 12 and 13 lack confidence in their speaking skills. They are good listeners and are happy to accept the views of the teachers and more confident members of the group, but make a limited contribution to lessons. This is reflected in much of their written work, with students often producing other peoples' responses to the texts they read, rather than giving their own.

102. Virtually all students in the sixth form are good readers. They read with fluency, interest and expression, with a number of above average students displaying high order reading skills. There are a number of students in the sixth form who still read at a surface level and find it difficult to read for sub-text and inference, and find it hard to read and talk about the writer's use of language. This issue is often reflected in their written work, which in turn impacts on their ability to gain the higher grades in their written work.

103. The standard of written work is of a variable quality and reflects the final examination grades gained by students. Some students find it difficult to produce a sustained and well-structured personal response to the books, plays, poetry and factual materials that they read. A number of students in the current Year 13 have yet to develop a mature style of writing with appropriate emphasis on syntax and structure.

104. Teaching is good overall. The main features of the good lessons observed were the well planned activities by teachers which provided for a good balance between teacher input and student activity. Teachers provide a good range of activities within a single lesson, with timed targets for each part of the lesson. All this ensures that lessons are brisk and purposeful. This is particularly important in view of the number of double lessons. Regular opportunities are provided for students to contribute to their own learning through good and challenging group activities. Much of the written work produced by students comes about in response to direct essay questions with too few opportunities for students to engage in personal research and to become independent learners. This is not helped by the poor study facilities in the sixth form.

105. Nearly all students display pleasure in their English and are prepared to work with interest and sustained effort. They have good working relationships with their teachers. This made a valuable contribution to the active working environment observed in many lessons.

106. A good range of departmental documentation supports teaching and learning. The assessment, recording and monitoring strategies used by the department enable teachers to quickly identify students with specific learning problems and to give support and advice.

107. The subject is well led and managed by a comparatively new head of department. In his short time in post he has addressed a number of concerns in the department and is working in consultation with his hard-working staff in putting into place a number of strategies and practices to help raise standards of attainment. When these are in place they will provide a sound foundation from which to move forward

FRENCH

108. Overall the quality of provision is **good**.

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is mostly good and some is very good
- Communication with native speakers is regular and beneficial.
- The management of the subject area is good.

Areas for improvement

- Better use of information and communication technology is needed.
- There is not enough extra-curricular provision.
- Resources to promote independent learning are scant.

109. In recent years, low numbers have entered for A-level French. In general, results have been above the national average for all schools, and in the last two years two male students attained the higher grade B. The quality of most students' coursework is good, reflecting secure knowledge of the language and a thoughtful approach to the set topics. Occasionally, students starting from a lower base of skills and knowledge find the work hard but produce simpler work that gains them lower pass grades. This limited but continuous success reflects the close co-operation between teachers and students in the small A-level classes.

110. The sample of students' work and a selection of lessons seen in Years 12 and 13 shows that standards overall are being maintained while the number of students taking French has increased. The Year 13 students, from ethnic minority and some from bi-lingual backgrounds, are currently achieving high standards in speaking and writing. Male and female students speak confidently and generally with a good degree of accuracy, expressing their ideas convincingly with telling illustrations from various sources and their own experience. A minority of students in Year 12 initially finds the transition from the simpler demands of GCSE hard, but gains rapidly in confidence due to the intensive and supportive atmosphere in class. Most A-level students' written work is good and a minority of pieces are excellent. Their level of grammatical accuracy and range of expression varies in both speech and writing but the quality of debate and rapid written summary of written resources is usually impressive. Most discursive essays are interesting and many reveal clearly the background, ideas and aspirations of their authors.

111. Most students have a sound grasp of grammar and sufficient vocabulary to tackle a range of topics spontaneously. Most have good powers of recall and absorb new elements quickly. In both Years 12 and 13, pupils display good powers of understanding when presented with authentic written texts or when listening to rapid and uncompromising spoken French. The less confident minority in Year 12 benefits from the good example and incidental support of their more articulate fellow students, extracting gist and detail from the French they read or hear.

112. The quality of teaching is never less than satisfactory. Most lessons are good and some are very good. This is reflected in the interest that students show in their work, their co-operation with their teachers, the steady growth in their confidence and the awareness they have of their own progress. Teachers are demanding of their students but sympathetic and supportive when tasks are hard or understanding incomplete. Much of the good language development in class stems from lively interaction combined with patient correction of students' mistakes and suggestions for improvement. Teachers plan their lessons well so that a series of short and varied activities sustains students' interest and exercises different skills in turn. Teachers bring to their lessons a variety of materials including recently published textbooks, newspaper and magazine extracts and videotapes. They ensure that the students themselves act as a learning resource, encouraging regular and spontaneous contributions to lessons. Teachers require students to research and bring to the lessons illuminating examples from their own and their families' experiences, or to do additional research using the Internet. Such contributions supplement the modest though adequate resources used in lessons, and partially compensate for the school's poor library facilities. They have not yet commissioned the recently acquired computers in the department, although students do use their own or those available in school to improve the presentation of their written work.

113. Teachers mark their students' work regularly and thoroughly, ensuring that they have an accurate appraisal of their standard in relation to examination requirements. They

regularly review students' progress and provide opportunities for discussion with learning mentors and parents.

114. Students of French are conscientious and relate well to teaching staff. They appreciate the depth of their teachers' subject knowledge and are mostly keen to develop their own. Students benefit from frequent contact with native French speakers in school, although there are, as yet, insufficient opportunities provided to live, work and travel abroad. A minority finds the work daunting and need their confidence boosting, especially in the early stages of Year 12. Most students show genuine interest in the topics they study, developing their own theories and convictions about social and economic issues such as the family, the environment and the media. By Year 13 they have acquired sufficient critical awareness to discuss and write about twentieth century literature and film. They quickly learn to work independently, using dictionaries and other sources to discover meanings and extend the range of their expression. In the liveliest lessons and the most accomplished written work, the mature and engaging personality of the students is given full expression.

115. Despite the small numbers taking French in recent years, the modern language department is thoroughly organised. Its policies are clear and the documentation sound. This provides a firm and supportive framework that enables well-established staff and newcomers to work with a common purpose. This continuity is evident in the day-to-day work of the new Head of Department and his colleagues, as well as in the clarity of their aims for the future. These include an increase in the number of students taking French and other languages, more frequent and beneficial use of information and communications technology and the provision of a richer selection of extra-curricular activities.