

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **THE HIGHFIELD SCHOOL**

Letchworth, Herts

LEA area: 919 Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117537

Headteacher: Jane Furnival

Reporting inspector: Brian Oppenheim  
2686

Dates of inspection: 12-15 November 2001

Inspection number: 194340

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

© Crown copyright 2001

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

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

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of students:	11-18 years
Gender of students:	Mixed
School address:	Highfield Letchworth Herts
Postcode:	SG6 3QA
Telephone number:	01462 620500
Fax number:	01462 620501
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr. Roger Storey
Date of previous inspection:	11/11/1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
2686	Brian Oppenheim	Registered inspector	Information technology	What sort of school is it? The school's results and students' achievements How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9977	Fran Luke	Lay inspector		Students' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
31548	Grahame Smith	Team inspector	English	
5317	Graham Clements	Team inspector	Science	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students?
1254	Marguerite Presman	Team inspector	Mathematics	
2731	Penny Holden	Team inspector	Special educational needs English as an additional language	
16762	Rosemarie Little	Team inspector	Geography History	
7084	Jack Haslam	Team inspector	Design and technology	
18884	Charles Whitham	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
18447	Ronald Cohen	Team inspector	Religious education	How well are students taught?
14446	Barry Simmons	Team inspector	Physical education	How well does the school care for its students?
15926	Janet Dyson	Team inspector	Music	

31114	Ann Power	Team inspector	Art Equal opportunities Physical education (support)	
12003	Andrew Marfleet	Team inspector	Religious education (support)	
23402	Birendra Singh	Team inspector		
23289	Carol Singh	Team inspector		

The inspection contractor was:

icp

360 Lee Valley Technopark  
Ashley Road  
London  
N17 9LN

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

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

## REPORT CONTENTS

Page

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

**7**

Information about the school  
How good the school is  
What the school does well  
What could be improved  
How the school has improved since its last inspection  
Standards  
Students' attitudes and values  
Teaching and learning  
Other aspects of the school  
How well the school is led and managed  
Parents' and carers' views of the school

### **ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM**

### **PART B: COMMENTARY**

#### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

**15**

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

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

**18**

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

**20**

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

**24**

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

**26**

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

**27**

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

**30**

### **PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS**

**32**

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

**37**

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

**57**

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

The Highfield School is an average sized mixed comprehensive school of about 900 students aged 11-18: 150 are in the sixth form. Students come from about 15 primary schools in the wider surrounding area. Most students come from white heritage backgrounds and about 17 per cent from a range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds including Black Caribbean, Black African and Indian. Fifteen students speak a language other than English and the school receives extra money to support 35, three of whom are just beginning to learn the English. Just over nine per cent of students are entitled to school meals free of charge, which is below average. Last year 258 students, or 26 per cent, had identified learning needs which is above the national average. Of these 13 had a statement of need: this figure is roughly in line with the average. When students start at the school, their attainment is broadly average.

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

The Highfield School gives its pupils a good education. Open leadership and practical management have had a strong impact on improving pupils' experiences: good teaching and learning are helping to push up standards. As a result value for money is good.

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

- Standards are improving, particularly in science, modern foreign languages, religious education and design and technology, and are high in art at GCSE.
- Good teaching has a strong impact on pupils' learning and on the improving standards.
- The open way the school is led and managed ensures that staff are involved in improvement.
- Pupils have very good attitudes to school and to their work: these positive attitudes help pupils to learn and achieve well.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils and between pupils are very constructive: they help teachers to teach and pupils to learn.
- The strong and caring ethos is based on encouraging all pupils to reach their potential: this is why so many pupils benefit from what the school provides.

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

- Standards still need to rise especially in mathematics and information and communication technology in Years 10 and 11, in geography and in art in Years 7 – 9.
- Statutory requirements for information and communication technology and religious education are not yet met.
- The way the school identifies the most pressing targets for development and measures progress towards them is not sharp enough.
- Assessment is not used enough in all subjects to give pupils targets for improving their learning.
- Space is very tight: some subjects are taught in unsuitable rooms which sometimes limits pupils' achievements.

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

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

The school has made good progress since the last inspection in 1996. Standards have improved and teaching and learning have improved strongly because of the more thorough systems for monitoring quality introduced over the last two years or so. New computerised systems mean that attendance registers are filled in properly each day: they are also being used to monitor patterns of attendance. The quality of the individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs is good and these are now monitored very effectively.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 11 and 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
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	C	C	C	C
A-levels/AS-levels	D	D	n/a	

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

Standards at The Highfield School are average by the end of Year 11 and pupils do as well as those in similar schools<sup>1</sup>. When pupils' GCSE results are compared with their achievements in the national tests at the end of Year 9, performance is above average.<sup>2</sup>: in other words pupils make good progress in the two years between Year 9 and Year 11. This is borne out by looking at the 2001 results in more detail: if the nine pupils who attended the local college or education centre are not included, results for those pupils who completed their Year 11 education at The Highfield are above average and pupils do better than those in similar schools.

Over the last five years GCSE standards have risen at a faster rate than results nationally. The school has set itself challenging targets over the past few years and came pretty close to achieving them in 2001: the targets for 2002 are equally challenging. The best GCSE results were in science, French, art and design and technology: results were also good in drama, statistics and physical education and there were strengths in English and food technology. Results were weakest in geography and business studies: religious education has not been a GCSE course. Results in mathematics are not as high as they should be given the higher than average results at the end of Year 9: this is because teaching is less consistent in Years 10 and 11 than the lower years. The gap between boys' and girls' results is quite a bit smaller than the national picture. This is because boys' results were slightly higher than the average and girls' were slightly lower.

GCE A and A/S level results also show that standards are improving but remain below average overall: fewer students than average gain the highest grades of A and B. However, the school's analysis of results indicates that students make at least satisfactory progress: indeed, achievement in a number of subjects is above average. Performance looks high, for example, in mathematics, art, graphics and drama but low in biology. Standards have risen, too, in the Intermediate GNVQ courses taken in the sixth form: 96 per cent of students achieved a qualification in 2001 compared with 77 per cent in 2000.

The work seen in lessons confirms the picture painted by test and examination results. The pattern of GCSE results is mirrored in achievement in lessons: science, art, design and technology, modern languages and physical education all do well. Similarly, Year 9 test results reflect achievement in lessons with mathematics and science doing a little better than English where pupils' achievements show promising signs of improvement. Achievement in information and communication technology (ICT) is close to expectations in Years 7 to 9 but in Years 10 and 11 standards are below average because pupils do not use computers enough in the different subjects. Broadly all pupils make good progress as they move through the school and achieve well

<sup>1</sup> Similar schools means schools with a similar proportion of pupils who qualify for school meals free of charge which, for The Highfield School, is between nine and 13 per cent of pupils.

<sup>2</sup> This means that pupils' GCSE results are compared with other schools that have similar National Curriculum test results (SATs) at the end of Year 9.



compared with where they started at the beginning of Year 7. This shows that the school adds value to pupils' learning and reflects in the good teaching seen right across the school.

### **PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Attitudes to the school	Very good: pupils are eager to come to school and enthusiastic about their work. This contributes well to their learning and achievement.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good: it is better in lessons than around the school where narrow corridors can make movement between lessons difficult.
Personal development and relationships	Good: relationships are good throughout the school and pupils have a firm understanding of their social and moral responsibilities. Pupils' spiritual and cultural awareness is satisfactory but their understanding of different cultures is underdeveloped.
Attendance	Satisfactory: it is just below the national average but has improved.

Pupils' attitudes are a particular strength of the school: this is one of the reasons why pupils make good progress with their learning and achieve well. The mixed age groups used for tutor time also have a positive impact on learning: good relationships, sensible behaviour and pupils' understanding of their responsibilities allow teachers to teach.

### **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

<b>Teaching of pupils:</b>	<b>Years 7 – 9</b>	<b>Years 10 – 11</b>	<b>Years 12 – 13</b>
Quality of teaching	Good	Good	Good

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

Teaching is good: this is an important improvement since the previous inspection. In the main school, in Years 7 to 11, over two thirds of the teaching is at least good while in the sixth form, all lessons are at least satisfactory and a very high proportion is good or very good. The very small proportion of unsatisfactory lessons is almost entirely concentrated in Years 7 to 9 with just one in Years 10 and 11. As a result of this good teaching, pupils learn well.

The strengths in teaching and learning include:

- the skilful way teachers manage their pupils, encouraging them by using appropriate praise;
- teachers have high expectations of pupils and give most pupils information about the standards they are reaching or could aspire to;
- pupils' learning is brisk because teaching always sets a strong pace;
- good lesson plans mean that teachers' impressive subject expertise is used to the full.

In the small number of lessons where teaching is unsatisfactory or where it is just satisfactory:

- pupils are not sure what they are supposed to do because the purpose of the lesson is unclear and they do not know what is expected of them;
- work is not demanding enough to stretch pupils and get them thinking;
- too many pupils are allowed to sit and listen rather than discuss and research ideas, deepen their understanding or use what they know to work out a problem.

In most subjects, the teaching of literacy is satisfactory. It is good in English and history. The teaching of numeracy is good in mathematics but is not yet sufficiently developed in most subjects.

### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory: the school provides a curriculum which generally supports the needs of pupils well.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good: support for pupils with special needs is good but the curriculum is not yet modified to meet the specific needs of gifted and talented pupils.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good: the small number of pupils are supported well getting help that is well matched to their particular needs.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. Provision for pupils' moral and social development is good because teachers set high standards of behaviour and establish good relationships. Provision is satisfactory for pupils' spiritual and cultural development but opportunities are sometimes missed particularly to promote pupils' understanding of different cultures.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. Pupils are cared for well and arrangements for their welfare, and for checking their personal development, are good. Assessment procedures are good in some subjects, though there are some weaknesses.

The school works well with parents and gives them helpful information: parents are broadly very involved in the life of the school. The legal requirement to teach religious education and information and communication technology in to all pupils in Years 10 and 11 are not met but the school is continuing to develop and expand both subjects. Similarly, the school does not comply with the need to hold a daily act of collective worship: nevertheless, the quality of assemblies is often very good and is part of the way the school sets out its strong moral and social stand.

### HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good: direct, robust leadership and practical management have a strong impact on what the school provides and how it cares for pupils. Heads of department are becoming increasingly effective in the way they strive for improvement.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors understand the school's priorities well and give strong support to improvement: most of their responsibilities are carried out efficiently.
The school's evaluation of its performance	There are good arrangements for checking that lessons promote pupils' learning and the analysis of examination results is very thorough. But the way it identifies the most pressing school-wide development priorities and measures progress towards them is not as sharp.
The strategic use of resources	The school manages its budget efficiently and effectively, ensuring that money is allocated to its educational priorities.

Resources for learning, including things like books and materials are broadly sufficient for pupils' needs. But there are not enough computers or video players, to allow all subjects to use information and communications technology: not surprisingly, pupils' achievements in ICT are not as high as they could be. Classroom space is very tight and means that some subjects cannot be taught in the same room each lesson: this sometimes limits pupils' achievements. The principles of best value are used well by the school but the governing body considers the comparisons with similar schools based on free school meals data as inappropriate.

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

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils have very good attitudes to school.</li> <li>• The progress made by their children.</li> <li>• The school responds well to their concerns and suggestions.</li> <li>• Teachers respect pupils who, in turn respond well.</li> <li>• Homework diaries/planners.</li> <li>• Reports about their children's work and progress.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Homework: some parents felt there is too much, others that there is too little.</li> <li>• They are not always as well informed as they would like.</li> <li>• The school does not always work closely with parents.</li> </ul>

Thirty-four parents attended the meeting for parents before the inspection and a little over 20 per cent responded to a questionnaire about their views of the school. Overall, parents' views are positive and inspectors broadly agree with them. The inspection team also found that information for parents is satisfactory overall and sometimes good. The homework diaries, for example, are used well by parents to communicate with the school. Despite parent misgivings, inspectors found that homework is good, and either compliments class work, or moves pupils' learning forward. Parents indicated they liked the new style written annual reports for parents: inspectors agree that some of the reports for older pupils are good and that the targets set are very good. In some, however, targets are too vague and could be improved.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The Highfield School has a sixth form of 150 students which makes it about the same size as most other sixth forms. The ethnic mix of the sixth form broadly reflects that of the main school: most students come from white backgrounds and a small number from Black Caribbean or Asian heritages. There is a broad range of subjects and vocational courses which are enhanced by working in partnership to set up a consortium with two other local secondary schools. Together, the three schools are able to offer a broader range of courses than The Highfield could by itself. Just under two thirds of students from Year 11 joined the sixth form, plus a few from other schools, and a very high proportion of these complete their courses. Examination results at the end of Year 11 are broadly average but the school keeps about half of its students who have special learning needs. Many students take A/S and A-level courses but some sign up for Intermediate GNVQ programmes.

## HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form is broadly successful and cost effective. Performance in examinations is below the average for sixth forms but students learn well and, given their starting point, achieve appropriately: this is because teaching is good. Students clearly benefit from staying on in the sixth form and their personal development is particularly well catered for.

### Strengths

- Teaching is good and has a strong impact on students' learning.
- Relationships between teachers and students are very good: as a result they respond well to their work and the school as a whole.
- Students are good at taking responsibility and playing a full part in the life of the school: the way they mentor younger students helps develop their personal skills.
- Students are cared for well: the sixth form provides a safe environment in which students can mature at their own pace and develop a sense of responsibility.

### What could be improved

- Standards in biology are not as high as they could be.
- Better communication with teachers from the other schools in the consortium so that best practice, and information about students' prior achievements and needs, is shared.
- Accommodation is very tight and there are not always enough teaching rooms for sixth form students.

*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	<b>Good.</b> Achievement is above the national average. Teaching is good or very good and as a result students are confident learners and achieve well.
Biology	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Achievement is below the average. Teaching is sound and means that students make satisfactory progress from a lower than average starting point .
Physics	<b>Good.</b> Achievement is above average. Teaching is good and as a result students make good progress .
Design and technology	<b>Very good.</b> Students make very good progress and achieve above average results. This is because the teaching is very good.
Business studies	<b>Good.</b> Teaching is good and occasionally very good and leads to learning. Achievement is average because students do not take enough responsibility for their learning.
Physical education	<b>Good.</b> The small number of students who took the examination gained pass grades that were higher than the national average. Teaching is good.
Art	<b>Very good.</b> Standards are high, particularly students' understanding of the creative process. Very good teaching challenges students' thinking.
History	<b>Good.</b> Standards in class are improving and achievement is average. However, students' achievements are affected by weak language skills. Teaching is skilful and confident and is sometimes inspirational.
English	<b>Good.</b> Students make satisfactory progress and usually achieve above average results. Teaching and learning are very good. Students have positive attitudes to the subject.

The work of other subjects was sampled including lessons at one of the other schools in the consortium. Teaching is always satisfactory and often good. There were particular strengths in the teaching of modern languages where students achieve well.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Students receive good advice and guidance from their subject teachers. The head of the sixth form monitors students' progress at key points during the year. The advice and support on future careers is good. Sixth formers receive appropriate specialist guidance and help in their planning of courses and careers.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	The sixth form is led and managed well. The head of the sixth form leads a cohesive and committed team of tutors very effectively. A particularly strong feature of the sixth form is the way it is an integral part of the whole school and reflects its strong and caring ethos. The analysis of students' performance is thorough and used appropriately to identify areas for improvement. The governing body is committed to the

	sixth form and sees it as an essential part of the school.
--	--

## STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• They enjoy being in the sixth form.</li><li>• They are taught well and challenged by the work.</li><li>• They are helped and encouraged to study.</li><li>• Information about courses is clear.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Careers advice.</li><li>• Assessment and the information about the progress they are making.</li><li>• The range of activities available to them.</li></ul>

Questionnaires were returned by 31 per cent of the sixth form students some of whom had only recently started Year 12. Nearly all had positive views about the sixth form and the inspection team endorses these strengths. Inspectors judge that careers advice was good but agree that assessment could be improved so that all students are clear about where they are and how to improve although the new A/S-levels make this more of a challenge. The range of activities for sixth form students is broadly satisfactory.

## COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

## PART B: COMMENTARY

### HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

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

1. Standards at The Highfield School are average overall. The results of the 2001 GCSE examinations are average for England and pupils do as well as those in schools with characteristics similar to The Highfield School<sup>3</sup>. However, when pupils' GCSE results are compared with their achievements in the national tests at the end of Year 9, performance is high<sup>4</sup>: in other words pupils make good progress in the two years between Year 9 and Year 11. This is borne out by looking at the 2001 results in more detail: if the nine pupils who attended the local college or education centre are not included, results are better. They show that, for those pupils who completed their Year 11 education at The Highfield School in 2001, standards are above average and pupils do better than those in similar schools. The school has set itself challenging targets over the past few years and came pretty close to achieving them in 2001: the targets for 2002 are equally challenging.
2. Over the last five years GCSE standards have been broadly average overall but improving at a faster rate than results nationally. A more detailed analysis of the 2001 GCSE results shows the percentage of pupils who gained five or more A\* - C grades is slightly lower than the national figure. On the other hand, the proportion who achieved five or more A\* - G grades is slightly higher than the national figure. This difference between the two sets of results explains why overall performance is broadly average. When these figures are compared with pupils' prior achievements they show that the school was successful in helping pupils achieve well: what is interesting, however, is that it did better in 2000 than 2001. Of course, small differences between one year and the next are not significant but they do show that the school did not add quite as much to pupils' learning in 2001 as it did in 2000 and is something it should keep an eye on.
3. The best GCSE results were in science, French, art and design and technology: results were also good in drama, statistics and physical education and there were strengths in English and food technology. GCSE results in mathematics are a little below average and were lower than in 2000. Results in mathematics are not as high as they should be given the higher than average results at the end of Year 9: this is because teaching and marking are less consistent in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9.. Results were weakest in geography and business studies: religious education has not been a GCSE course. The gap between boys' and girls' results is quite a bit smaller than the national picture: this is because although boys' and girls results in 2001 were both close to the national average, boys' were slightly higher and girls' were slightly lower.
4. The results of the end of Year 9 National Curriculum tests in English are average and pupils did as well as those in similar schools. In mathematics and science results are above average and compared with similar schools pupils did well in mathematics and very well in science. In the 2001 tests boys did a little better than girls and although both were close to the average, boys' results were slightly above and girls' results were just a fraction below.
5. The work seen in lessons confirms the picture provided by the examination results. However, 2001 has seen an improvement in pupils' achievements in, for example, science: overall, pupils now in Year 11 look as though they will consolidate this improvement when they take their GCSE examinations in 2002 and improve in others such as English. The pattern of GCSE results and Year 9 tests is mirrored in achievement in lessons: science, design and technology, modern languages and physical education all do well. In art pupils do very well by the end of Year 11 but do not reach national expectations by the end of Year 9. Broadly pupils make good progress as they

---

<sup>3</sup> Schools with similar characteristics means schools with a similar proportion of pupils who qualify for school meals free of charge which, for The Highfield, is between nine and 13 per cent of pupils.

<sup>4</sup> This means that pupils' GCSE results are compared with other schools that have similar National Curriculum test results (SATs) at the end of Year 9.

move through the school and achieve well compared with where they started at the beginning of Year 7. This shows that the school adds value to pupils' learning and reflects in the good teaching seen right across the school. Similarly GCSE results in mathematics mirror pupils' achievements in lessons: here, standards are a little below average at the end of Year 11 but higher at the end of Year 9 largely because teaching is more consistent in the lower years which helps most pupils make better progress. As a result standards in mathematics are not as high as they should be by the end of Year 11.

6. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are broadly in line with expectations for pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 but across the school there is not enough use of ICT. This means that in Years 10 and 11 standards are below average and pupils do not apply what they have learnt about ICT lower down the school to their GCSE and other examination courses. There are some notable exceptions: in music, for example, good use is made of ICT despite there being no room for up-graded computers in the teaching areas.

7. The contribution made by subjects to pupils' competency in literacy is satisfactory overall and standards are broadly average. A range of different methods are used effectively to help pupils plan their writing, develop their vocabulary, discuss ideas together and develop their reading habits and skills: however, these are not yet used consistently right across the school and explains why standards of literacy are not higher. There is a new policy for numeracy across the school but this has not yet had sufficient impact on the quality of pupils' numeracy skills and standards.

8. The above average number of pupils with special learning needs make good progress particularly when they receive support from either a learning support assistant or teacher. Initiatives such as the small Year 7 skill teaching sessions are very effective in helping pupils acquire the skills needed to work alongside their classmates. The small number of pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress and are supported well.

## **Sixth form**

9. GCE A-and A/S-level results also show that standards are improving but remain below average overall: fewer students gain the highest grades of A and B. However, a more detailed analysis of the figures reveals that in 2000 the school came very close to achieving average results: similarly, the 2001 figures also look as though they just fell short of matching the average for England. In addition, the school's own analysis of results indicates that students make at least satisfactory progress: indeed, achievement in some subjects is above average. Performance is above average, for example, in mathematics, art, graphics and drama but it remains below average in biology. Standards have risen, too, in the Intermediate GNVQ courses taken in the sixth form: 96 per cent of students achieved a qualification in 2001 compared with 77 per cent in 2000.

10. Work seen in lessons broadly confirms the standards reached in examinations but there is evidence of improving levels of achievement. In English, for example, AS level examination coursework shows a high standard of written work and in lessons observed, students were analysing passages from Shakespeare plays with great confidence. In physics, there is an upward trend in A level performance which is backed up by the evidence from lessons: here, because teaching is good, students make good progress in their learning and achieve well. In geography, standards have risen significantly and they are now close to the average having been very low in 2000. This improvement was evident in lessons too: students had particularly good attitudes to their work and responded well to a recent field trip.

11. The standards students achieve in skills of communication and the use of number are sound. Last year, for example, 27 students took a course in English for business as part of the school's basic, or key, skills provision. In 2001 56 per cent achieved the equivalent of a GCSE grade C which is broadly average. All students now take a basic course in information and communication technology: their skills remain fairly basic overall. The proportion of pupils who continue with their sixth form studies is high: about 90 per cent of students complete their courses.



12. There are an unusually high number of students in the sixth form with special educational needs as the school is committed to giving these students the opportunity to continue their education in the school. These students make good progress and often achieve more than they themselves expect. This is one of the reasons why attainment in examinations remains below average overall but students' achievement, and the progress they make towards their targets, is at least satisfactory.

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

13. Pupils' attitudes have improved considerably since the last inspection and are now very good overall. All pupils are enthusiastic and eager to come to school and have very positive attitudes to their work, which supports learning and teaching. The great majority of pupils listen and follow instructions well, they work hard at their tasks and in many cases remain on task throughout the lessons. In a design and technology lesson pupils took pride in their work and persevered to achieve their best. In many lessons, pupils show good levels of concentration and are happy to contribute; they show a great deal of interest in their work, which they enjoy, and they remain focused and on task.

14. Relationships throughout the school are good. There is often a mutual respect between staff and pupils. Staff provide good role models for the pupils. The good relationships allow pupils to respond well to staff, which encourages them in their work. Pupils work well together in pairs as well as in groups; they collaborate well, sharing ideas and are happy to listen to the views and opinions of others, which they respect.

15. Behaviour throughout the school is good, although it is better in lessons than around the school where there is a lack of space in some of the narrow corridors. No vandalism was seen during the inspection nor was any bullying, oppressive behaviour or racist behaviour seen. However, some pupils spoken to do refer to some incidents of bullying and racism, which they felt have not been dealt with as well as they would like. These are the exception: the school has now improved its systems and pupils are mostly now clear about the procedures should they require any help. Staff confirm that there are detailed procedures in place to deal with any incidents of bullying or racism and that all incidents are treated very seriously. Evidence from pupils' files confirms that the school takes these issues seriously. There are also good opportunities for parents or pupils to obtain help and advice speedily from the appropriate staff; parents indicate that the school is now very quick in responding to their concerns or enquiries.

16. Pupils use equipment and resources well. In design and technology pupils handle glassware and other equipment sensibly and with care. There are opportunities for pupils to take on additional responsibility and they respond well. The sixth form pupils help with the school council; other pupils are elected from each tutor group and are representative of all year groups, and take their role seriously. Older pupils are encouraged to look after younger ones, for example they 'buddy' Year 7 pupils and keep a check on the homework diaries of those pupils within their tutor groups.

17. The school has worked hard to reduce the level of permanent exclusions. The level of fixed period exclusions has risen but this is a short-term problem. The school is using early intervention and working with pupils thus reducing the need for exclusions. The school confirms that the number of fixed period exclusions has begun to reduce and that this trend will continue.

18. Pupils' personal development is good overall. They respond well to other cultures in art and music. A significant time is spent in modern foreign languages in Years 7 - 9 looking at other cultures. Overall pupils' awareness of cultures other than their own is underdeveloped because it is not always part of teachers' plans: this means that pupils are not as well prepared as they might be for dealing with the increasingly diverse culture represented in the country. However, where pupils are given the opportunities, they respond very well: for example, pupils enjoyed learning about the customs and food of Muslims in a religious education lesson. Pupils' spiritual awareness is satisfactory: when listening to a pupil read in Arabic from the Koran, for example, a Year 8 class

were fascinated and completely reverent. In a Year 11 art lesson pupils responding to a topic on a sense of place talked sensitively about their beliefs and motivation.

19. Attendance at school is broadly satisfactory although it is just below the national average. The school has made efforts to improve the level of attendance and the newly introduced computerised system of registration enables staff to monitor and track the attendance of individual pupils as well as groups of pupils. Parents are informed regularly of the procedure for reporting absences; the school contacts parents on the first day of absence if no reason for absence has been given. Where there are problems with attendance, the school meets regularly with the education welfare officer. The school works hard to ensure that pupils continue to receive education, either at home or at a different institution if appropriate.

### **Sixth form**

20. In the sixth form students' attitudes are very good. They are keen, well motivated and show considerable interest in their work, concentrating well and taking their work very seriously. Pupils clearly enjoy their lessons and are confident learners; they are stimulated and remain on task. Pupils persevere to achieve their best. They behave responsibly throughout the school and in lessons. They have good relationships with each other and with staff, which assists learning. Pupils give good support to other pupils within the school.

21. Students' develop their independence and initiative well and carry out a range of school-wide responsibilities. For example, they help with sports clubs and younger pupils with their reading, and mentor others. Students also organise the school council. The very active sixth form committee, elected by students, deals with a wide range of issues and students quiz evenings, visits to the theatre and an elaborate May Ball that raises money for the school. Students also take responsibility for deciding how the money is to be used and have recently used money raised to replace furniture in the sixth form common room buy books for the library. Occasionally, for example in history, teachers tend to spoon feed the students and do not always encourage them enough to be independent learners. This can sometimes limit learning a little.

22. Students' views of the school are satisfactory overall. Whilst the majority of students have positive views, a small but significant minority have some concerns about the level of support given by the school. However, many of the students who completed and returned the pre-inspection questionnaire had only just started their sixth form studies and had yet to experience some of the school's support for such areas as careers. Overall, inspectors judged careers provision to be good.

23. Attendance is satisfactory. Staff monitor attendance very closely and discuss concerns with other schools within the consortium.

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

24. The quality of teaching in the school as a whole is good. This represents a marked improvement since the previous inspection. Of the lessons seen, in 96 per cent teaching was satisfactory or better. This included about two per cent with excellent teaching, 26 per cent in which it was very good and about 40 per cent with good teaching. The quality of teaching was satisfactory in 28 per cent and only in four per cent of lessons was it less than satisfactory.

25. For Years 7 to 9, the pattern is similar to that of the school as a whole, although the school's very small proportion of unsatisfactory lessons is almost entirely concentrated here. In Years 10 and 11 only one lesson out of the 61 observed was unsatisfactory and in the sixth form, all lessons were at least satisfactory and a very high proportion, 78 per cent, was good or very good. As a result of this good teaching, pupils learn well. The quality of learning is good across the school as a whole.

26. In those lessons where teaching is unsatisfactory, the lessons are characterised by a lack of clarity of objectives. As a result, pupils are not sure what they are supposed to do and the lessons lack purpose. Sometimes the objectives are clear but they do not sufficiently challenge the pupils, or, more commonly, the teacher allows too many pupils to be passive recipients rather than active participants in their own learning.

27. The majority of lessons, however, have many good teaching features. Teachers manage their pupils well, using maximum encouragement and appropriate praise. Teachers show high expectations of pupils and most pupils have a good grasp of the standards they are reaching or could aspire to, and the pace of their learning is good, due to consistently strong teaching.

28. While staff changes have taken place at the school since the last inspection, the good quality of teaching owes more to changes in style. The school has chosen to develop a working policy for effective teaching and learning, which will eventually be based on best and tested practice over the next few years. In the school's development plan, a clearly effective programme of development towards that final Teaching and Learning Policy has been laid down. The programme gives the opportunities for all staff to be involved with and become more secure with teaching strategies concerning such aspects as lesson planning and structure, effective strategies to promote thinking skills and independent learning, the use of homework and other practical considerations. Staff use these strategies consistently well. As a result, planning is a good feature of teaching across the school and it allows the very impressive subject expertise of the teachers to be fully utilised.

29. The improvement in teaching and learning, since the last inspection, has been general across subjects but has been particularly marked in some subjects. In a school where all subjects could boast some outstanding lessons, teaching in some subject areas were consistently of a high standard. These include French, design and technology and religious education.

30. In many lessons, the strength of teaching and learning combine with great effect. For example, in a Year 11 class in personal and social education, where the underlying theme was developing moral and social awareness, pupils, just returning to school after work experience, were encouraged by searching questions by the teacher to share their experiences with their peers in order to push their understanding forward. The teacher's very good relationship with the pupils enabled them to recount individual experiences confidently and without embarrassment. These included moral and social issues in the workplace, such as the treatment of gay workers. The teacher's professional but sensitive handling of the discussion meant that pupils learned much about the world of work whilst enhancing their own social and moral development.

31. In a Year 9 religious education lesson, teaching was deemed to be very good overall, since it had many features which characterised good teaching in the school. The lesson was well prepared and had a very good structure. The teacher had very good rapport with the pupils. The lesson had pace and challenge, and it engaged the pupils immediately and kept them involved till the very end of the lesson. The lesson was on the theme of prejudice and discrimination. The teacher began by using the last homework to praise beyond reasonableness certain pupils in the class. He added to the praise by giving them sweets. He then turned his attention to another group of pupils about whom his criticism was very barbed. He immediately asked the same question of all those who had been praised, "What colour are your eyes?" All replied "blue", similarly, those who had been lambasted all had brown eyes. All this happening in the opening five minutes of the lesson set the scene for an exciting and thought-provoking lesson, at the end of which, all pupils could define both prejudice and discrimination, use analytical skills to evaluate their own feelings at the moment of elation or distress and finally write lengthily and meaningfully about them.

32. In an art lesson with Year 7, teaching was very good because the teacher displayed several strong features of the good teaching of the school. Excellent planning ensured that clear slots of time were allocated to a brief introduction and a review of recent homework, which had been done well and which the teacher celebrated accordingly. Good organisation meant that the homework was skilfully linked to the object of the lesson which was to introduce the concept of hot

and cold colours and tone. The teacher's own obvious love for her subject enthused the pupils. She used personal anecdotes well to illustrate the points she wanted to make but did not dwell on them and got the pupils working quickly on their own tasks. Throughout this well-organised lesson changes of activity and regular encouragement helped pupils maintain attention. As a result they attained well above what might be expected.

33. In most subjects, the teaching of literacy is satisfactory. It is good in English and history. The teaching of numeracy is good in mathematics but is not yet sufficiently developed in most subjects.

34. The quality of teaching and learning for pupils with special educational needs is good with some that is very good and gives rise to good progress and standards relative to pupils' previous attainment. Teachers understand how to use their expertise and resources to make learning accessible and challenging. Pupils are usually well motivated and they concentrate well and enjoy their successes. Learning support assistants give good support, which has a positive impact on pupils' attainment in mainstream classes. Teachers take account of the targets set out in individual education plans, which contain clear targets and are sufficiently practical for subject teachers to implement when support staff are not present.

### **Sixth form**

35. Forty lessons were inspected in the sixth form. The quality of teaching is good overall. It was satisfactory in around a quarter of the lessons seen and good in over half. Teaching is very good in one in every three lessons. In no lesson seen was teaching unsatisfactory overall. The quality of teaching is similar in both Years 12 and 13.

36. Amongst the strongest features of sixth form teaching is the depth of teachers' command of their subjects. This results in students being given a wide-ranging, articulate and up-to-date view of their chosen subjects. Most teachers confidently encourage at least a little debate, maintain a good pace, provide well-chosen resources and convey their personal enthusiasm to students. In-depth marking generally gives students an accurate view of the standard they have reached and wise guidance on how to improve. Staff put in much effort on behalf of students. Most basic skills and techniques are well taught and reinforced.

37. The pre-inspection questionnaire completed by nearly all students gives a very strong endorsement of the school's teaching. Nearly all students amongst the vast majority who returned the questionnaire feel that they are given helpful and constructive advice, are taught well and expected to do their best, and receive appropriate help with research. A slightly smaller, but still high, proportion believe that their work is thoroughly assessed and that they are kept well informed about their progress. Inspectors agree with these judgements.

38. In the sixth form, there are weak features in only a few lessons. These relate mainly to the depth and pace of learning. Occasionally lessons move along too slowly, so that insufficient ground is covered. A little more common is the modest level of expectation of both teachers and students, with the result that issues are examined fairly superficially. Their low level of general knowledge or specialist background also hampers the progress of a minority of students. Some students lack confidence and are too reliant on their teacher for guidance and they are not always encouraged to learn independently. This sometimes hinders their progress. However, in the vast majority of lessons, students work productively and respond well to skilful teaching. As a result, in most subjects they make good advances in their knowledge and understanding.

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

39. The school provides a curriculum which supports the needs of pupils well. Pupils identified as having special educational needs have access to the entire curriculum. All the

subjects of the National Curriculum are taught to pupils up to the end of Year 11. However, the school does not meet the requirement to teach religious education to all pupils, as laid out in the locally agreed arrangements and syllabus: this is because too many pupils do not study religious education in Years 10 and 11. Similarly, arrangements for information and communication technology in Years 10 and 11 do not meet statutory requirements: again this is because too few pupils study the subject and computers are not used enough in other subjects to enable pupils to cover all aspects of the National Curriculum. There is good provision for personal, social and health education and this has a strong impact on pupils' sense of what is right and wrong and their understanding of relationships. A small number of pupils follow a vocational course at the local college, which gives them a more worthwhile experience, better suited to their needs than the school can provide. This provision clearly has the potential to benefit these pupils but because the school has little information about their outcomes, and how well they achieve, it is difficult for it to know for sure.

40. The school has adopted a teaching week of 25 hours which is in line with that in most secondary schools. The generous time allocated to modern foreign languages in Years 7 - 9 allows all but a few pupils to study two foreign languages in Years 8 and 9. This is one of the reasons why pupils do well in this subject and has a strong impact on standards in modern foreign languages. In Years 10 and 11 all pupils take double science which is well above the national average for maintained schools and gives all pupils the opportunity to gain a broad science education.

41. Pupils are grouped for teaching using a variety of arrangements which change as they move through the school. All subjects except mathematics, for example, teach pupils in mixed ability groups during Year 7. In Years 8 and 9 mathematics and geography, for example, take all pupils and put them into teaching groups according to ability: science, modern foreign languages and history do the same thing but split the year into half before putting them into teaching groups determined by ability. In English, on the other hand, pupils are grouped by ability in Year 8 but taught in mixed ability groups in Year 9. These arrangements are broadly effective and help teachers adapt the curriculum for each pupil so that it is appropriate to their individual needs. In Years 10 and 11, grouping by ability in mathematics, science, modern foreign languages and Year 10 English is used effectively to ensure that the curriculum is appropriate to the needs of all pupils. Some departments help to raise literacy skills, for example, by implementation of spelling policies and display of key words, but a focus on improving pupils' skills across all subjects is not as strong as it could be. Twenty minutes of tutor time is designated each week for reading but this is not used consistently in all tutor groups and this reduces the effectiveness of an otherwise good strategy. Strategies for teaching numeracy skills are unsatisfactory because the school strategy has yet to be implemented by all departments.

42. Throughout the school, support for pupils identified as having special needs is good. Individual education plans are in place for all pupils as required by the Code of Practice. Learning objectives on these plans, particularly those set by the special needs department, are realistic and attainable, reviewed regularly and, where appropriate, new targets are set or existing ones modified. However, the curriculum is not, as yet, modified to meet the specific needs of gifted and talented pupils.

43. All pupils gain some experience in the use of information and communications technology in Years 7, 8 and 9 but there is insufficient opportunity to develop ICT skills throughout the school, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Some pupils use their ICT skills to improve the presentation of their coursework but practice varies between subjects.

44. In addition to the subjects of the National Curriculum, the school provides a very well-designed, comprehensive programme in personal, social and health education. This course is supported by teachers who specialise in particular aspects of the programme as well as by outside speakers. Careers education is also good. An extensive range of up-to-date and relevant information is easily accessible in the careers library. Work experience was recently provided for all Year 11 pupils and contributes well to their personal development.

45. A fairly large number of extra-curricular activities are available to pupils throughout the school and they are well attended. Many sporting activities are provided which are not restricted to the most talented pupils and all have the opportunity to go on a residential trip if they wish: these illustrate the way the school works to include all pupils in what it offers. There are a variety of musical, drama and dance activities at lunchtime and after school, and there are several other clubs that meet regularly. All these activities extend pupils' range of experiences and make a significant contribution to the sense of community within the school. Extra-curricular opportunities for music, for example, are very good, offering something to cater for all musical interests, although only a relatively small number of pupils is involved.

46. The school makes good provision for the moral and social development of pupils and provision for spiritual development has been improved to a satisfactory level since the previous inspection. Provision for cultural development continues to be satisfactory.

47. The school does not provide a daily act of collective worship: each pupil attends assembly twice a week and has tutor time on the other days. Assemblies are broadly Christian in character: representatives of different religions visit to talk about their beliefs and assemblies often include a spiritual component. Many assemblies seen during the inspection were good or very good: the assembly taken by the headteacher, for example, dealt with sensitive moral and social issues very well. However, the opportunity to let pupils reflect on the significance of what has been talked about or presented is not always used. In an assembly about respecting different religions, for example, a group of girls performed Gospel songs which clearly moved those pupils watching: however, little time was given to encouraging pupils to reflect on the way the singing had affected them.

48. Religious education now makes a very strong contribution in Years 7 - 9 to pupils' spiritual development by effectively providing pupils with knowledge and insight into human feelings and emotions, and asking them to apply these to a range of fundamental issues which confront them in real life. Pupils are given the opportunity to discuss values and beliefs and how these impact on people's lives. The study of other faiths teaches pupils to appreciate the diversity of those faiths. Good opportunities for reflection are provided in drama and in English, for example, through the poetry of Wilfred Owen. Other opportunities for spiritual growth include the residential trip to Normandy during which pupils visit the war graves and also a day trip for Year 9 to Ypres. Work in art, particularly in Years 10 and 11, asks pupils to explore personal and often spiritual themes.

49. Provision for moral education is good. There is a clear code of conduct which teachers implement consistently and pupils are helped to distinguish right from wrong through firm, but fair, disciplinary procedures. There is a system of merits to reward achievement such as exceeding one's target level in tests. Sporting achievement is celebrated in assemblies and through the school's newsletter. The personal and social education programme includes health education with comprehensive sections on drugs and sex education. Teachers provide good role models. The vertical tutor groups give good opportunities for older pupils to actively support younger pupil although not all tutors use these opportunities well. The moral development of pupils is sustained through the personal and social education programme where pupils are encouraged to develop an understanding of citizenship. Ethical issues are discussed in English, and moral issues are addressed in drama through role play. Environmental issues, such as the generation of electricity, are considered in science.

50. Provision for social development of pupils is good. Pupils collaborate well with each other and there is good rapport between teachers and pupils that is based on mutual respect. Good relationships between teachers and pupils, and between pupils themselves create an atmosphere that is harmonious throughout the school. There is a positive ethos in the school and pupils from ethnic minority groups mix together freely and happily with others. Much of this is due to the mixed age tutor groups where pupils have opportunities to develop relationships and friendships with those older or younger than themselves. Sometimes, however, the advantages of these mixed age groups is not used to the full, particularly where pupils are left to chat. There is a wide range of well-attended lunchtime and after-school activities to improve the social development of pupils, including sports, music, and drama clubs. The school's extensive programme of charity work,

which results in substantial sums of money being donated to different causes each month, makes a significant contribution to social development.

51. Provision for the cultural development of pupils is satisfactory and is promoted in a number of subjects. It is supported, for example, in English and drama through theatre trips and events such as a visiting author. In food technology awareness of other cultures is developed through exploring food and recipes from other parts of the world, and extensively in music through concerts and a music tour to Holland. The modern foreign languages department organises annual trips to France and Germany. As a school with comparatively small numbers of ethnic minority pupils it takes care to ensure all individuals do well. It has good links with a group that promotes the achievements of black pupils and their successes are celebrated. Pupils' art work is prominently displayed around the school, demonstrating the value placed upon it. There is, however, an area that could be improved: although pupils' have an appropriate appreciation of their own culture, their awareness of a wider range of cultural traditions is less secure. Knowledge of how different cultures have contributed to scientific discovery or to mathematic understanding are relatively underdeveloped, and the range of art work on display tends to be limited to Western art,

### **Sixth form**

52. In the sixth form an appropriate range of subjects is offered at GCE AS and A-level, as well as a number of GNVQ subjects. The school is successful in tailoring this provision to match the needs of the students: the GNVQ courses, for example, provide opportunities for students to follow courses that have a more vocational focus. The successful way these courses meet the needs of students is shown by the fact that the GNVQ Intermediate courses, particularly in business, are full. However, the legal requirement to teach religious education in the sixth form is not met.

53. The work of the sixth form, and the range of courses offered, is strengthened by the links the school has with other schools in the locality. There have been informal arrangements between the schools' sixth forms for some time but there are now more formal consortium arrangements with a co-ordinator who reports to each of the headteachers on a yearly rotation. These arrangements are broadly effective and students benefit from the opportunities to study courses that the school would otherwise not be able to offer. A good example is A-level computer studies: the school does not have the teacher expertise but about 10 Highfield students go to another for computer studies. The timing of the school day in each of the schools is similar making it fairly easy for students to move between schools although there are sometimes transport problems: the school does its best to solve these and, for example, staff will drive students to other schools if there are particular difficulties. It is examples such as these that show how seriously the school takes its responsibility to support students' learning and provide them with worthwhile experiences. There is, however, an area for development which is recognised by the school: communication between the schools in the consortium about the detail of students' learning is not as strong as it could be and teachers do not always have enough information about the prior experiences of students joining their class from another school.

54. The school provides well for students to develop their key skills in English, numeracy and ICT. There is, for example, an English for business course that attracts between 25 and 30 students each year mainly from those taking GNVQ business studies. The quality of this course is good and provides students with a worthwhile experience so that they can gain at least a basic grasp of the use of English: furthermore, doing well in the examination gives students an equivalent to a GCSE grade C. There is also a key skills course in which some Year 12 students are taking an examination. All students now take a basic course in information and communication technology: their skills remain fairly basic overall but this development shows the school responding appropriately to improvement.

55. The range of additional activities available to sixth form students is broadly satisfactory. The trip to Italy is a good example: here, 100 out of the 150 sixth form students paid for the trip. In addition students take up school-wide responsibilities: they help with sports clubs, enter debating competitions, help younger students with their reading and mentor others. There a very active sixth

form committee, elected by students, that deals with a wide range of issues: for example, sixth form students organise quiz evenings, visits to the theatre and an elaborate May Ball that raises money for the school. They decide how the money is to be used: recently money has helped replace furniture in the sixth form common room and a grant has been given to the library. All these show clearly how well sixth form students benefit from, and contribute to, the ethos of the school.

56. Sixth formers receive specialist guidance and help in their planning of courses and careers. A relatively high proportion of students, who returned the pre-inspection questionnaire, felt that careers advice could be improved: however, many of these had only been in the sixth form for a short time and had not yet experienced the school's provision. There are opportunities, for example, to attend careers conventions, and visits to higher education institutions are organised. Overall the provision of careers is good.

57. It is this strong school ethos that helps students develop their social skills, and their awareness of spiritual, moral and cultural issues. For example, the twice-weekly sixth form assemblies provide good opportunities for students to develop a sense of pride in their school, in the achievements of others and a sense of their own self worth. One of the two assemblies each week, for example, is organised by the students on a variety of themes: one, a performance by gospel singers, was particularly moving and students sat and listened spellbound although opportunities for reflection were limited. On the other hand, sixth form English lessons provide numerous good opportunities for reflection through topics such as war and tragedy, death and the afterlife. The programme of visiting speakers, including, for example, the local vicar and a drugs counsellor, helps to give students a broader awareness of issues about the world outside of school. Another example of the way the school provides for students' all round personal development is by the way they are expected to contribute to the running of the school. Here, the school deliberately does not have a prefect system: instead all students are expected to have some school wide-responsibilities such as running the school council. In this way the school is successful in making the sixth form an integral part of the whole school that reflects the strong and caring ethos.

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

58. Arrangements for the care of pupils are good and include a well-organised and effective pastoral system. The staff know the pupils well and understand their educational, social and personal needs.

59. A senior member of staff is the named and trained child protection person for the school, and she has ensured that all staff are well aware of their relevant responsibilities. Very good liaison is kept with external agencies including the police, education welfare service and social services. The school keeps a very detailed incident record book, and all specific documentation is securely locked away.

60. Procedures for ensuring pupils' welfare are good and this helps to ensure that they are able to work to the best of their ability and achieve well. Pupils with personal and academic problems are particularly well supported. When the need arises staff can refer individual pupils to the pupil progress co-ordinators. The working environment is safe and pupils are well supervised at work and during breaks.

61. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are good. House teams remain constant throughout the pupils' time in the school, and this continuity helps to ensure that members of the staff know their pupils very well. The form tutors works very closely with the pupil progress co-ordinators and there are very good links with other members of staff such as the special needs co-ordinator.

62. The school has been mentoring pupils for about three years now, ahead of the national initiative, to help them deal with any difficulties they have with studying or coping with school life. This is one of the reasons for the school's positive ethos and pupils' good attitudes. A successful partnership has been developed with an outside agency to mentor black pupils and a support group



for black pupils help to promote achievement well. These initiatives show the school's commitment to helping all pupils achieve their potential. Other pupils are mentored to help them avoid exclusion, others to help them achieve their potential. Pupils speak positively about the support they receive in this way.

63. Expectations of good behaviour are clear. Adults are good role models and set good standards. Behaviour is well managed by the teachers. Pupils have a clear idea of what is, and what is not acceptable. Some bullying does occur, and is firmly and effectively controlled, although the staff are reviewing the way in which this is managed.

64. Following comments in the last report the school has worked hard to improve attendance. Attendance procedures have been completely revised, with records now being computerised. This information is being used to enable the school to alert parents on the same day as their child is absent. Although attendance levels are just below the national target, the 92 per cent attendance rate represents a considerable improvement since the last inspection.

65. Assessment procedures are good in some subjects, though there are some weaknesses. Nevertheless, they are significantly better than at the time of the last inspection when it was a key area for improvement. Much time and energy has been expended in producing a new and comprehensive whole-school assessment policy, which makes clear the procedures which heads of department should institute. This has served to meet, to a large extent, the concerns voiced at the last inspection, and has also raised the profile of assessment throughout the school. Good procedures are to be found in science, religious education, English, history, physical education and modern foreign languages. The school is aware of inconsistencies in some departments and is taking steps to ensure that the good practice in some departments is used throughout the school. Form tutors need to be more involved in the academic monitoring of the pupils.

66. Underpinning this review of the assessment procedures is the introduction of a computerized tracking system that enables staff to quickly identify those pupils who may be underachieving and those pupils who have specific needs. It is also being used to set minimum attainment targets. Academic support for those pupils whose needs are identified are good, and includes the summer school, links with local colleges and support for those with special educational needs. Assessment information is now held centrally, and is readily accessible to staff who need it. There are effective systems in place for obtaining data from primary schools for pupils joining in Year 7. Members of staff visit the local primary school before pupils arrive at the school, and much valuable information is gained from these visits. Overall, significant improvements have been made to the schools' assessment procedures but there is not yet a common approach and the information is not generally shared with all pupils.

## **Careers Education**

67. The provision for careers education is good. It is well organized and is delivered within the personal and social education programme, beginning in Year 7 and continuing until the pupil leaves school. Comprehensive and relevant schemes of work are well prepared and are effective in introducing pupils to career-related topics, including knowing yourself, self-evaluation, decision making, and how to access careers information. There is a well-stocked career information library which is kept in the careers office. This office serves as a base for the teacher in charge of careers, careers administration staff, and the professional careers officer who visits the school on a regular basis. It also serves as a 'drop-in' centre where pupils can avail themselves of the careers information and the expertise of the careers staff.

### **Sixth form**

#### **Assessment**

68. Overall, the procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress are good. The school has comprehensive information on individual students' earlier achievements that are efficiently used to set targets for the end of the sixth form.

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

69. Students receive good advice and guidance from their subject teachers. The head of the sixth form monitors students' progress at key points during the year. The advice and support on future careers is good. Sixth formers receive specialist guidance and help in their planning of courses and careers. There are opportunities to attend careers conventions and visits to higher education institutions are organised.

70. The written information provided for parents in reports is broadly sound. Some of the reports, particularly for students in the sixth form, are good: the targets set for students are mostly clear but sometimes targets are a little vague and are not as helpful as they could be.

71. Health and safety procedures are good, although the day-to-day system whereby sixth form students sign in and out is not used rigorously enough.

72. The head of the sixth form leads a cohesive and committed team of tutors very effectively and this ensures that students are supported and cared for well.

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

73. The last inspection found that the school worked well with parents, providing them with information as well as encouraging them to play a part in the life of the school. Parents continue to have positive views of the school. The majority of the responses to the parent questionnaire were positive, as were the comments made at the pre-inspection meeting with parents. A small number of parents were unhappy about the amount of work their children have to do and a number feel they are not kept well informed or that the school works closely with parents. The inspection judges that the school's documentation for parents is informative and fulfils statutory requirements. Overall the information provided for parents is satisfactory. Good information is provided through the weekly newsletter to parents, this newsletter informs them about what is happening in school. There are also opportunities for parents to find out more about the curriculum through information evenings, which are provided by the school. The recent drop-in session introduced by the school for parents was successful and more are planned. The homework diaries are well used by parents as a means of communication with the school. For pupils with English as a second language, there is good support in school and translators are employed when appropriate and, for example, attend parents' evenings.

74. Despite some parents' misgivings, the inspection found that the provision of homework is good, with homework set which either complements the work being undertaken in class, or moves the pupils forward to the next stage.

75. The impact of parents' involvement on the work of the school is good. The parent/teacher association (HSA) raises significant funds on behalf of the school to purchase materials and resources. Recent purchases include the seats around the grounds as well as some white boards and projectors. The HSA also run social events for the pupils, such as discos.

76. At the pre-inspection meeting, parents indicated they liked the new style written annual reports for parents, in particular how the reports were structured, giving targets for improvement. They also liked the fact that pupils are able to comment on their own progress. The inspection finds that the written information provided for parents is sound. Some of the reports for pupils higher up the school are good, particularly the progress reports. In some of the reports, the targets set for the pupils are very good, but some targets are too vague and could be improved.

77. The majority of parents are supportive of the school. A number come into school on a regular basis and help out in the school library, others have been invited in to talk to pupils about their employment, to aid pupils in their course work. Parents are also pleased with what the sixth form provides and the standards their children achieve: this was clear in the meeting with parents.

78. Students have positive views about the sixth form: this is borne out by the fact that 100 out of the 150 students in the sixth form paid to join a trip to Italy. Questionnaires were returned by 31 per cent of the sixth form students, some of whom had only recently started in Year 12. Nearly all affirmed the positive views about the sixth form.

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

79. The Highfield School is led and managed well and this has a strong impact on what the school provides and how it successfully cares for its pupils. Without doubt the headteacher drives the school forward but it is also clear that the deputy headteacher and senior managers share the commitment to the pupils and students and to ensuring that they receive a good quality education. Indeed, the team of senior managers makes a strong contribution to way the school is being steered sensitively but firmly towards improvement. There is a clear focus on improving teaching and pupils' learning and achievement in a way that is both pragmatic and robust. Pragmatic because management is concerned with what works at The Highfield, robust because leadership is committed to using hard evidence to improve and develop. This commitment and vision are reflected in the improvement in teaching and standards since the last inspection and show clearly how hard work has paid off.

80. One of the keys to this pragmatic management and robust leadership is undoubtedly the governing body. Governors understand the school's priorities well, give strong support to improvement and carry out their responsibilities efficiently. Their analysis of where the school was two years ago and their appointment of the headteacher is testament to this: their decision was made in the light of the particular circumstances and needs of the school. They have clearly chosen well and the governing body and senior managers work well together and share the headteacher's vision and pragmatism. The governing body keeps itself well informed about the school: for example, it analyses examination results in detail each year which helps to set targets and keep track of performance. The governing body also has meetings with heads of subjects which gives it a clear view of the relative strengths of different subjects and areas for improvement. The school's budget is also monitored appropriately: governors' advisory groups receive a draft of the budget which they check against the school development plan. As governors note, they "push these two around as much as possible" to ensure that they make the best use of the money available. As a result of this the governing body has a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and plays an important part in its development.

81. Broadly, the school takes good account of principles of best value: a telling example is the way the governing body is currently consulting with teachers to find out what they value about The Highfield School and what persuades them to stay: this is part of the development of a recruitment and retention policy. One area that is perhaps not quite as sharp is the way governors use the free school meal comparative data: because they feel it is statistically flawed, there is a tendency for the school not to use the data more fully to drive up standards even though they confirm some of the value added data. This is not a major weakness; rather it means that sometimes a sharper analysis is missed. Another area for improvement is that the school does not yet meet the legal requirement to teach religious education and information and communication technology in Years 10 and 11 but it is continuing to develop and expand both subjects. Similarly, the school does not comply with the need to hold a daily act of collective worship: nevertheless, the quality of assemblies is often very good and is part of the way the school sets out its strong moral and social stand.

82. Heads of department are becoming increasingly effective in the way they strive for improvement. In many cases, these key staff manage their subjects well. In science, for example, good management has a strong impact on improvement: a review last summer has led to an action plan with appropriate priorities and targets for improvement. Similarly in English, strong leadership has led to improvements in pupils' achievements and changes have been managed effectively. There are other subjects that are equally well managed: the new head of religious education leads the subject very well and is making great strides in improving teaching and learning. In design and

technology, modern languages, history and physical education good leadership ensures that pupils have a good experience and benefit from their experiences. In mathematics and geography, however, leadership and management are not as strong: this partly explains why standards and teaching are not as good as they should be. The role of the quality managers is also developing well: the previous role of head of house is now much more about monitoring how well pupils and students achieve in all aspects of their school life and this is having an effective impact on learning. One of the results of this effective management is that nearly all staff are involved in the improvement of the school.

83. The way the school evaluates its performance, and identifies what needs to be done is good overall. There is, for example, a very thorough analysis of examination results which is used to help set targets for pupils, students and the school. An important part of this work is the way the school analyses its examination results by different groups of pupils including gender and ethnic background. Recently, the school has begun to monitor the achievements of dual heritage pupils showing sensitivity to the issues of ethnic background. What is significant about this analysis is the way it is shared with heads of subject: by making the analysis available the school is helping key staff to use examination and other data to identify how well pupils are doing and what could be done to improve. There is one thing that the school needs to watch: in its efforts to use the data to demonstrate the value it adds to pupils' learning the school sometimes uses figures in its prospectus that are not entirely accurate.

84. One of the key priorities identified in the last inspection was to "strengthen the school's practice in the monitoring of teaching and, in particular, extend this good practice to departmental level." The school now has more thorough systems for checking the quality of teaching and its effect on pupils' learning: this is one of the main reasons why teaching and learning have both improved strongly since the last inspection. In science, for example, there is a comprehensive lesson observation programme that gives all teachers the opportunity to observe others as well as be observed themselves: this has been instrumental in raising the quality of teaching through the sharing of good practice. In modern languages there is a very high level of consistency in lesson planning and teaching approaches. One particular point, which came out of the inspection, is the accuracy of these observations: one modern languages lesson was observed, coincidentally, by both an inspector and the deputy headteacher. Both identified similar strengths and areas for development thus providing clear evidence of the rigour with which the school monitors and evaluates its performance.

85. The school uses the information it collects to evaluate its performance and analyse strengths and weaknesses effectively: this is borne out by the lesson observations, the identification of appropriate targets in the school development plan and the strong improvement to teaching and learning since the last inspection. There are, though, some aspects of how the school draws up plans for tackling its targets that could be improved to make the whole process of self evaluation sharper. The large number of school development targets means that it is not always clear which are its most urgent and pressing priorities. There are, for example, over 70 targets in the current development plan but no clear sense of priorities. It is not clear, for example, how the targets under the two headings "standards and the curriculum" and "behaviour management and motivation" relate. Success in reducing exclusions and increasing attendance may be important in reducing disparity between boys' and girls' achievements but are shown as separate, distinct actions. Of course, the way the plan is written is not, in itself, particularly significant: what is more important is the impact of the action the school takes as a response to the plan. The school has clearly taken strong action to improve teaching and learning and the impact has been good. But the large number of targets means that success criteria are not always sharp enough to be easily measured: this makes it more difficult for the school to be sure that it takes the right action and uses its time productively.

86. The budget is efficiently and effectively managed overall. Spending plans are linked broadly to its plans for development and improvement but, as the school admits, these links could be stronger. For some targets the school development plan shows the cost of the action but for others there is little indication of the financial resources needed: the cost of improving the teaching

facilities, for example, is very clear but this tends to be the exception rather than the rule. More sharply focused success criteria would help here. Nevertheless, looking at the big picture, financial management is effective and regular information about spending is available to the school and the governing body. The school currently has a fairly large financial surplus but has clear plans to use this to improve the accommodation by increasing the number of classrooms. Given the tightness of space and the impact this has on learning, this money is clearly targeted appropriately to help improve pupils' achievements. The money the school has to support pupils with special learning needs is used well: this has a strong impact on pupils' achievements and they make good progress with their learning.

87. Resources for learning, such as books, materials and equipment, are broadly sufficient for pupils' needs but there are some deficiencies. There are not enough computers or video players, to allow all subjects to use information and communications technology: as a result, pupils' achievements in ICT are not as high as they could be. The range and experience of staff are broadly adequate: indeed, all staff at the school, including teachers, teaching assistants, administration staff and caretakers, all support the school well.

88. Accommodation is very tight in some subjects: in Years 8 to 11 in mathematics, for example, one third of mathematics lessons are taught in non-specialist rooms. This means that most teachers have to move classrooms for some of their week and some classes are taught in a different room for each of their three mathematics lessons a week. In business studies there is not a permanent base making it difficult to establish a consistent ethos. In music the lack of space for groups to rehearse during class lessons, and for pupils to practise and have individual tuition, limits their opportunities. This lack of space sometimes holds back pupils' achievements although the good teaching goes a long way to minimising the impact: however, because teachers have to work hard to overcome the lack of space, opportunities to push pupils' achievements forward in these subjects are limited. In mathematics, for example, there is almost no opportunity to develop a subject ethos in classrooms by displaying pupils' work and posters to help learning. The school library is well organised and managed. It has adequate resources and is very well used by pupils for personal study. However, the accommodation is very cramped and the number of pupils using the library at any one time has to be controlled. This limits pupils' access to the resources offered, particularly at lunchtimes.

## **Sixth form**

### ***Leadership and management***

89. The sixth form is led and managed well. What is significant about the sixth form is that it is an integral part of the whole school, sharing and reinforcing its values, and contributing effectively to its ethos. Indeed, the ethos of the sixth form reflects the strong and caring ethos of the whole school. One of the main ways this is achieved is because the head of the sixth form is part of the leadership team: this ensures that school-wide issues are reflected in the work of sixth form and vice-versa.

90. Overall, the governing body fulfils its responsibilities well: it has a clear view of what sort of a sixth form it wants and monitors performance and expenditure carefully. It does not, however, meet the statutory requirement to teach religious education in the sixth form.

91. The way sixth form performance is monitored and evaluated reflects the systems for the main school: a good and thorough analysis of examination results, including value-added analyses, is used well to help set targets for improvement. Similarly, the school's monitoring of teaching has been applied appropriately to the sixth form and has led to some important improvements: in science, for example, the monitoring of teaching, and subsequent efforts to develop teachers' skills, has helped improve the quality of teaching in biology, although there is still room to improve further.

92. Consortium arrangements with two schools in the locality are broadly effective. There have been informal arrangements between the schools' sixth forms for some time but these have

recently been formalised. Line management is better defined and the joint induction programme for all students in the consortium prepares them well for their sixth form studies. Arrangements for moving between the schools are broadly effective but sometimes there are transport problems which affects learning. The start of a geography lesson, for example, was disrupted because students coming from other schools were late. In the same way, communication between the schools in the consortium about the detail of students' learning is not as good as it could be: sometimes information about students' prior attainment and experiences, or their progress, is not available to the right person at the right time.

93. The sixth form is broadly cost-effective. The amount of money allocated to the sixth form is used appropriately: the sixth form does not receive extra money from funds allocated for pupils in the main school. Similarly, money meant for sixth form students is not used to subsidise spending in the main school. The consortium adds to the cost-effectiveness of the sixth form as it allows minority courses, that would otherwise have too few students, to recruit from the other schools.

### **Resources**

94. Resources are broadly adequate although space for the sixth form is cramped. In some cases teaching rooms are not always large enough making it difficult for teachers to develop different ways of working such as group or practical work. Although there is a small room with computers, facilities for information and communication technology are somewhat limited. Sometimes sixth form students use one of the main school computer rooms. This happened, for example in a Year 8 ICT lesson: this was helpful in giving the sixth former access to the equipment but was far from ideal. Teachers are broadly well matched to the subjects they teach: this one of the main reasons why teaching is good.

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

95. The school should now:

- Improve standards in mathematics and information and communication technology in Years 10 and 11, in art in Years 7 – 9 and in geography by:

continuing to monitor the quality of teaching to identify good practice;  
sharing this good practice more widely;  
ensuring that the national curriculum is given proper weight in art in Years 7 to 9;  
improving leadership and management in the subjects.  
(paragraphs: 1 – 8; 24 – 34; 82; 117 – 129; 151 – 157; 164 – 170)

- Ensure that the statutory requirements for information and communication technology and religious education are met in full by:

continuing to develop religious education;  
developing the use of ICT in subjects.  
(paragraphs: 39; 129; 135; 150; 157; 164 – 170; 181; 192 – 198)

- Ensure that the school development plan identifies the most pressing targets for development and measures how well it is making progress towards their achievement by:

prioritising the most important targets and setting these out clearly;  
developing much more rigorous success criteria and performance indicators against which to measure achievement.  
(paragraphs: 79 – 88)

- Use assessment more consistently in all subjects to set pupils individual targets for improving their learning by:
  - ensuring that all subjects use the best practice in the school;
  - continuing to monitor and evaluate the work of departments rigorously.  
(paragraphs: 65; 66; 125; 144; 155)
- Continue to explore ways to increase the number of classrooms.  
(paragraphs 88, 124; 181; 201; 203)

### **Sixth form**

- Improve standards in biology by continuing to monitor and evaluate teaching and identify what works well and what does not.  
(paragraphs 210 – 215)
- Improve communication with teachers from the other schools in the consortium so that best practice, and information about students' prior achievements and needs, is shared.  
(paragraph: 92)
- Continue to explore ways to increase the number of teaching rooms for sixth form students.  
(paragraphs 94; 237)

### **OTHER ISSUES WHICH SHOULD BE CONSIDERED BY THE SCHOOL**

- Improving the procedures for identifying pupils who have special talents, or who are particularly gifted by continuing to implement the recently introduced procedures.
- Meeting the legal requirement to hold a daily act of collective worship and to teach religious education in the sixth form.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	153
	Sixth form	41
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		33

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

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

#### Years 7 – 11

Number	3	36	62	45	7	0	0
Percentage	2	23.5	40.5	29	5	0	0

#### Sixth form

Number	0	15	17	9	0	0	0
Percentage	0	37	41	22	0	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

#### Pupils on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	749	151
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	85	

#### Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	13	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	258	7

#### English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	105

#### Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	20
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	13



## Attendance

### Authorised absence

	%
School data	9.3
National comparative data	8.1

### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	77	74	151

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	48	54	61
	Girls	55	51	52
	Total	103	105	113
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	68 (n/a)	70 (79)	75 (72)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	15 (n/a)	50 (54)	42 (35)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	61	56	55
	Girls	68	53	47
	Total	129	109	102
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	86 (83)	72 (77)	68 (64)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	43 (57)	50 (48)	35 (24)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	74	70	144

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	32	70	70
	Girls	32	62	64
	Total	64	132	134
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	44 (49)	92 (86)	93 (92)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	38.5 (39)
	National	39.0 (38.4)

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those 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
	2001	25	31	56

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	13.2 (16.2)	16.32 (13.3)	15.74 (14.9)	n/a (8.0)	n/a (n/a)	n/a (8.0)
National	n/a (17.7)	n/a (18.6)	n/a (18.2)	n/a (2.6)	n/a (2.9)	n/a (2.7)

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those students who achieved all those they studied	School	26 (0)
	National	n/a (76.5)

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

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

*Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.  
n/a - 2001 figures unavailable at time of publication*

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

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	45
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	0
Indian	29
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	8
Chinese	2
White	792
Any other minority ethnic group	23

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

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	7	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	1	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	3	0
Chinese	0	0
White	56	0
Other minority ethnic groups	2	0

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

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

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	56.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16

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

Total number of education support staff	15
Total aggregate hours worked per week	356

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

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	76.2
---	------

#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 2	
Key Stage 3	23
Key Stage 4	21.6

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2000/2001
	£
Total income	2,423,709
Total expenditure	2,367,858
Expenditure per pupil	2,640
Balance brought forward from previous year	73,149
Balance carried forward to next year	129,000

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

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	25
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	27.5
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1.6
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	900
Number of questionnaires returned	183

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	44	46	6	3	2
My child is making good progress in school.	33	53	7	3	5
Behaviour in the school is good.	16	64	10	1	9
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	16	60	17	5	2
The teaching is good.	28	63	1	3	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	28	48	12	9	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	56	36	4	3	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	54	39	4	1	2
The school works closely with parents.	27	47	16	7	4
The school is well led and managed.	39	47	3	3	8
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	39	51	5	1	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	33	52	8	1	6

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

**ENGLISH**

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

**Strengths**

- The good quality of the teaching, which helps to engage pupils and ensures that appropriate progress is made.
- The positive response and attitudes of the vast majority of pupils to English lessons.
- The higher than average proportion of pupils achieving grades A\* and A at GCSE.
- The leadership and management of the department, which give clear direction to the work of the team and promote high standards.

**Areas for improvement**

- Continuing with the efforts to raise the attainment of boys.
- Ensuring that the balance of teaching units in Years 7 - 9 allocates appropriate time to teach, practise and secure key skills and priorities.
- The use of ICT to support pupils' English throughout the school, and the need for guaranteed access to a range of multi-cultural texts as part of the provision for Years 7 – 9.

97. Overall, standards in English are in line with the national average at the end of Year 9, and above the national average in Years 10 and 11.

98. Attainment in the 2001 tests at the end of Year 9 was close to the national average and in line with the performance of similar schools. Despite a fall in the percentage of pupils achieving Level 5 or above, standards have improved significantly since the last inspection, with more pupils now reaching the expected levels.

99. At GCSE, the percentage of pupils achieving grades A\*-C in English in 2001 was in line with the national average but below the performance of similar schools. This represents a fall compared to recent years, where performance at this level has been consistently above the national average. However, based on the prior attainment of these pupils in Years 7 - 9, the school added good value. In English Literature GCSE, the percentage of pupils achieving grades A\*-C was close to the national average. In both subjects in 2000 and 2001, there was a much higher proportion of pupils achieving grades A\* and A than is found nationally.

100. Despite the decline in 2001, evidence from the inspection confirms that standards overall are currently above the national average in Years 10 and 11 and that the department is well placed to consolidate this position in the future.

101. In speaking and listening, pupils are generally co-operative, enjoy oral work and gain in confidence as they move through the school. The views and opinions of others are well respected. Pupils work together effectively in pairs and in small groups, listening and responding to other class members. The use of standard spoken English develops well with higher attaining pupils. However, a significant number of pupils at both key stages are reluctant to offer extended oral responses in more formal situations, and there is a small proportion of pupils who rarely contribute to whole-class discussions.

102. In reading in Years 7 - 9, most pupils are able to offer a personal response to what they have read and can recognise general features of a text such as plot, characterisation and major themes. Pupils experience a wide range of fiction and non-fiction texts, though written responses to texts tend to focus on summary at the expense of critical analysis and evaluation. There is, however, evidence of an increasing understanding of the conventions of different text types, and the

department has worked hard to encourage extended reading for both recreation and study. In Years 10 and 11, the skills of inference and deduction develop more swiftly as a result of a rigorous GCSE curriculum, though the use of specialist literary terms to aid analysis is underdeveloped. Higher attaining pupils are able to identify authors' techniques and evaluate their impact on the reader but this is rarely evident in the work of middle and lower attaining pupils.

103. In writing, most pupils at both key stages are able to write at length and they become more confident in structuring and sustaining extended pieces of writing as they progress through the key stages. Higher attainers make effective use of wide and varied vocabulary, though spelling and punctuation errors persist at all levels of ability. There is, however, some evidence that the recent explicit teaching of word and sentence level skills is having a positive impact on standards; for example, in a Year 8 class where pupils were beginning to experiment in achieving various effects by using different sentence structures. A wide range of genres is practised, for various audiences and purposes. However, whilst most pupils write with considerable commitment, many pupils, particularly in Years 7 - 9, lack an explicit understanding of the features and conventions of different types of writing, and this occasionally leads to work which uses language in an inappropriate style.

104. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, make good progress in English. Across the school as a whole girls perform better than boys in both reading and writing but recent efforts to raise boys' attainment, for example, through the use of planning frames and carefully structured tasks with explicit objectives, are now beginning to make a difference. In lessons boys' achievements are improving. An analysis of the 2001 GCSE results for English also shows an improvement and boys are doing rather well when compared with the national figure for boys. Here, girls do better than boys but by a smaller margin than the national difference between boys and girls: girls' results are below the national average for girls by about 11 percentage points but boys' results are below the national average for boys by only two points. In fact the difference between boys and girls at the school is about seven points compared with over 16 points nationally.

105. Overall, the quality of teaching in English is good. In two out of three lessons seen during the inspection the teaching was judged to be good and sometimes very good. In Years 7 - 9, half the teaching seen was good or better. In Years 10 and 11 the teaching was even more effective with almost a third of lessons judged to be good, and a similar proportion very good. There was almost no unsatisfactory teaching.

106. English teachers are well qualified and subject knowledge is secure and often impressive. Planning is very good and homework is well used as a means of consolidating and extending learning. The best marking is thorough and encourages and supports pupils in understanding how well they have achieved and what they need to do to improve further.

107. The best teaching seen was characterised by a lively pace and careful planning for a range of interactive tasks, differentiated to meet the needs of all abilities. This was seen, for example, in a very effective Year 10 lesson where pupils were given varied degrees of structured guidance to support a coursework assignment comparing and contrasting pre- and post-twentieth century texts. This allowed all pupils to engage with the task and make very good progress. Effective pupil management, together with purposeful, focused group work, was also evident in most of the good and very good lessons; for example, in a Year 11 class where pupils worked in pairs to sequence chunks of a poem, exploring issues of structure, meaning and rhyme, which enhanced their understanding of the text. Energetic, enthusiastic teaching had a direct impact on pupils' attitudes, behaviour and learning. In these lessons, pupils' progress was swift and attitudes were very good and sometimes excellent.

108. In the very few cases where lessons had some elements of unsatisfactory teaching, insecure pupil management led to a slow pace, with too many pupils not completing work, or skills not being consolidated or extended. There were also occasional examples of activities that were not matched to the abilities of the pupils, or where instructions were not sufficiently clear. Some marking was also too superficial, or validated unacceptable work.

109. Overall, however, the provision of core schemes of work, shared resources and objectives-led teaching, are strengths of the department. The school's involvement in the pilot National Literacy Strategy in Years 7 - 9 is also beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' explicit knowledge of language and teachers' skill in supporting pupils' reading and writing: this is one of the reasons why boys' achievements are improving.

110. The department has generally made good progress since the last inspection. Attainment, which was below the national average at both key stages, is now in line with national standards in Years 7 - 9 and above national standards in Years 10 and 11. Lessons are more interactive and there is some evidence of improvement in most of the marking seen in English. Provision for pre-twentieth century literature is now good, though guaranteed access to a range of multi-cultural texts still needs to be addressed.

111. Leadership and management of English are very good. The head of department provides energetic leadership and has managed change and new initiatives with focus and commitment. Policies and procedures promote high standards and overall, curriculum opportunities and assessment systems are good. Curriculum planning is thorough and detailed, though the time weighting given to key teaching units in Years 7 - 9 needs to be reviewed. The use of assessment data is very good and procedures for tracking pupil progress are generally effective. English makes a positive contribution to pupils' moral, social and cultural development.

112. Overall, because of the good teaching, positive pupil attitudes and clear, strong leadership, the department is well placed to make further progress.

### **Literacy**

113. The contribution made by other subject areas to pupils' competency in literacy is satisfactory overall. There is some evidence of the effective use of planning frames, key words, collaborative talk, active reading strategies and the modelling of effective language use, in some areas. However, practice is generally inconsistent and is not yet fully embedded. Some good examples were seen in design and technology, modern foreign languages, English, drama, personal and social education and physical education, and the school has clear plans for further development in this area. A summer school, and the provision of catch-up units in Year 7, make a valuable contribution to pupils' literacy development.

### **Drama**

114. Standards in drama in Years 10 and 11 are above average. Drama is not taught as a discrete subject in Years 7 - 9, and pupils arrive in Year 10 with limited experience of dramatic conventions or technical vocabulary. However, they make very rapid progress during their GCSE course and skills are swiftly secured. Pupils are co-operative and relationships are very good. Improvisations and performances are lively and considered, with good use of voice and movement. The increasingly effective use of appropriate technical vocabulary ensures that pupils make rapid progress in their skills of evaluating performances.

115. The quality of teaching seen during the inspection was very good. Lessons are well planned and classroom management is exemplary. Teachers' subject knowledge is very secure and high expectations of both work and behaviour are evident. This has a direct impact on learning: pupils are focused, committed, and work with imagination and energy.

116. Drama lessons make a very positive contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.



## MATHEMATICS

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

### Strengths

- The department is fully staffed
- Teaching in a number of lessons is good or very good
- The relationships established between many of the teachers and their pupils are good

### Areas for improvement

- Standards should be higher
- The lack of suitable accommodation, which affects the quality of learning
- Stronger leadership in the department to eliminate the inconsistencies in practice and the unsatisfactory teaching
- More use of ICT to enhance mathematics learning

118. The 2001 GCSE results in mathematics are a little below the national average. In 2001 GCSE results were lower than in 2000: nearly 50 per cent got the top A\*- C grades in 2000 but 42.2 per cent achieved these levels in 2001.

119. At the end of Year 9 pupils achieve better results in the national curriculum tests: here, performance is above average although again they have dropped a little from 2000 when they were high. Nevertheless, in the past few years there has been a steady improvement in the achievements of pupils in Years 7 to 9. Much of this is due to more consistently good teaching in Years 7 to 9 which helps most pupils make better progress.

120. These standards are broadly confirmed by lessons. Pupils' learning is satisfactory overall but broadly better in Years 7 to 9: this is why standards in the tests are better than in GCSE examinations. Generally pupils acquire skills, knowledge and understanding well in their lessons, supported by the homework they do, which extends their learning further. Usually, the pace of learning and pupils' productivity in lessons is good and this helps them to make progress. In Years 7, 8 and 9, most pupils make good progress. Where progress was unsatisfactory in lessons it was sometimes due to the teacher being unable to keep pupils focused, sometimes in an unsuitable room, as there is a shortage of dedicated mathematics rooms. Pupils in the higher sets are making better progress overall than those in the lower sets because teaching tends to be better: teachers have a clearer idea of what to expect of pupils. In Years 10 and 11, pupils make satisfactory progress overall: what is happening is that in the lower years the school is better at adding value to pupils' learning than between Years 10 and 11 where standards could be higher. This is because there is more consistency in teaching in Years 7 to 9 than in 10 and 11.

121. In Year 7, in the top set, pupils can identify all the symmetries in two-dimensional shapes and know and can use the properties of quadrilaterals to classify different types of quadrilaterals. Year 7 pupils can collect like terms in algebra and can manipulate decimal numbers confidently. In Year 8 some pupils can enlarge by positive and negative numbers or by a fraction. These pupils enjoyed the challenge of this advanced work. Other Year 8 pupils understand standard form and can use it to multiply and divide very large numbers. The range of attainment in Year 9 is very large, spanning from Level 3 to Level 7. In Years 10 and 11, pupils are working at foundation, intermediate or higher level mathematics, dependent on which examination they are likely to take in GCSE. For the higher examination, pupils understand how to find the averages of grouped data. Other pupils were able to multiply and divide fractions to make recurring decimals. Pupils in the foundation class can find whether two variables have a positive correlation or a negative one, plotting the data on a graph.

122. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. Whilst there were quite a high proportion of lessons that were very good, and one that was excellent, there is a wide range in quality with some

unsatisfactory teaching. In general, teaching was better in the higher sets than in the lower sets, and in Years 7 to 9 than in 10 to 11.

123. Where the quality of teaching is very good, the teacher has good subject knowledge and presents the work to the pupils very well. These teachers make good use of pupils' prior knowledge to recap on work already learnt, before moving to new work. Teachers have high expectations, especially for pupils' behaviour, and calm pupils down quickly and effectively when the pupils become over keen and excitable. Some teachers keep a very good pace to their lessons and enthuse the pupils to work hard. These teachers have a positive effect on the class so that pupils are keen to work. In these classes pupils' learning is very good and they make very good progress. Teachers make good use of homework to extend pupils' learning. Some teachers have very good mental mathematics "starters" to their lesson, which keep pupils interested from the start of the lesson, and often challenges them well. There are some good examples in some rooms of mathematical keywords being displayed around the room, which is a good support for pupils' literacy.

124. Where there are significant weaknesses in the teaching, pupils make unsatisfactory progress. Sometimes a teacher is unable to keep the class on task and working sufficiently hard for them to make sufficient progress in the lesson. Sometimes the pace of the lesson is insufficiently brisk and too much time is wasted between activities. A high proportion of lessons are taught in rooms other than mathematics rooms, and some of these rooms are most unsuitable. In Years 8 - 11 one third of all lessons are taught in non-specialist rooms. This means that most teachers are transient for some of their week and some classes are taught in a different room for their three mathematics lessons a week. This is most disadvantageous for pupils' learning.

125. The quality of marking of books varies considerably between teachers: this is another area where inconsistencies detract from learning. Some teachers mark work and give valuable comments and encouraging remarks, while others just tick work. Although some pupils are given targets at the beginning of Year 7 there are insufficient indications in the books on how pupils can reach their targets.

126. Pupils' attitudes to their mathematics lessons are usually very positive in all years. In some lessons pupils sustain concentration very well and make very good progress. Pupils are usually polite to their teachers and there are good relationships between the pupils and the teachers and among the pupils. Where the behaviour is unacceptable this is usually because pupils have insufficient challenge in the lesson or they feel able to get away with the poor behaviour.

127. Pupils participate in the Mathematics Challenge as they progress through the school, and this supports their interest in the subject. A special summer school was held for numeracy in 2001 for pupils starting school in September and a few pupils in Year 7. The summer school helped to raise the confidence of the pupils and parents gave much praise to it.

128. The management of the department is not sufficiently strong. There is much good practice in the department but insufficient consistency in such things as marking, the quality of teaching in Years 10 and 11 and sharing good practice. This lack of consistency is one of the reasons why standards in Years 10 and 11 are not as high as they should be.

129. There has been some improvement in pupils' achievements at GCSE over recent years but the drop in 2001 shows that there is still some way to go to ensure that standards are high enough. There is a new policy for numeracy across the curriculum but this has not yet had sufficient impact on the quality of numeracy across the curriculum. In the last inspection the report stated that good use is made of information technology to enhance learning. Now, however, there is not enough information technology used in lessons, and little evidence in pupils' books. The improvement in mathematics across the school is limited.

## SCIENCE

130. Overall, the quality of provision in science is **good**.

### Strengths

- Overall, standards are above average and represent significant improvement since the last inspection
- A common pattern to lesson structure has been established that has proved effective in improving teaching and learning
- At both key stages, target setting for individual pupils is having a significant influence on improving standards as it raises the expectations of teachers and increases the motivation of pupils.

### Areas for improvement

- The use of ICT is not sufficiently exploited.
- Some investigative activities need to be extended to give pupils the opportunity to explore their own ideas and provide an additional challenge

131. Overall, standards in science are above average. In Years 7 - 9 and in Years 10 and 11, most pupils develop a good understanding of many scientific principles. There is clear evidence of this through the quality of their written work and the answers they give to teachers' questions. Current standards represent significant improvement since the last inspection. The recent focus on improving teaching and learning has proved effective and a common way of planning and teaching has been established. In all years target setting for individual pupils is having a significant influence on improving standards because it raises the expectations of teachers and increases the motivation of pupils. The use of ICT is not sufficiently exploited, however. Some investigative activities need to be extended to give pupils the opportunity to explore their own ideas and provide an additional challenge.

132. In Years 10 and 11, all pupils attending the school full-time take double science. In 2001, almost all Year 11 pupils gained A\* - G grades and 50 per cent gained A\* - C grades, which was almost equal to the national average. The proportion of these pupils gaining A\* - B grades is higher than average. Although these results were slightly lower than in 2000, they were higher than the school percentage for A\* - C grades in science at the time of the previous inspection. There are clear indications that current Year 10 and 11 pupils are achieving above average standards. In particular, their coursework is of a good standard and in lessons seen they demonstrated the ability to apply their knowledge and understanding of scientific principles when answering questions in class. Year 11 pupils, for example, were able to explain the advantages and disadvantages of various ways of generating electricity and others were able to apply physical principles of pressure and heat transfer to explain processes of homeostasis. The frequent use of questions by teachers, that need considered answers, challenges and encourages pupils to think for themselves and helps them to learn.

133. By the end of Year 9, the percentage of pupils reaching the nationally expected level in the National Curriculum standard tests in 2001, at 75 per cent, was above the national average and continued the upward trend from previous years. As in previous years, there was no significant difference between the results of boys and girls. In 2001, as in 2000, more than 42 per cent of Year 9 pupils exceeded the expected level. These percentages were also above national averages. The high standards evident in these test results are also apparent in current classes in Years 7 to 9. For example, in the lessons seen, Year 7 pupils demonstrated a good understanding of human reproduction and were quick to learn about puberty and the menstrual cycle; Year 9 pupils responded very thoughtfully to a lesson on adaptation by raising many interesting and searching questions and several Year 8 boys showed a very high level of knowledge and understanding of light through their interpretation of ray diagrams and their explanations of refraction. As in Years 10 and 11, pupils are encouraged and continually challenged to explain their answers. In addition, the

identification of target levels for each individual pupil to achieve in tests as well as by the end of the year provides strong motivation.

134. Pupils of all ages and ability share their teachers' interest and enthusiasm for science and generally make good progress. The quality of teaching is good overall and substantially better than at the time of the previous inspection. A consistent approach to lesson planning, with aims explained clearly at the beginning and outcomes summarised at the end of every lesson is having a direct impact on the improvement of standards. Teaching was good or better in half the lessons seen and satisfactory in almost all the remainder. All teachers start their lessons promptly with a review of work previously covered and engage pupils' attention through questioning that tests not only their ability to recall facts but also challenges their understanding. For example, Year 9 pupils were required to define 'digestion', Year 11 pupils to explain the variation of crystal sizes in rocks and Year 12 chemistry pupils to describe the application of Hess's Law. Teachers make thorough assessment of pupils' levels of ability and use this information not only for target setting but also to allocate pupils to different teaching groups. In general, teachers make effective use of these arrangements to direct their teaching to the appropriate level. Occasionally, for example when the task is too abstract or written tasks are too long, pupils lose interest and make less progress in the lesson.

135. In the best lessons, teachers explain clearly the purpose of the lesson, provide an interesting variety of activities and set time targets for each activity to ensure a brisk pace throughout the lesson. Sometimes opportunities to extend investigative activities in order to challenge pupils to plan appropriate strategies or to interpret observations and draw conclusions are not exploited. Pupils with special educational needs are often supported by classroom assistants and generally make good progress. Gifted and talented pupils, however, have not been identified so the curriculum is not matched specifically to their needs. At both key stages pupils are careful and responsible when handling scientific apparatus but they have insufficient opportunities to use information technology, such as data logging equipment and Internet access as facilities are not easily available. Many pupils use word processing competently to present their GCSE coursework to a high standard.

136. The department is managed very well and morale is high. Teachers and technicians work together harmoniously to create a stimulating environment through tidy organisation of resources and attractive, interesting displays of pupils' work. A review of the department last summer identified the strengths and weaknesses accurately and has led to a departmental action plan that has appropriate priorities and targets for improvement. The monitoring of teaching through a comprehensive lesson observation programme that gives all teachers the opportunity to observe another as well as be observed has been instrumental in raising the quality of teaching through the sharing of good practice. The science department has made much improvement since the previous inspection and shares a common commitment to raise academic standards further.

## ART AND DESIGN

137. Overall, the quality of provision in art is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- Good examination results over three years
- Pupil peer relationships and shared discussion of work
- The ability of KS4 pupils to carry out discussions using a high level of intellect

### Areas for improvement

- Schemes of work do not include all national curriculum requirements in Years 7 - 9.
- School and national assessment data in Years 7 - 9 is not used well enough to help pupils improve their work to reach their full potential
- Use the outcomes of monitoring of teaching to identify professional development and share good practice

138. Standards in Years 7 - 9 are not reaching national expectations. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are well above average.

139. Details of pupils' achievement in Years 7 – 9, with regard to national curriculum levels, were not available although there was evidence of individual assessment of units of work, and also of marking in sketchbooks and teaching files. Evidence from lessons, and work completed previously, indicate that at the age of 14 pupils use paint and collage with confidence and produce three-dimensional work in clay. They use colour, tone and shape effectively. All lessons contained reference to the work of other artists, for example a Year 8 lesson that included discussion on the work of Gilbert and George. The use of ICT was evident in a Year 8 lesson where work produced included photographs obtained using a digital camera. Drawing skills are underdeveloped and the range of work limited, this results in weak investigative work in sketchbooks and a reliance on copying of the printed image.

140. In Years 10 and 11 GCSE results, as in the past two years, were well above average with 71.2 per cent gaining A\*-C and 99.97 per cent gaining A\*-G. Boys consistently perform well. At the end of Year 11 high attaining pupils are able to carry out discussion with their peers using a high level of intellect, in comparing their own work to that of other artists, and presenting personal interpretations of abstract ideas. Sketchbooks show evidence of extensive investigation, and the use of ICT skills. Work seen was limited by a lack of drawing skills.

141. In Years 7 - 9 standards are affected by the lack of provision for the learning of drawing skills resulting in limited responses in both classwork and homework. In Years 10 and 11, despite the lack of drawing skills pupils achieve well in terms of examination results. This is due in part to careful planning of the course to include detailed instructions to pupils to ensure that they follow closely the requirements of the examination board. Work observed shows evidence of a narrow skills base but much imaginative and developmental theme exploration.

142. Teaching overall is satisfactory. Where teaching is good, planning is comprehensive, a wide range of teaching strategies are employed, lesson aims are clear, key words are a feature, and pupils are able to present the work of their peers to the class. Expectations are high, challenging questions encourage analysis of both work and homework and samples of exceptional work are used to reinforce the teaching of particular skills. Pupils with special education needs achieve well when work is tightly structured although no additional support was provided in the lessons observed. There is no planned provision for gifted and talented pupils. Relationships are warm yet productive and pupils show interest in their work. However, in lessons where pupil/teacher relationships are less than satisfactory, and there is little positive encouragement or praise, pupils demonstrate a lack of confidence in their work and unacceptable behaviour by a significant number of pupils hinders progress. There is some evidence of work on a cultural theme. There is no evidence of the use of numeracy.

143. Management of the department is satisfactory. The accommodation, which is limited, is well organised with sufficient resources, but there is a lack of stimulus material. The department development plan identifies broadly appropriate targets but not enough emphasis is given to how these are to be monitored and evaluated: for example, because there is no record of standards achieved in Years 7 – 9, it is not possible to identify strategies for improvement. Monitoring of the work of the newly qualified teacher has taken place but opportunities to share good practice have not been explored fully. The art rooms are accessible to pupils at lunchtimes and use is made of visiting artists. There are also educational excursions, for example, the Year 10 visit to the Tate Gallery. Displays of two- and three-dimensional work are seen throughout the school.

144. There has been satisfactory progress since the last inspection. GCSE results are now well above the national average, and the study of the work of other artists in Years 7 - 9 is now more thorough. There are improvements in assessment but no records of levels achieved in Years 7 - 9, nor comparison with national standards.



## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- Standards of work seen are high and pupils have a good understanding of design and technology
- Pupils achieve well and make good progress, including those with special educational needs because the skills taught lead to more demanding tasks
- Teaching is consistently good; lessons are planned very well and proceed at a good pace
- Leadership and management of the faculty are good
- A good level of accommodation

### Areas for improvement

- The lack of resources for newer technologies and information technology limits coverage of the programmes of study and the standards that pupils can attain
- The development plan for the faculty although listing areas for improvement does not have targets for improving standards or the use of assessment to improve achievement
- Assessment of pupils' work in Years 7 – 9

146. In the 2001 GCSE examinations, results were above the national average overall. The results at A\* - C, show that boys' and girls' results are broadly similar. The results show that the pupils have made progress and achieve the results expected for their prior attainment. In 2001 the results for graphic products and electronic products are better than other aspects of design technology. The results for 2001 show an improvement over the previous year. The results are above the average achieved by all subjects in the school.

147. By the end of Key Stage 3, teachers' assessment shows that standards are well above the national expectations. The review of pupils' work shows that standards are above those expected. Pupils are very enthusiastic and well motivated by the activities provided because learning is relevant and they are successful. They learn about a wide range of materials and they use a good range of small and large equipment competently and safely, for example, when making candleholders in Year 9. They demonstrate very good graphical skills in Year 7 when they use techniques for representing three-dimensional drawing. They are extremely proud of new products they have developed in food lessons. Higher achieving pupils plan their work and evaluate it objectively against specific criteria. Lower achieving pupils carefully evaluate how well they have worked.

148. By the end of Year 11, standards are above national expectations. Pupils systematically solve problems. They can question and have sufficient confidence to experiment and explore materials and processes when they develop their designs. The higher achieving pupils work well independently and are very well motivated to succeed. Their work is thoughtfully and professionally presented. Pupils have few opportunities to use information and communication technology, particularly to present their work but also when they are designing. Pupils' design work shows good progression in development and a high level of craftsmanship in their execution. The higher achieving pupils critically analyse their work well. All pupils, regardless of ability or gender, achieve well because teachers expect them to learn well. Standards are particularly high in graphic design, food technology and electronics.

149. Teaching is good overall; some teaching is very good, particularly in graphic design and food technology. In the most successful lessons, the teachers' enthusiasm and knowledge engage and inspire pupils. Their skilful handling of materials and equipment enables pupils to be successful. All staff work hard to develop productive relationships with classes and these are always good. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge. The teaching is well planned and leads to a coherent learning programme that is well supported with prepared lesson notes and work sheets which can then be retained to build up a good picture of individual progress. Pupils are

rightly proud of what they achieve. The lessons are well structured and teachers' questioning is good. Key learning points are systematically reinforced and the good range of activities ensures that all pupils are actively involved in their learning. New knowledge is introduced as it is needed so that pupils can immediately use it to develop their understanding. In the best lessons there is a collaborative approach to the learning that encourages pupils to become curious and ask questions. The planning and purpose of the lesson is sufficiently focused and the objectives are shared sufficiently with the pupils. There are adequate introductions which link with previous work and teachers use technical vocabulary to help pupils understand and extend their vocabulary. The differing needs of pupils are well met and their designing and making skills are sufficiently developed. Teachers work well with pupils with special educational needs, and are aware of targets in individual education plans. Special educational needs pupils make good progress and classroom assistants are used well to support learning. Teachers support literacy well and are careful to introduce new words and provide writing frames. Teaching and learning is well supported by a very good technician who provides very effective support for the smooth running of the department. There is an emphasis on health and safety during lessons. Teachers use display well in classrooms and the open areas and this contributes considerably to pupil interest and the development of ideas.

150. The leadership and management is good. As a result, the improvement in standards since the last inspection has been good. The head of department has a clear view of how the department should be developed and is fully aware of the need to provide more support for pupils in Years 7 to 9 in the form of monitoring and assessment of attainment and progress. Statutory requirements are met, although a greater emphasis should be given to the use of information and communication technology, particularly better coverage of control technology and the use of computer aided design. The curriculum has been developed with the result that the activities are relevant to pupils. Schemes of work are in place giving details of long term planning to show what knowledge, skills and understanding it is intended that pupils of differing abilities should achieve. The assessment system is satisfactory. The recording of assessment using specific criteria linked to the schemes of work to set targets is not being used effectively to improve standards. The quality and size of accommodation in the technology areas is of the standard expected. There is also a lack of resources and equipment to teach computer aided design and control. The development plan focuses on the development of resources, equipment, accommodation and improvements in standards, but does not indicate specific responsibilities or dates for review and completion. Department meetings are used well to discuss issues to improve policy and standards in the subject. The department has continued to build on the good features outlined in the last inspection report. Control technology is taught in Key Stage 3 but pupils have limited opportunities to use computers in the department to extend their capabilities in using information technology.

## GEOGRAPHY

151. Overall, the quality of provision in geography is **unsatisfactory**.

### Strengths

- The geography field trips to Icknield Way, Swanage and the Isle of Wight have a positive impact on pupils' learning
- Teaching is satisfactory overall

### Areas for improvement

- Standards at GCSE need to be improved
- Course planning needs to specify more clearly the skills that pupils are to be taught so that a better balance is achieved between knowledge, skills and understanding
- The range of teaching strategies is relatively narrow: they do not always challenge pupils enough or give them enough opportunities to learn from one another
- Assessment in Years 7 – 9 is not rigorous or accurate enough and marking needs to improve so that comments help pupils make progress
- Leadership of the department is not focused sufficiently on raising standards



152. In the summer of 2001 about a quarter of pupils achieved grades A\*-C in GCSE geography; this is well below the national figure. These results are worse than at the time of the previous inspection. Relative to other subjects, boys and girls underachieve in geography. The department has recently changed the syllabus and this alongside other strategies should lead to improved standards in the future.

153. Most pupils in Year 9 achieve standards that are in line with the national expectations. Pupils acquire sound knowledge of different places like Italy, Japan and Brazil. The last is studied in depth. Pupils learn the main human and physical features of these countries and understand why ways of life are different from their own. Environmental issues such as the destruction of the rainforest provide the context for learning important concepts such as global warming and the greenhouse effect. In all but one lesson observed pupils of all abilities make at least sound progress. In one lesson pupils had to decide the best location for a shopping centre; this involved weighing up the advantages and disadvantages of four possible sites. This helped refine their decision-making skills. However, overall the progress made in the development of skills across the key stage is less secure in all ability groups. Mapping and fieldwork skills are taught in Year 7, but in Years 8 and 9 schemes of work tend to focus on knowledge and understanding; skills are not prominent enough. In particular, ICT is used rarely. This imbalance hinders pupils' progress because they do not have enough opportunities to learn independently by posing questions, planning investigations and writing well-supported arguments. There are too many short, undeveloped answers in pupils' books.

154. In Years 10 and 11 the standards achieved in most lessons match expectations. Most pupils develop secure knowledge of indicators of development, such as standards of living. Progress is usually sound in lessons with pupils making sufficient gains in knowledge, skills and understanding. Their geographical skills are developed during the fieldwork visit to Swanage to study tourism. The coursework arising from this enquiry showed that pupils are able to pose hypotheses, choose appropriate methodology and answer questions about the reasons why tourists visit Swanage. Some pupils used ICT effectively to present the findings of their surveys and interviews. Pupils are able to make deductions from data relating to land use patterns. They spoke enthusiastically about their field trip to the Isle of Wight where they studied the processes relating to coastal landforms.

155. Geography teaching in Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 to 11 is satisfactory overall. Where teaching is most effective learning objectives are understood by pupils and reviewed at the end of the lesson. The brisk pace of teaching was maintained by the use of time limits for activities. Clear and brief explanations and instructions put the onus for learning on the pupils. In the one unsatisfactory lesson the teacher did not establish quiet before talking to the class; the tasks were pitched too low and did not challenge pupils. In other lessons opportunities for learning are stifled because the teacher talks for too long. Pupils of all abilities are unaware of how well they are doing in geography. Marking is both irregular and unhelpful. Comments relate to the presentation of work and not to the geographical context. The current system of assessment in the lower school needs to be more accurate, rigorous and systematic.

156. From Years 7 to 11 pupils' attitudes towards learning geography vary between unsatisfactory and good. Inappropriate behaviour is seen in lessons where the teaching was uninspiring. Where expectations are high pupils were alert and eager to learn. In most lessons boys and girls sit separately. Some of the resulting group dynamics hinders learning because off-task behaviour soon develops. Where tasks demanded co-operation pupils worked well together.

157. Leadership and management of geography are not focused clearly enough on raising standards and improving teaching and learning. As a result the variety of teaching methods is quite narrow and this gives pupils too little opportunity to think, learn from one another and develop their geographical skills. Resources are adequate except in relation to the statutory requirement to use ICT in the teaching of geography. The department does not have enough suitable accommodation which adds to the challenges it faces to raise standards and improve teaching and learning.

## **HISTORY**

158. Overall, the quality of provision in history is **good**. There are more strengths than weaknesses.

#### Strengths

- The good quality of teaching helps to engage pupils and ensures appropriate progress is made by pupils of all abilities
- Marking helps pupils make progress because it gives specific guidance on how work can be improved
- The leadership of the department is good; strategies being put in place will raise standards in the future

#### Areas for improvement

- Address the statutory requirement for ICT Years 7 – 9
- Review the assessment system in Years 7 - 9 to ensure it is more rigorous and accurate

159. In the GCSE history examinations over half the pupils entered achieved grades A\*-C in 2001, just below the national figure. Even so, relative to other subjects boys and girls did less well in history. These results match those achieved at the time of the last inspection in 1996; no gains in standards have been made either by the end of year 9 or in GCSE. There are grounds for optimism in that the new head of history has in place a number of strategies for improving standards.

160. Attainment of pupils by the end of Year 9 is in line with national expectations. In lessons most pupils make good progress in developing secure understanding of aspects of British history. Year 9 pupils study the causes of the Great War and trench conditions. Most pupils can identify how different causes contributed to the outbreak of war in 1914; the more able spoke of a network of causes. The field visit to Ypres strengthened their knowledge of trench warfare and the conditions on the Western Front. The majority of pupils make good progress in developing their historical skills both in lessons and across the key stage. Pupils are taught how to use sources in a variety of contexts: in Year 7 the death of King Harold and the reputation of King John are examined; in Year 9 pupils have more complex sources to use in assessing whether or not Haig was the 'butcher of the Somme'. The schemes of work suggest that an appropriate balance of knowledge, skills and understanding is being taught to lower school pupils.

161. The quality of teaching is good overall. Very good relationships between teachers and pupils characterised all lessons observed. Learning objectives are clearly explained and reviewed effectively at the end of lessons. Teachers plan activities carefully. Each lesson is driven by the search for answers to a historical question. In Year 7, for example, it was Why did Thomas Beckett die? In Year 9 pupils were investigating why women gained the vote in 1918. Pupils responded well to the teachers' lively sense of humour and were given opportunities to draw their own conclusions from a range of sources. Effective class questioning and small group discussion help pupils to develop their understanding prior to written work. Constructive marking means that pupils know how well they are achieving in history and what they need to do to make further gains. In one lesson the teacher talked too much. This stopped pupils from thinking about and discussing historical issues.

162. In GCSE lessons teaching is good overall and sound in one lesson. Teaching is most effective when clearly structured tasks challenge pupils' thinking and preconceptions. One teacher used sources about the Treaty of Versailles to unpack issues relating to interpretation. In another the pupils wrote different histories of the Polish Solidarity movement in the 1980s to illustrate the point that bias does not devalue the reliability and utility of sources. Pupils respond well to the demands made of them. Their attitudes towards learning history are positive. This stems from the teachers having high expectations of pupils' behaviour and work. Teachers value their comments and have a sense of fun. Most pupils take pride in their work. In history classes pupils work

confidently together within a climate of trust and security. The policy of seating boys and girls together works well. Overall, pupils make good progress in lessons.

163. The department is led effectively and efficiently by a new head of department, who is a good role model for the team of history teachers. He is committed to raising standards and encouraging pupils of all abilities to high achievement. As part of improving standards further, work needs to be done in developing a more accurate and rigorous system of assessment for Years 7, 8 and 9. In addition, although ICT is used for research and word processing, the statutory requirement to use ICT is not being met because there are inadequate facilities within the school.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Strengths**

- Pupils have broadly good attitudes to their work
- Teaching is broadly good: teachers' of the ICT courses have solid knowledge and competence
- The course for Years 7 to 9 is beginning to provide a worthwhile experience for pupils

### **Areas for improvement**

- Meeting statutory requirements for teaching ICT in Years 10 and 11
- There are not enough computers and this limits pupils' access
- The management of ICT lacks consistency, including changes each year to the teaching team
- There are not enough written materials to support pupils' learning
- Work is not always matched to the different needs and capabilities of pupils.

165. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are broadly in line with expectations for pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 but across the school there is not enough use of ICT. This means that in Years 10 and 11 standards are below average and pupils do not apply what they have learnt about ICT lower down the school to their GCSE and other examination courses. There are some notable exceptions: in music, for example, good use is made of ICT despite there being no room for improved computers in the teaching areas. The GNVQ Foundation course in Years 10 and 11 has been only recently introduced and thus there is no examination data or information. Overall, provision for ICT does not yet meet legal requirements and this explains why it is unsatisfactory.

166. Last year's teacher assessment at the end of Year 9 shows that attainment was broadly average. This is confirmed by evidence from lessons: here pupils are certainly achieving satisfactorily and there is some evidence that the younger pupils in Years 7 and 8 are improving. This is mainly because the broadly good teaching is effective in helping pupils improve their ICT skills and understanding, and because of an increased amount of time allocated to the subject. In a good Year 8 lesson, for example, pupils used the computer to design a company symbol and letter heading. They were well motivated, and were clear about what was expected. A particularly strong aspect of the lesson, and pupils' learning, was the way pupils worked by themselves without having to ask for help. This gave the teacher more time to work with the higher achievers and help them with a more advanced task thus extending their learning well. This illustrated the teacher's firm subject expertise and competence in teaching ICT. It also meant that all pupils worked hard during the lesson, and thus achieved appropriately and made good progress: by the end of the lesson all were able to use the particular piece of software with confidence. Another significant aspect of teaching is the relationships between teachers and pupils and the high standards of behaviour expected by teachers. This was evident in a Year 7 lesson where the teacher's good relationships and sensitivity helped to guide pupils effectively and maintain good behaviour: again pupils worked well and made good progress.

167. One of the reasons why teaching is good is that teachers have a solid understanding of how and what to teach. In nearly all cases, ICT is not teachers' first and main subject: but, nevertheless, they are effective in getting the most out pupils. In a good Year 9 lesson, for example, where pupils were designing their own magazine, the teacher's good command of the subject and effective teaching skills meant that they made good progress and learnt well. This is also a strong feature of lessons in Years 10 and 11: again teachers are not specially trained in ICT but their strength is that they are good teachers. In a very good Year 11 lesson, the teacher was careful to make the objectives for the lesson very clear and the introduction short and sharp: this ensured a brisk start and got pupils working right from the beginning. Very high expectations of both behaviour and learning meant that pupils were stretched by the work. Good relationships, giving pupils a limited time to complete their work, challenging questions and a very good knowledge of each pupil's particular strengths and weaknesses all helped to push learning forward effectively. Pupils learnt and behaved well, applied lots of effort to their work and made good progress as a result.

168. The weaknesses in teaching are in to two areas which are related:

- there are not enough written materials, such as help or instruction sheets to support pupils' learning;
- work is not always matched to the different needs and abilities of pupils.

169. Not having enough written materials means that teachers either have to make their own or do without. The problem here is that because most teachers only teach one or two lesson of ICT each week, it is difficult to find the time to develop new materials on their own. Importantly, too, the fact that the school has had to rely on lots of different teachers, who change each year, makes leading and managing the subject effectively particularly challenging: getting together to agree teaching materials, for example, is not always possible. This is why sometimes work is not as well matched to pupils' needs or capabilities as it could be: the difficulties of co-ordinating teachers from different subjects, and the fact that the teacher responsible for ICT is also head of art, mean that consistency suffers. Nevertheless, within these limitations, some progress has been made in developing the teaching scheme for Years 7 to 9: here, the course is beginning to provide pupils with a worthwhile experience. Similarly, the new GNVQ course in Years 10 and 11 is proving to be good: pupils are gaining significant benefit from the course.

170. There is some evidence that information and communication technology is being used in other subjects. In music, for example, pupils use computers to support their work but across the school there is not enough use of ICT: this means that pupils are not consistently good at using what they have learnt about ICT in Years 7 - 9 to help with their work in other subjects. This is also one of the reasons why the school does not meet statutory requirements for teaching ICT: in Years 10 and 11 only those pupils following the GNVQ course gain access to computers consistently and thus the skills necessary for later life. Another, reason, of course, is that there are still too few computers: the school has done much recently to upgrade its systems but it, too, recognises the need to go further.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

### Strengths

- Teaching is very good throughout the school
- Standards in French are above the national average
- Leadership and management of the department is very good

### Areas for improvement

- Accommodation is inadequate
- Further investment in books and equipment is needed

172. Standards in modern foreign languages are high. At GCSE in 2000, the proportion of pupils achieving A\*-C grades was considerably above the national average in French, and in German it was in line with the national average with a high entry rate. In 2001 German maintained its position and, with a higher entry rate, French A\*-C pass rates were lower but still above the national average. Attainment in lessons observed was sound or good in both Key Stages 3 and 4 and good in the sixth form. Pupils in a Year 9 class in French were able to talk about what they did and express opinions. In a Year 11 German lesson pupils spoke from memory about their work experience. Year 12 pupils in French have already written in French at length on a range of subjects, including marriage, youth and justice. In a Year 13 class, pupils in French successfully extracted details from a recorded interview with an ex-Resistance leader, and in German a pupil was able to answer questions about German history at length.

173. Teaching is very good throughout the school. Teachers' subject knowledge is very good and they have high expectations of pupils in all lessons. The level of challenge in tasks set is correctly pitched, so that pupils' learning is taken forward throughout lessons. Lessons begin promptly and are conducted at a brisk pace. Pupils are put under pressure to complete tasks within a time limit so that no time is wasted. Teachers engage pupils and involve them actively in learning: as a result pupils are well behaved, motivated and responsive. There is always a variety of activities in lessons, with regular changes of activity, so that new language or language previously learnt is practised and developed in different ways. Lessons are planned and prepared carefully, thoroughly and appropriately. Learning objectives are clear and discussed with pupils in lessons.

174. Pupils of all ability groups and backgrounds make good progress throughout the school. Pupils in Key Stage 3 keep their own record of their progress through the national curriculum levels. Pupils' work is regularly scrutinised by teachers and well marked. Teachers monitor pupils' progress regularly through end of unit tests and use this information well to inform their planning.

175. Leadership of the department is very good. Staff work very effectively as a team and there is a very high level of consistency in lesson planning and teaching approaches. The department is equipped and resourced to a satisfactory standard and items belonging to the department are very well looked after. However, the department would benefit from further investment in projection screens and a new German course for Key Stages 3 and 4. Teachers make the best of inadequate accommodation: the department has only four dedicated classrooms to share among eight teachers. Pupils benefit from French and German foreign language assistants and annual trips to France and Germany, and teachers provide extra help in their own time for GCSE candidates in Year 11. Since the last inspection, standards of attainment, progress and teaching have improved considerably.

## MUSIC

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

### Strengths

- The standard of composing achieved by pupils in the GCSE groups
- Teachers' subject knowledge and their ability to motivate pupils

### Areas for improvement

- The overall level of participation in extra-curricular activities
- Some aspects of the accommodation

177. The number of pupils entered for GCSE in recent years is too small for national comparison. However, the number of pupils opting for GCSE has risen considerably in the last two years. Pupils in the present group are attaining broadly in line with national expectations. Composition is a strength. Recorded examples of Year 11 work show good levels of refinement and reflect a range of styles and genres, such as Blues. Some pupils in Year 10 are already attaining beyond the expectation in their compositions. They have a well-developed sense of style,

drawing on music they have listened to and describing how it has influenced their work. One pupil talked about the influence of jazz on her compositions while another had drawn on the style of Romantic piano music.

178. By the time pupils complete Year 9 they are attaining standards that are broadly in line with national expectations. Their skills in performing and composing are developing progressively. They play on keyboards, practising and performing with an awareness of different parts and are beginning to improvise well. Some pupils use musical vocabulary confidently and all pupils record their compositions using graphic scores and staff notation. Time is built into lessons for pupils to evaluate their work but their ability to analyse, evaluate and compare is not so well developed.

179. Teaching is good overall with very good features in some lessons in Key Stage 3. Teachers have good subject knowledge. They provide good role models as musicians, often playing to pupils, which is very motivating and helps to promote the positive attitudes which most pupils have to music. The majority are keen to succeed and to show what they can do. Many boys respond particularly positively in lessons and are well represented in extra-curricular musical activities. In most lessons teachers ensure that pupils are working to their full potential. They monitor pupils' progress effectively during individual and group work, moving pupils on in their learning by posing individual challenges. In most lessons teachers ensure that there is good provision for the different levels of musical competence in the class. This was demonstrated effectively in a Year 9 lesson on Pachelbel's Canon where differentiation was effectively built into the task. At the end of the lesson all pupils took part in a successful performance of the piece, selecting which of the six parts they felt most confident to play.

180. Approximately 120 pupils have lessons in a wide range of instruments and in singing. The quality of teaching in the lessons observed during the inspection was good. Extra-curricular opportunities for music are very good, offering something to cater for all musical interests, although only a relatively small number of pupils is involved. Music contributes well to pupils' cultural and social development. Pupils across the age range take part in ensembles such as string group, jazz band, choir; wind band, rock bands and productions performances including a recent Music Tour to Germany.

181. The department is well managed. The issues raised in the last inspection report have been addressed well and the curriculum is now relevant, well planned and actively involves pupils in making music in the classroom. The two teaching rooms are well organised and provide good learning environments. However, lack of space for groups to rehearse during class lessons and for pupils to practise and have individual tuition limits their opportunities. ICT is used well, particularly by the GCSE groups, but there is no room to up-grade ICT provision in the teaching areas.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- Strong leadership of the department
- A wide range of extra-curricular activities
- Pupils achieve well in public examinations

### Areas for improvement

- Ensure all teachers give pupils the opportunity to be involved in the planning and evaluation of their work
- Explore the possibility of offering dance at GCSE

183. The number of pupils gaining A\*-C grades in the GCSE in July 2000 was very high, and significantly above the national average. In 2001, although the number gaining the A\*-C grades was lower than the previous year, it was still well above the national average. These results compare

very favourably with the results the same pupils gained in their other subjects. There were more boys than girls taking the examination, but there was no significant difference between their levels of attainment.

184. Pupils arrive from their primary schools with varying levels of physical education skills, with some below the level expected. They respond quickly to the good quality teaching and by the time they are 14 years old they have made good progress, and most of them are attaining levels that are in line with national expectations. Pupils perform well in a wide range of physical education activities. In games activities they demonstrate good levels of skill, often showing good ball control and being aware of defence and attack strategies, although some pupils find it difficult to apply these skills when the element of competition is introduced. Many pupils arrive at the school with only very limited experience of dance, but quickly get involved in the activity and by the end of Year 9 they are able to demonstrate good patterns of movement and gesture which are often performed with clarity and fluency. In gymnastics pupils are able to display a range of movements both on the floor and on apparatus, with an increasingly competent ability to link them together into complex sequences. Pupils have a satisfactory understanding of how to prepare for physical activities and do so consistently at the beginning of each lesson. Some pupils are able to evaluate their own and others' performances and are able to make perceptive comments on how improvements can be made, but others are given too little opportunity to develop this aspect.

185. Pupils continue to make good progress during Years 10 and 11 and by the end of Year 11 their attainment is at least in line with national expectations, with some, particularly those in the examination groups, doing even better. Good levels of skills are clearly evident in a range of activities. They have a good understanding of tactics and strategies and are able to apply the skills that they have practised in a full game. In health-related education pupils demonstrate a good understanding of fitness issues and practices, and many are able to devise their own fitness programmes. Pupils are able to work independently and organise practice sessions within the lessons. They can undertake a wide range of tasks including acting as officials and acting as coaches. Pupils in the examination groups are developing understanding and expertise in both theoretical and practical aspects of the subjects, and many are producing coursework folders that are well presented and detailed.

186. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated, and are given much support by both teaching staff and fellow pupils and reach levels of attainment, which are commendable for them.

187. In spite of the big changes in personnel the good quality of teaching noted at the last inspection has been maintained, with no unsatisfactory lessons observed. In most lessons observed the teaching was judged to be good or very good. The teaching has a clear purpose derived from well-devised and coherent schemes of work. All lessons begin in an orderly manner. Objectives are clearly stated which help pupils understand what is expected of them, and how they can improve. Teachers are enthusiastic about their subject, and the vast majority of pupils respond very positively and work hard. Teachers expect that pupils will work hard and behave well, and in most lessons these expectations are met. Pupils' enjoyment of their lessons is very evident.

188. The curriculum allows pupils to take part in a wide range of activities, and it is meeting statutory requirements. The department has instituted a new assessment procedure, with comprehensive records of pupils' attainments and attitudes being kept in a readily accessible form. This wealth of information is being used to set targets in physical education for individual pupils and to influence curriculum planning.

189. Staff give very freely of their time to provide a wide range of extra-curricular activities which are well supported by enthusiastic groups of pupils. The many school teams take part in a wide range of inter-school matches and competitions and gain much success. Many pupils have represented the district in a range of teams and some have gone on to represent Hertfordshire. There are pupils in the school who have gained national honours in soccer, girls' rugby and athletics.

190. The school has good on-site games facilities that are well maintained. The shortage of dance and indoor sports facilities is in part compensated for by the occasional use of the excellent facilities of the North Hertfordshire leisure centre, but the pupils would benefit a great deal by the provision of another on-site indoor facility. Good quality departmental displays around the school effectively stimulate pupils' interest in the subject.

191. Strong leadership and a positive ethos characterises the management of the department. The schemes of work and the documentation are of high quality and are regularly revised, and this revision ensures the best ideas are used. The three newly qualified teachers who joined the staff in September have settled in very well and have received much valuable help and support from the head of department. Hard working teachers work together very effectively as a team, sharing good practice and demonstrating a strong commitment to their pupils. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

192. Overall, the quality of provision in religious education is **unsatisfactory**.

### Strengths

- Very good imaginative teaching leads to good learning
- Pupils respond very well to the work and clearly enjoy their studies.
- Very good plans underpin work in the subject
- Very good management and leadership with a clear vision for the future

### Areas for improvement

- More focussed provision for gifted and talented pupils
- More visits to external places of religious interest
- Ensure statutory provision at post 16 and in Years 10 and 11

193. The quality of provision in religious education is unsatisfactory, because the subject is not offered in the sixth form, and has only very recently been introduced to a small number of pupils in Years 10 and 11 who have opted to study it as a GCSE short course. The remaining non-examined pupils in Years 10 and 11 do not study religious education. In both these stages of pupils' education the school is failing to provide in accordance with its statutory obligations. This was a concern of the last inspection report. In Years 7 to 9 the subject is now provided appropriately to all pupils.

194. During the inspection, timetabling restrictions meant that no classes were seen in the short course and the work completed by the pupils this early in the term is insufficient to make a reliable judgement about their attainment. In Year 9, attainment is generally above, and, for some pupils, well above the standards expected by the local agreed syllabus. Pupils know and understand the religious symbols, practices and beliefs of the world's major religions and can use the appropriate religious technical language correctly and effectively to describe and evaluate them. For example, Year 9 pupils, in their study of the similarities and differences in the dietary laws of Judaism and Islam, correctly use the terms Kosher and Halal to describe foods which are permitted and Treifah and Haram to categorise those which are proscribed.

195. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in Years 7 to 9. The department makes very good use of individual education plans and of the learning support staff. These latter make an effective impact on pupils' learning and ensure that all pupils are taught and acquire investigational skills which lead to better understanding and interpretation of some of the facts they learn. Although higher attaining pupils are well provided for, the additional provision for the gifted and talented pupils is not yet developed.



196. Pupils' response is very good. They work both diligently and joyously. They sustain interest and intellectual rigour well. They work well both with their peers and the adults with whom they come into contact.

197. The very good response of the pupils is a direct result of the very good, and occasionally excellent teaching. Teaching is well planned, exciting and stimulating. It challenges pupils and motivates them, thus enabling them to learn effectively. Although there are few visits to local places of worship, the teaching, in school, is characterised by imaginative use of resources and a considerable amount of humour and fun. For example, in a Year 8 class on the Jewish festival of Chanukah, pupils not only learned of the symbolic foods which Jews eat at this time, but also were involved in cooking and eating them. More serious reverence for other people's religious beliefs also found a place in the lessons, and there was a moment of spirituality when in the same year group, the class listened in rapture while a Muslim boy read out an appropriate passage in Arabic from the Qur'an.

198. The very recently appointed head of department currently carries out all the teaching. He is enthusiastic, knowledgeable and committed to raising standards throughout the school in religious education. He is aware of the issues facing the department and has a clear vision for the future of the subject. He has already effectively introduced schemes of work which have been meticulously planned and followed. These are supported by assessment procedures and target setting against levels which are shared as routine with pupils in the course of their lessons. In a very short time, he has established the basis in Years 7 to 9, for successful future development of religious education in both Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form.

## **BUSINESS STUDIES**

199. Overall, the quality of provision in business studies is **satisfactory**.

### **Strengths**

- Rising standards in class
- Pupils make good progress from a low base of attainment at entry
- Teaching is never less than satisfactory. Teachers often use good examples to explain difficult concepts
- Good leadership and management with a good vision for the future

### **Areas for improvement**

- Raise standards of attainment in public examinations
- Acquire appropriate permanent accommodation
- Employ the use of ICT more to aid pupils' learning

200. Standards overall are below national expectations at GCSE, where results in public examinations in 2001 fell markedly from 80 per cent A\* - C (2000) to only 24 per cent which is well below the national norms for similar schools. However, standards in pupils' work seen during the inspection, rising standards, sometimes in line with national expectations, and several aspects of pupils' work in the current Years 10 and 11 bode well for much better results in future GCSE examinations. However, many of the pupils choosing to study business education have low levels of prior attainment when they enter Year 10 and they make good progress. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress.

201. Teaching is never less than satisfactory. Teachers are secure in their knowledge of the subjects they teach, and they plan their lessons effectively. They set clear targets and use a range of examples to enlighten and involve pupils. Their examples lead to good pupil learning and understanding. For example, in a Year 11 lesson on economies of scale the teacher used, with humour, examples of both the sale of aircraft seats and the manufacture of choc-ices to help the class understand the concept. Teachers are particularly adept at teaching in rooms which are not

specialist rooms. Nevertheless, the lack of specialist accommodation impacts negatively on both the range of teaching strategies that can be employed and upon pupils' learning.

202. Pupils have good attitudes towards their work. They are generally attentive, they respond well to questions, they behave well and are willing. However, a combination of the difficulties of some of the concepts and the unsuitability of the teaching areas challenges them in the areas of remaining on task, maintaining concentration and taking pride in their finished work.

203. The business education department is efficiently and effectively managed. The quiet but firm support of the head of subject has secured a department committed to high achievement. Under the head of department's leadership, the department has produced informed and informative documentary evidence of good planning in all aspects of the work of the subject. The department is aware of the challenges posed by the low prior attainment of many pupils and by the problems associated with lack of specialist accommodation and has made good changes to the syllabus for the current year 10, introducing a new examination syllabus. The department has, therefore made some significant improvements since the last inspection despite the need to raise standards in examinations.

**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 2001.

***GCE AS level courses***

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score (old tariff)	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	25	60		20		3.04	
Biology	26	81		19		4.23	
Physics	13	92		15		4.92	
Design and technology	6	100		0		4.00	
Business Studies	18	100		50		6.44	
Physical Education	6	100		50		6.67	
Art	14	100		79		8.43	
History	32	94		19		4.81	
English	19	95		47		6.84	

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

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	18	94		50		5.89	
Biology	23	52		17		2.70	
Physics	11	100		36		6.00	
Design and technology	7	86		0		4.00	
Business studies	10	100		20		4.80	
Art	11	100		73		8.73	
History	15	93		27		4.93	
English	14	100		7		4.86	

***Intermediate vocational qualifications***

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		Average point distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Business studies	10	100		30			
H & S Core	6	83		83			
Leisure & Tourism	10	90		50			



## SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

### MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

204. The inspection covered the A-level courses offered by the school in mathematics with mechanics, mathematics with statistics and further mathematics. There is a re-sit GCSE course but this was not inspected. The possibility of replacing this with a key skills course from next September is being considered.

#### Mathematics

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

##### Strengths

- A level results in recent years have been consistently at or above the national average.
- The standard of work which students produce is above average; they are achieving well. They are confident learners and enjoy the subject
- Teaching is good and sometimes very good

##### Areas for improvement

- Students would benefit from being given more opportunities to develop their use of language by making extended contributions in class discussions

206. The mathematics department does well for its sixth form students. In 2001 results were high, with half of the students gaining passes at grades A or B. Over time there is a consistent improvement in the average points score to well above the national average. Most students begin the course at above average standards but the high standards reached by many at the end of the course represent good achievement. There are no significant differences in the take-up or attainment of females and males. Overall, results are similar.

207. The standard of work seen during the inspection indicates attainment above the national average and in line with previous years. Students have a good understanding of the mathematics they have learned and use and apply this well when introduced to new topics. For example, in Year 12 students build on and extend their knowledge of calculus in solving problems with two variables, and use their knowledge of Pascal's triangle to help make sense of the binomial expansion. Students in Year 13 show a thorough understanding of fundamental statistical concepts such as probability distributions, confidence intervals, mean, estimated mean and standard deviation. They apply this knowledge well when tackling work on the t-distribution for the first time. They are able to identify the key information needed, and use formulae in a meaningful way to solve problems. Nearly all students have a good knowledge and understanding of algebraic relationships and procedures. This underpins much of their work and enables them to do well.

208. The high quality of sixth form teaching identified at the last inspection has been sustained. Teaching is good and sometimes very good, with very good features in all lessons observed. Teachers plan their lessons thoroughly with clear objectives. Lessons are structured well and maintain a good pace so that students are engaged in learning throughout and no time is wasted. Teachers' subject knowledge is very good, illustrated by the clarity of their explanations, and the focus on key points and questions which promote understanding. They have high expectations, showing students the degree of rigour and accuracy needed in presenting work and the depth of understanding needed to do well on the course. Students live up to these expectations: they participate fully in the lessons and work hard to make sure they understand what they are doing. Homework is used very well to provide practice to support the learning in lessons, and marking is effective in helping students to see how they can improve. The practice of involving students in demonstrating solutions for the class, often working together, is a strength and provides some opportunities for oral work and discussion. Overall, the leadership and management of mathematics in the sixth form is appropriate but students would benefit from this approach being

developed to include more in-depth and extended contributions which would promote their use of mathematical language and further challenge their thinking.

## SCIENCES

209. The focus was on physics and biology, but chemistry was also sampled. In chemistry, A-level examination results were above average in 2000 and in 2001. Two lessons were observed. Both were at least sound. In one, good notes consistent in style and representation with the textbook helped students make sound progress. In the other, students were presented with an appropriate challenge and were asked to make presentations on the topic of 'Equilibrium'.

### Biology

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

#### Strengths

- The current standards are better than those at the time of the last inspection
- Teaching is sound
- Students make sound progress
- Students' attitudes to learning in biology are sound and relationships are good
- The curriculum is appropriate

#### Areas for improvement

- Examination results
- Teaching is focused on providing information and key concepts are not always explained fully
- Marking is inconsistent; some work is not checked or marked
- Students are not sufficiently challenged or encouraged to discuss and explain key ideas in depth.

211. The GCE A-level examination results in 2000 and 2001 were well below average. The percentage of students achieving A – B grades fell from 31 per cent, near to the national average of 34 per cent, in 2000 to 17 per cent in 2001. The standards at the time of the last inspection were also well below the national average. However, standards are now beginning to improve.

212. The standards of work seen during this inspection are higher than those obtained in the last two years and are higher than those at the time of the last inspection. They are still below average but students' start from a lower than average point. Students carry out class experiments well, as seen in one Year 12 and one Year 13 lesson. They are able to follow instructions and carry out food tests carefully and safely, and plan and set up an investigation. They are less able to describe the structure of the amino acids, the building blocks of protein, or the factors or variables involved in their investigations.

213. Teaching is satisfactory overall. Lessons are planned appropriately and work is set at a suitable level to match students' prior attainment. Class management is good. Teaching is focused on providing information and securing competence in experimental procedures. This helps students to consolidate their basic knowledge but does not always provide enough challenge to the more able and allows them to coast. Sometimes good questioning helps to extend students' learning but it does not always engage students in extended explanations. Here, the opportunities for detailed discussion on key areas of knowledge and skills are a bit limited and, as a result, students do not learn as quickly as they could. There were the beginnings of this sort of discussion in most lessons but it was not sustained. In one Year 13 class, for example, students answered well factual questions relating to the vertical structure of the atmosphere but did not explore the graph fully. Some remained unsure about the factors involved and the units of measurement shown. In another Year 13 class, opportunities were missed for securing students' understanding of how molecules move.

214. Students show considerable interest in their lessons. They work well in pairs when carrying out investigations and support each other with learning in class. They listen attentively to their teachers and take notes. These activities help them make progress. Most, however, remain passive. Even the more able are reluctant to engage in discussion or ask for explanation.

215. The syllabus is appropriate. The planning is satisfactory but data analysis, particularly graphical data, is not covered fully enough. For example, in the study of the growth of bacterial culture the data was presented in a tabular form only: because no graph was plotted the opportunity to discuss the bacterial growth in more detail was missed. Overall, the subject is suitably led and although there is still room to improve teaching much has been done over the past few years to develop teachers' skills and knowledge. This improvement is now feeding into lessons and explains why standards now are better than in last year's examinations.

## Physics

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

### Strengths

- The current standards are above average and are considerably better than those at the last inspection
- Teaching is good
- Students make good progress
- Students are motivated, work hard and productively
- The curriculum is appropriate
- The leadership is good

### Areas for improvement

- Marking is not as helpful as it could be, with some work not checked by teacher or student
- The coverage of data analysis, graphical data in particular, is less than full
- There are insufficient opportunities for students to engage in extended discussion of key concepts

217. The GCE A level examination results in 2000 and 2001 showed the standards to be above average. With a small group of five students in 2000 the percentage gaining A – B grades was 20 per cent, much lower than the national average of 41 per cent but all students gained A – E grades which was higher than the national average of 88 per cent. In 2001, with a group of 11, the percentage obtaining A – B grades improved to 36 per cent: again the proportion gaining with grades A – E was 100 per cent. The proportion of students completing the course was also relatively high. The findings of this inspection confirm this improving trend.

218. The current standards in lessons are above average too and thus in line with the results shown in recent A level examinations. Sometimes work does not challenge the higher attaining students as much as it could because it does not deepen students' learning as much as it might. In a Year 13 lesson, for example, students were able to use formula to calculate different values but were less confident in explaining the reasons why things happened in certain ways. In another Year 13 lesson, students were able to carry out numerical calculations but the high attaining students were unable to explain the concepts of specific heat capacity or of latent heat with confidence. Overall, however, students make good progress and achieve well.

219. Teaching overall is good: this is why there is an upward trend in students' achievements. The main features are good lesson planning, teachers' enthusiasm and knowledge of their subject and high expectations of their students. Teachers show numerical calculations thoroughly and explain concepts well. They set out clear learning objectives and have high expectations of students. Lessons are informed by students' homework and build on prior learning. Teachers provide individual help well and use the blackboard and the OHT effectively to focus attention and to keep students fully on task. There is good pace and the resources are used well. More

opportunities for students to engage in extended discussion of key concepts, for example, of energy transfer without a change in temperature, will enhance the quality of learning even further. Equally, a more thorough marking of students' completed work and a check on incomplete work, for example incomplete graphs, would enhance learning.

220. Students learn well. They show a keen interest in learning and work productively throughout the lesson. They respond with enthusiasm to good, well-targeted tasks which their teachers set for them. They support each other in the classroom and work well in pairs during class experiments. Relationships are very good. Most show initiative and ask questions and make corrections to their work. Some have acquired good independent learning skills helping them to achieve well.

221. The curriculum is appropriate and planning is good. A more detailed coverage of data analysis, particularly of graphical data, for example, of exponential growth and decay, will enhance learning and provide appropriate challenge to the more able. The leadership of the subject is good.

## **ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING**

222. The focus was on A/S and A-level product design and three sessions were observed. Students make very good progress and achieve above average results. The teaching is very good. This leads to students gaining a secure knowledge and understanding of preparing a specification for the design and manufacture of a product.

### **Design and Technology**

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

#### **Strengths**

- Students have a sound grasp of design concepts apply them well in assignments, in answering questions, during discussions and overall are achieving well
- Teaching is very good: lessons are well structured with a range of activities which effectively help students to build up their knowledge and understanding
- Students work well together, they share ideas and information freely
- The subject area is very well led and there is a good range of learning resources

#### **Areas for improvement**

- There is a lack of information communication technology to support teaching and learning

224. The GCE A/S and A level results are very good. All students who took the examination gained the higher grades and high proportion completed the course

225. The standard of work of current students is above average. Students are achieving very well in relation to predictions based on GCSE results. In the lessons seen they were doing very well as a result of effective teaching which demanded much of them. The lesson structure and activities clearly focused their learning. Students recall knowledge and apply well, and their project work shows the same confidence as their class work.

226. Teaching was very good and students learnt well as a result. The principal features of the good teaching were clear objectives, sharp planning, brisk pace and a range of teaching strategies to bring about learning. The teachers had a very good subject knowledge and used this well in questioning and the tasks set. The lessons provided opportunities for students to practise what had been discussed and their skills and techniques improved as the lesson progressed. In the lessons students had opportunities to carry out research working as individuals to formulate ideas and record their findings. The teacher drew together their ideas and provided explanations. Students responded confidently to the activities.



227. Students learn very well. They are attentive, work productively and respond very well to the supportive teaching and different learning styles they experience. They rose to the challenge of designing products for a specific purpose. In the lesson time was used well. Students support and help each other effectively and, in groups, talk and listen to each other in a mature way as part of their learning. Students are always confident when offering ideas in more open discussion.

228. The good teaching and learning result from work in the faculty being well led and managed. There is a commitment to building on what has already been achieved and to improving standards. The planning effectively reflected the course requirement and determined the level for good teaching. Recording of progress and target setting based on careful analysis of student performance from testing and assessment is well established. Learning outcomes are sharply focused.

229. The standard of students' work seen meets the demands of the course requirements. In the sessions observed, they were doing well as a result of effective teaching which demanded much of them. The lesson structure and activities clearly focused their learning. In the lesson seen students drew well on their knowledge of design and meeting the requirements of a specification. The students recall knowledge and understanding well and apply it well: project work generally shows the same confidence as their work in class.

## **BUSINESS**

230. The school offers business education in GNVQ Intermediate level and AS/A2 levels and these were the focus of the inspection. In both types of provision, students attain in line with national averages.

### **Business studies**

231. Overall the provision in Business Studies is **good**

#### **Strengths**

- Teaching is good and occasionally very good
- Good planning
- Good student response
- Good leadership and management

#### **Areas for improvement**

- Accommodation and its impact on teaching and standards
- Resources
- Need to widen the provision with AVCE course

232. At the intermediate level of GNVQ results in 2000 and 2001 saw all students passing, but whereas 30 per cent attained distinction in 2000, with 10 per cent achieving a merit, in 2001, a much larger proportion received a merit (30 per cent) while the remainder passed. Work seen during the inspection indicated standards above pass rate and students confidently and accurately use a wide range of business terminology. They demonstrate clear understanding of key business concepts. The strength of the students' work lies in their steady accumulation of knowledge, which is well organised in their files, and in their basic understanding of the subject matter. The relative weakness is in the use made of this understanding, particularly, in the interpretation and analysis of data.

233. In GCE A-level business studies, the examination results were above average two years ago. They then fell markedly, so that they were below average this year, when 15 per cent of students obtained the higher grades A or B. The standards reached by current students, as seen in lessons and in their written work, are above average for both male and female students except for a minority of students who have EAL problems, as a result of which their attainment is just average.

234. In Year 12, students make good progress in understanding the central ideas of the subject, including those relating to the economic environment in which business operates, but they are not so good at applying their understanding. Students in Year 13 also progress well in their current work, and some are making good or even very good progress. However, their achievement is no more than satisfactory overall. This is due mainly to the lack of wider and in-depth reading around the subject, and additional interests outside school, which impact on the time they can devote to learning. In both years, there are deficiencies in the students' analytical skills which are needed to reach the highest grades.

235. Overall, the quality of the teaching on the GCE A-level course is good, and occasionally, very good. The teacher's excellent rapport and expert subject knowledge underpins discussion and lends clarity to the explanations provided. Lessons are carefully planned, and effective use is made of case studies and other activities to allow students to apply and extend their learning. For example, in a Year 13 lesson on marketing strategies and marketing plans, students consider a case study of an analysis carried out by the L'Oreal company about market penetration. Students generally worked well, knew what they were meant to do and learned effectively. The teacher's methodical explanation on this occasion promoted considerable gains in the lower attaining students' comprehension. However, a tendency to over-provide such help for the students is partly at the expense of ensuring that they have enough practice in the kinds of analysis that will enable them to become more independent learners and reach the higher levels of attainment.

236. Students respond well in lessons. Their attitudes are mostly mature and they sustain interest. Higher attaining students maintain intellectual rigour and they portray evidence of wider reading. Too often, however, they are happy to be passive recipients rather than active participants in their own learning.

237. Resources in the department are inadequate. The subject suffers particularly from the lack of a permanent base room. The itinerant nature of the teaching means that only limited resources and activities can be developed and this impacts adversely on students' progress.

238. Leadership and management is good. The head of department has a clear vision for the future of the department which sensibly encompasses additional courses at A level, for example A level economics, and at AVCE levels. The addition of such a range of courses would meet the wide and differing needs and aspirations of future cohorts of students.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

239. All the computer studies A and A/S-level lessons are held at another school in the consortium. During the inspection one lesson was sampled. Standards in lessons are broadly average for those students from The Highfield School who study the subject: in 2001, six students took the examination achieving results that were appropriate. Students have very good attitudes to their work and they achieve well compared to where they start. Teaching is good: thorough subject knowledge and expertise and a good understanding of the examination requirements all help students to learn well.

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

240. The school began offering students the opportunity to take AS and A-level examinations in physical education in September 2000. The small number of students who took the examination in July 2001 gained pass grades that were higher than the national average. An increased number of students began the AS level course in September 2001. The courses are well organised and administered and have attracted able and enthusiastic students.

## Physical education

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

### Strengths

- The attainment of the small number of students who took the AS level is above average
- Students achieve well
- Teaching of AS and A-level PE is good

### Areas for improvement

- Active participation of some of the quieter students

242. The school began offering its students the opportunity to take the AS level in physical education in September 2000. Six students completed the course and their attainment was above the national average. This is true both for the proportion of the students obtaining at least at pass grade (A-E), and for the proportion obtaining a higher grade pass (A-B).

243. Inspection evidence indicates that the five students currently in Year 13, who were the students who had gained examination success in the AS level examination, and the ten students who are just beginning the AS level course, are producing work that is at least in line with the national average, and some of them are doing even better. Students' practical programmes show a good range of skills in different activities. Most students can analyse practical performance confidently and they use their evaluation to refine their work. Students, particularly in Year 13, are able to ask quite perceptive questions of their teachers, and were able to demonstrate a good knowledge of the influences that a nation's culture has on the organisation and delivery of its national sporting programme. They have a good command of technical language and can apply it accurately and effectively. However, some students in Year 12 find the use of correct terminology difficult to use. Some students have used the Internet to broaden their knowledge and to research individual topics.

244. The teaching of AS and A-level PE is good. Teachers are aware of the different ways in which their students learn and they work hard to use methods, and provide them with resources which meet their needs. A particularly impressive feature is the importance which teachers place on a continuity of approach from Year 11 to Year 12. They know that the change to sixth form study can be difficult for some students and they therefore attempt to ease their students into research and further reading. The expectation of what students can do is high, and students respond with high levels of industry and a mature approach to their studies. Teachers pass on their considerable subject expertise and challenge students to think intellectually. They contribute to students' learning by giving them and pointing them towards a wealth of background information and resources. They give students the opportunities to make and share extensive notes. Lessons proceed at a good pace, and teachers mark the students' work consistently so that they know how to improve their achievements. In addition to having impressive knowledge, teachers have good relations with their students and treat them as responsible adults. Teachers know their students well, and are aware of their strengths and weaknesses and are skilled at asking them just the right questions in order to prompt thought, and to enter into discussions.

245. The physical education department is well managed. Teachers work well together as a team. They provide students with good advice on how to structure their work under examination conditions. The process of setting assignment encourages good independent learning. Assessment and recording are good and students receive helpful individual feedback.

## VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

246. The inspection covered the A-level course offered by the school in art. There were no A-level entries in music last year. One student is following an 'A/S' course which is taught through one of the other schools in the sixth form consortium.

## Art

247. Overall, the quality of provision in art is **good**.

### Strengths

- Students' ability to discuss the meaning behind their work
- Students' attitudes to the subject including their ability to experiment and persevere
- The quality of relationships in the art room, which ensure work is rewarding and challenging

### Areas for improvement

- Improving the students' technical skills by giving drawing, for example, a more prominent place in the curriculum
- Increasing the range of media and techniques used by students

248. Standards in art at A level are high and have been so for many years. A comparatively large number of students take the subject and these numbers are rising. Their work consists mainly of multimedia painting, construction and collage. Ideas inspiring their work are robust and individual students are eloquent advocates for their pieces. They use their sketchbooks well to explain how their ideas have developed and to select further information. Students draw on often private and very personal themes for their art and select ideas expressing aspects of their own culture or faith. They also make use of the work of a range of artists ranging from Turner to Patrick Heron.

249. There is a very strong studio-workshop feel to the art room; students are there to work as artists. Teachers ask good open-ended questions to help students think a little deeper and understand more. For example, when discussing work with students teachers will ask questions such as "Where are you going with this piece of work?" Relationships between the teachers and students are very good and students answer such questions thoughtfully and honestly. Teachers do not push their views on students. Questions about the way a piece of work is being completed or what is the thinking behind it start many good quality discussions between staff and students. Students discuss their work very articulately and lucidly, explaining any symbolism used extremely well, referring to original ideas and to famous artists who have influenced them. They take their work seriously and expect everyone else in the art rooms to do the same. They also discuss with other students what they are doing and often ask each other how they might develop theirs. The response they get is both positive and sensitive as they are keenly aware of the effort and thought that has been placed in someone's painting or collage, for example. During the inspection, representatives of a local gallery spoke to each individual to select paintings and collages to display there. The students' ability to discuss their work using specific art vocabulary was very evident: they were able to engage in extended conversations with adults they did not know and this helped the organisers make good choices. All students work with their minds as well as their hands. They are confident learners. Indeed when a teacher offers a student ideas about how a work might be extended or refined students are confident enough not to take the teacher's advice if they do not feel it suits their purpose. Assessment of individuals' work is supportive and gives students clear ideas about what needs to be improved. Guidance about what is needed for the course and examinations, both written and verbal, is thorough and helpful so students understand what they must do.

250. The leadership and management of the department is founded upon very strong philosophical ideas about what constitutes art. This philosophy is the reason the students can talk so eloquently about art, about the inspiration for their work and the ideas that develop it. Students are encouraged to take risks, to experiment and to use and manipulate visual images. There is a very strong desire on the part of the department to ensure all students succeed and enjoy their work. This aim is clearly met but also has a negative aspect. The need to give students success has led to some narrowing of challenge in techniques, skills and medium. Students use cut-out images from magazines, for example, rather than draw for themselves. Drawing skills both in paint and other drawing materials are not developed over time. A similar multi-media mix of acrylic paint,

construction and collage is becoming the signature of the department. This is recognised by the department and there are changes planned in the curriculum. There is to be an increase in the ways used to enrich students' art knowledge including the use of slides of artists' paintings and students will be given a greater variety of materials. The head of department carries out almost all of the teaching of sixth form students.

## HUMANITIES

251. The inspection concentrated on history: there was only one geography lesson timetabled during the week of the inspection. Geography standards are broadly average and teaching and learning are satisfactory: this is an improvement on the 2000 results which were very low. In the lesson seen students had particularly good attitudes to their work and made satisfactory progress in developing understanding of the development of farming systems. They responded positively to a recent field trip to the Isle of Wight and this supported their learning well: this explains why standards are rising.

### History

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

#### Strengths

- Good teaching which is sometimes inspirational
- Good management of this stage of the students' learning
- Good monitoring of best practice
- Good vision for the future

#### Areas for improvement

- Resources need to improve, particularly access to ICT
- Encourage students to read more widely

253. At A level, results in public examinations over the last two years, at 20 per cent A-B and 24 per cent A-B respectively, are below national averages. However, attainment in work seen during the inspection in both AS and A-level courses of study is overall in line with national averages.

254. Year 12 students acquire and effectively communicate knowledge and understanding of periods they are studying. For example, in their studies of the break with Rome, students prepared well and delivered with effect papers to their classmates about the range of reasons for the actions of Henry VIII. These included political, social and economic reasons as well as the religious reasons. Students listened diligently, though few asked follow up questions. Year 13 students can discuss historical issues from different perspectives and they develop historical concepts and understanding involving the need for judgements based on evidence. They develop their analytical skills. For example, in a lesson on the causes of the revolt of the Netherlands in the reign of Philip II, the students not only correctly ascribed causality to such factors as the importing to the Netherlands of the Inquisition and the rampaging Spanish soldiers, angered by not receiving their wages, but they also used analytical skills to judge effectively the role of Philip in the cause of the outbreak.

255. In both years, however, attainment and progress are affected adversely by language weakness, both orally, in class work, and, particularly, in written work. Both evidence a lack of wider reading. This often results in students having a good knowledge of the events and people they have studied but lacking an in-depth historical overview.

256. Teaching is good. Teachers' presentations are skilful, confident, accurate and they often inspire and enthuse, and this leads to good learning. Teaching is particularly supportive of students' development as historians, their use of evidence and their respect for it. Sometimes, however,

teachers are too inclined to spoon feed the students and do not always sufficiently encourage independent learning.

257. The response of students is mostly good, particularly in class. However, they have not yet developed a culture of wide reading even when sources are suggested to them.

258. Resources are barely satisfactory. There are no appropriate maps for the periods studied and access to ICT facilities is very limited. The recently appointed head of department manages sixth form aspects efficiently and effectively. Peer group monitoring amongst the teachers is in place and best practice is disseminated well. He has a clear vision for the development of the subject at post-16.

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

259. The focus of the inspection was on English literature. Modern foreign languages lessons in the sixth form were sampled during the inspection. In both French and German standards are a little above average and this is reflected in the good achievement seen in lessons. Year 12 students in French have already written in French at length on a range of subjects, including marriage, youth and justice. In a Year 13 class, students in French successfully extracted details from a recorded interview with an ex-Resistance leader, and in German a student was able to answer questions about German history at length.

### English

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

#### Strengths

- Very good teaching
- Positive student attitudes
- Good examination results over a period of years

#### Areas for improvement

- Standards could be higher still
- Wider reading by students would contribute to this
- Students would benefit from being taught regularly in English teaching rooms

261. The GCE A-level English literature results for 2000 were higher than the national average. There was an unexpected fall in the number of students gaining the higher grades, A and B, in 2001, but all candidates obtained at least an A-level pass, as they have done here for several years now. 18 of the 19 candidates for AS English language and literature in 2001 obtained a pass, with six at grade A and three more at grade B.

262. The standard of work reached by current Year 13 students is in line with or just above the national average. They are making satisfactory progress, given their prior attainment. The coursework they produced last year for their AS examination shows a high standard of written work; students can redraft work to good effect, and are able to reflect and comment successfully on their own writing. In the lessons observed, they were seen analysing passages from Shakespeare plays with great confidence. They are able to talk about the language of the texts, using appropriate technical vocabulary, and to make useful notes.

263. Year 12 students are less secure on the use of grammatical terms, but are already able to talk about the language of texts. They can identify rhetoric in a newspaper editorial, and can describe the impact of a Wilfred Owen poem with direct references to the text. They have begun to make successful notes; they have progressed satisfactorily from the standards they reached at GCSE and are becoming more aware of the demands of the AS course.

264. Teaching is always good, and more often very good. Teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of their subject, including the linguistic theory demanded by the syllabus. This has a significant impact on learning: students become secure in their own knowledge about language as a result. Lessons have pace and a sense of direction, and teachers use effective methods to promote learning. Most use group work to good effect, so that students are able themselves to analyse the language of texts. A Year 13 class were able to demonstrate their understanding of the way Othello's language changes throughout Shakespeare's play because the task was well planned and structured. Good relationships between students and their teachers encourage students to rise to the challenges set for them. Their knowledge of the set texts is growing, although most would benefit if they read more widely. Students are very well served by their teachers, however: teachers set homework regularly, assess and mark students' work thoroughly and, in some cases, give up part of their lunchtimes to provide extra help to those who need it. They know their students well, and have a keen awareness of the standards they can reach if they are sufficiently challenged.

265. The students, in turn, are eager to take responsibility for their own learning. Their positive attitudes also contribute to their learning. They work hard, and in lessons are more than willing to work in groups of the teachers' choice, discussing freely and presenting their findings confidently to the class. They are ready to take notes based on feedback to the class from their peers, trusting the quality of each other's work. Relationships in lessons are good, sometimes very good, both between students and their teachers and amongst students. They clearly enjoy the subject.

266. The current Year 13 are the first group in the school not only to be taking an A2 course, but also to be studying English language and literature, rather than English literature, as previous A-level candidates had done. Although the change of syllabus clearly makes demands on students and teachers alike, all seem to be rising to the challenge, as the 2001 AS results have shown. The more broadly based syllabus is already attracting more students, as it is perceived to have a wider relevance beyond school life.

267. Sixth form teaching is well organised within the department, which is very well led. Each set has two different teachers all eager to develop their knowledge and understanding of the syllabus by attending training arranged by the examination board, to build on the skills and knowledge they already have. New course books have been obtained, supplemented by other texts and videos, although the use of rooms in the sixth form area is less than satisfactory, as space is limited and there is no scope for display work.

268. Good progress has been made since the last inspection, not least because more students are now taking English in the sixth form, many of whom did not achieve top grades at GCSE.