

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **TEMPLE MOOR HIGH SCHOOL**

Leeds

LEA area: Leeds

Unique Reference Number: 108064

Headteacher: Mr R E Sheriff

Reporting inspector: Dr D A W Biltcliffe  
1025

Dates of inspection: 5<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> October 2001

Inspection number: 194349

Full Inspection carried out under Section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11-18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
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Dates of previous inspection:	2 <sup>nd</sup> - 6 <sup>th</sup> December 1996

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13452	Mr H Meggitt	Lay inspector		Partnership with parents
5038	Mr H Heller	Team inspector	Special educational needs; English as an additional language	Pupils' attitudes and values; school's care for pupils; leadership and management
11479	Mr J A Paine	Team inspector	English; drama	
1262	Mr R Heath	Team inspector	Mathematics	
4607	Dr D E Ward	Team inspector	Science	
31688	Mr B McGonagle	Team inspector	Art	
11190	Dr W M Burke	Team inspector	Design and technology; information and communication technology	
12470	Mr B M Greasley	Team inspector	Geography	Curriculum
8873	Ms C Evers	Team inspector	History	Efficiency: staffing, accommodation and learning resources
4829	Mr I H C Waters	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
8645	Dr J D Ward	Team inspector	Music	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; assessment
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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

This mixed comprehensive school educates over 1100 pupils aged 11-18: of these just over 1000 are in Years 7-11. The school is growing in size owing to parental demand for places here. The social and economic background of pupils is broadly average. The overall level of attainment of pupils on entry to the school at age 11 is rising and is now around the national average. The proportions of pupils with special educational needs or with statements of such need are also average. About 3.5 per cent of pupils come from families of ethnic minority heritage, but none is at an early stage of learning English. The school was last inspected in December 1996.

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

This is a good and improving school. Pupils' overall standard of attainment at the end of Year 9 is now close to average, although below average in GCSE. Most pupils make sound progress. Standards in the sixth form are rising and close to average overall. Teaching is of a good standard. Governors and the school's senior management work positively to raise standards. The school provides a good standard of education for its pupils. On its well above average income, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

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

- Art, design and technology, geography, history and music are particular subject strengths.
- The quality of teaching is high overall: pupils' good attendance and effort are rewarded by good progress here.
- The quality of pupils' attitudes, behaviour and relationships is generally high.
- Pupils' moral, social and cultural development and their all-round growth are promoted well.
- Pupils' care, welfare and guidance are taken very seriously.
- Leadership and management are strong at all levels.
- The school is a warm, friendly and inclusive place, with a strong feeling of being a community.

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

- The weaknesses in a small minority of teaching.
- The amount of extended, rigorous discussion in class and the clarity of pupils' speech.
- The consistency with which the needs of pupils with special educational needs and of high attainers are met.
- The quality of the school's management information systems, especially those relating to pupils' progress.
- Statutory requirements are not met for information and communication technology (ICT) in Years 10-11, religious education (RE) in Years 7-9, and for daily collective worship for all pupils.

*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 improved steadily on many fronts since 1996. Pupils' attainment by the end of Year 9 has risen from below average to slightly above average. Their overall level of attainment in GCSE examinations and at GCE Advanced (A) level is higher than at the last inspection. The school's teaching has improved further. The school's ethos continues to be friendly and welcoming. The school has shown a sound capacity to keep on getting better. The school's new management has the determination and skill to improve its practice further. The school received the national *Investors in People* status in 2000.

The school has significantly improved some of the weaknesses identified in 1996. For example, it has:

- spread good teaching ideas reasonably well through an increased monitoring and review of class teaching;
- clearly identified teachers' training needs and formed appropriate plans to meet them;
- provided a good scheme of work experience for Year 11 pupils;
- ensured that sixth-form RE has its own module within the general studies programme.

In contrast, it has not done enough to:

- identify and target support for gifted and talented pupils consistently;
- ensure that pupils with special educational needs consistently receive the help they need in class;
- use ICT sufficiently in school or to meet statutory requirements for the subject fully in Years 10-11; and
- provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils.

## 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
	1998	1999	2000	2000
GCSE examinations	E	D	E	E
A-levels/AS-levels	D	D	A	

Key	
<i>Well above average</i>	A
<i>Above average</i>	B
<i>Average</i>	C
<i>Below average</i>	D
<i>Well below average</i>	E

The school's results in the Year 9 national tests in 2000 were average in mathematics and science, but (unusually) well above average in English. The results were, overall, well above the average for schools of a similar kind (as measured only by the proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals). Standards have risen over the 1996-2000 period, broadly in line with the rise nationally. By the end of Year 9 standards in the school are average in most subjects. They are above average, however, in physical education (PE), but below average in ICT and RE. Boys and girls do equally well in most subjects. The majority of pupils make sound progress in their studies between Years 7 and 9.

Results in GCSE were well below the national average in 2000 and have been below average since the last inspection on most of the usual measures. The overall standard in 2000 was also well below that generally achieved in schools of a similar character (again, based solely on free school meals ratings). The 1999 results, in contrast, had been close to average. The progress of the majority of pupils from 1998 to GCSE in 2000 was, however, sound, because their earlier attainment had also been well below average overall. Boys do noticeably worse than girls overall: the academic gap between the sexes is usually greater here than it is nationally. The strongest subjects in GCSE in the school over the last two years have been mathematics, geography, history, PE and business education. Pupils have consistently tended to do slightly worse in English and science. Most pupils make a satisfactory rate of progress over Years 10-11, but a minority of poor attenders pull down the school's results and progress ratings. In 2001, GCSE results, although still a little below average, rose substantially: two-fifths of all Year 11 pupils gained at least five A\*-C grades and the average points score for all pupils was the highest of recent years.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	The vast majority of pupils show positive, caring attitudes to the school and its provision. There are also minimal litter and graffiti.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour around the school is predominantly good. Pupils are generally pleasant and cooperative. Harassment is rare.
Personal development and relationships	Most pupils form very friendly, thoughtful attitudes and relationships with one another and adults.
Attendance	Attendance is satisfactory overall, whilst punctuality for school and lessons is good. A few pupils should attend much better.

Most pupils are pleasant, hard-working young people, displaying good personal standards and manners. The rate of permanent exclusions is low. Pupils shoulder responsibility well.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching is good overall throughout the school. In the core subjects it is satisfactory overall in English in Years 7-9 and in both mathematics and science in Years 10-11; in other years it is good. In other subjects teaching is good overall. The exceptions are the satisfactory teaching found in Years 7-9 in ICT and RE, in Years 10-11 in art and PE, and in French throughout Years 7-11. Teaching is very good in geography in Years 10-11 and in design and technology throughout Years 7-11. There is insufficient teaching of ICT. In well-taught lessons pupils make good progress through rigorous, pacy and interesting teaching. Unsatisfactory teaching is characterised by low expectations and dullness. The needs of the highest-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs are not fully met in a minority of lessons. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is satisfactory overall. Pupils are generally keen to learn and work hard. Most make sound progress in their studies.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school provides a satisfactory range of learning opportunities and subjects that mostly meet the needs of all pupils.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Sound policies have been put in place after a period of inadequate provision. There is, however, not enough high quality support available.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	This is good overall, with no aspect of significant weakness. Moral education is highly emphasised. Some very good social opportunities are provided, but pupils have few facilities for social gathering.
How well the school cares for its pupils	A substantial strength of the school. Pastoral staff are dedicated and experienced. Child protection arrangements are effective.

Most curricular aspects are sound, although ICT does not meet statutory requirements in Years 10-11 and RE does not do so in Years 7-9, because they are not taught enough. Guidance and counselling services are very effective and thoughtfully used. Assessment policies are clear and practice is improving. The personal and social education course is well structured, but not well taught. The previous weak system for pupils with special education needs is being quickly and effectively updated.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Leadership is of good quality at all levels of management. The new headteacher has made a substantial, positive impact in a short time. Other key managers fulfil their roles with energy and commitment.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors accept wide responsibilities and give much time to the school. They give strong support, but require clear performance information.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The national system of performance management is in place. Planning for the future is clear, realistic and appropriately targeted. Academic monitoring has gaps, but suitable remedial action is being trialled.
The strategic use of resources	Academic priorities are thoughtfully financed. Planning and monitoring are sound. The school's budgetary deficit is well under control.

The school spends a below average amount on staff, but the provision of teachers is good. Most accommodation is suitable, but poor acoustics plague drama and dining. Learning resources are generally satisfactory as a result of recent high spending, but there are some shortages of textbooks, up-to-date computers and library books. The school pays close attention to obtaining the best value for its money.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils are expected to work hard and do their best.</li> <li>• The high quality of teaching and management.</li> <li>• The school's close links with parents.</li> <li>• The good progress most pupils make.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More information about pupils' progress.</li> <li>• Greater consistency in setting homework.</li> </ul>

Inspectors' judgements largely support the views that most parents express. The school sets great store by children working hard and achieving success. It enables most pupils to make sound progress. The quality of teaching is good overall. The school's previous and new senior management highly value strong links with pupils' homes, are strongly backed by parents and offer effective management and leadership. Reports and other means of communicating children's progress to parents are generally sound, but are not specific enough overall about exactly what pupils achieve. Homework was set reasonably during the inspection. Parents – and, as the school's oversubscription shows, the wider community – prize what the school achieves with their children.

## **ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM**

The sixth form has 122 students, with slightly more male students than female. It offers a suitably wide range of courses. Until recently, these led predominantly to GCE Advanced (A) level, but an increasing range of vocational courses is offered at Advanced, Intermediate and Foundation levels. Currently, a greater proportion of students take vocational, and a smaller proportion take GCE Advanced Supplementary (AS) and A-level, courses than the national picture. The vast majority of students are white, in line with the ethnic characteristics of Years 7-11. Around two-fifths of pupils stay on from Year 11 into the school's sixth form. About 30 students annually take at least two GCE A-level subjects.

### **HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS**

The sixth form is successful and steadily expanding. Although pass rates and grade quality are usually slightly below average, these generally reflect students' lower GCSE results. Most students here make at least sound progress. Results show an improving trend. Students can study a wide range of courses: these include law and psychology by distance-learning. Teaching is good and is very good in art and in design and technology. The sixth form is well managed. It is, however, heavily subsidised by the rest of the school. The main strengths and areas that could be improved in the sixth form are:

#### **Strengths**

- Students achieve good results overall. They make sound progress in most subjects.
- The majority of students display very mature, thoughtful and committed attitudes to their studies.
- Attendance and punctuality are high, reflecting both students' attitudes and thorough management.
- The overall quality of teaching is good: a fifth of it is very good and none is unsatisfactory.
- The school provides a suitably wide range of courses: students have a good choice.
- Students' personal development is carefully nurtured. Students are very well supported and guided.
- Students themselves rate the school very highly on virtually all aspects of its work.

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

- Cost-effectiveness: the range and mode of sixth-form courses are a drain on the rest of the school.
- The overall quality of discussion, debate and clarity of speech in class.
- Further aspects for improvement are included within subject reports.

*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 specifically 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 in detail. The nine listed below are GCE A-level courses apart from two vocational (AVCE) courses.

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	<b>Sound.</b> Results have improved steadily since the last inspection. Students' mastery of skills and techniques is a particular strength. Overall, teaching is good and students achieve well.
Chemistry	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Results are generally in line with students' earlier attainments. The good teaching is based on clear objectives and careful planning.
Physics	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Results are improving. Students achieve results at least in line with their prior attainment. They are strongly encouraged to explore ideas. They receive good teaching from experienced staff.
Business studies (AVCE)	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Results have been above average. Teaching is helpful and systematic. Students' current work is below average overall.
Travel and tourism (AVCE)	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Average standards are achieved. Teaching is knowledgeable, well organised and enthusiastic. Students are a little over-dependent on teachers.
Art	<b>Very good.</b> Standards are improving. Students' work is of high quality owing to very good teaching. Vocational aspects of the subject are, however, underplayed.
Geography	<b>Good.</b> Results are above average. Students achieve well. Teaching is well planned and effective. Assessment procedures are a strength. The subject is led and managed very well.
History	<b>Good.</b> Current students reach average standards. Results were below average in 2000. Teaching is good, challenging students with appropriate work and providing careful guidance through thorough marking.
English	<b>Good.</b> Results are good and students achieve highly. Teaching is good: lessons are well planned and effective. The subject is led and managed well.

Work was sampled in other subjects. Teaching was always at least satisfactory. It was good in the few lessons seen in modern foreign languages, PE, psychology, law and key skills, and very good in design and technology, leisure and tourism, child development and in health and social care. Personal and social education and general studies were satisfactorily taught overall, but one lesson had very effective teaching.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	The pastoral ethos of the sixth form is very strong. Students appreciate the considerable time, care and sensitive guidance that staff give to them.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Good. Senior staff have worked hard to create a wide-ranging curriculum, a good quality of teaching, adequate study and social facilities, and a caring but challenging ethos. The progress of students is carefully checked. Cost-effectiveness, however, is this sixth form's Achilles' heel.

## STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The high quality of teaching they receive.</li><li>• The encouragement and help they are given.</li><li>• Opportunities for working independently.</li><li>• The wide choice of courses on offer.</li><li>• "Temple Moor is a good place to be".</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Advice about study and work after the sixth form.</li><li>• The range of out-of-school activities and enrichment opportunities.</li></ul>

Inspectors closely concur with students' "likes" about life in the sixth form. The quality of most teaching and the care and help that students receive are of a high order. A broad range of vocational and non-vocational courses is on offer. Facilities for independent study are adequate and distance-learning stimulates self-reliance. About a fifth of students rightly felt, however, that, although the school's provision is sound, sixth-formers require still more exposure and insight into high-level economic, political, artistic and cultural life.

## 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. Pupils in the school vary widely in the standard of attainment they reach. Overall, however, by the end of Year 9 and Year 11 their level of attainment is close to that expected nationally of pupils. Pupils' level of attainment has recently been broadly average in the national tests in Year 9, but below average in GCSE examinations. Over the last few years the overall standard reached in GCE Advanced (A) level examinations has been a little below average. Since the last inspection in 1996 the level of attainment in the Year 9 national tests has risen quite substantially, at least keeping pace with the rise nationally. The school's results in GCSE have also risen over the 1996-2001 period, broadly at a similar rate to the rising national trend. Results have improved at A level.
2. When pupils come to the school in Year 7, their overall level of attainment varies a little from year to year, but is now close to average overall. The proportion of high-attaining pupils joining the school is fairly typical of a comprehensive school, but was a little low in 1999. In the national primary tests in 2000 (the highest academic standard of intake so far and the latest year for which full comparative national data are available), eight out of every ten pupils in Year 7 reached the basic yardstick of Level 4 and nearly three out of ten reached the higher Level 5. Other sets of national tests administered by the school suggest, however, that the school's intake has usually been below average. The school's intake has risen progressively each year since 1997 to reach an average level in 2000.
3. In the national tests taken at the end of Year 9 in 2000, the proportion of pupils who achieved either the national standard of at least Level 5 or the higher standard of at least Level 6 was average in mathematics and science, but above average in English. On the average "points" that pupils scored in the tests in 2000, their attainment was close to average in mathematics and science, but well above average in English. Since 1995 the school's results have usually been close to, but a little below average (well below in 1998), but rose to an average level in 1999 and 2000. These results show a clear upward trend.
4. Girls are consistently and quite substantially ahead of boys overall in English by the end of Year 9. In contrast, girls and boys usually do equally well overall in mathematics and science, although girls just edged in front of boys in these two subjects in 2000. In most recent years teachers' assessments of pupils have been fairly close to the test results pupils achieved.
5. When these 2000 Key Stage 3 results are compared with those in schools which have a similar background (as measured solely by the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals), pupils in this school performed well above the group average overall – above it in mathematics and science, but well above it in English. Pupils' average points score for the three subjects was below the average of other schools in the same free meals category in 1998, but well above it in 1999. Over the 1998-2000 period the English rating has risen strongly from well below to well above average.
6. In the five other (non-core) subjects formally assessed at the end of Year 9 in 2000, teachers judged the overall attainment of pupils as broadly average in geography, history and modern foreign languages, but well below average in design and technology and in information and communication technology (ICT). All apart from ICT are judged by staff in 2001 to be at least average. Inspectors consider that the overall level of attainment is average in all these subjects except one: in ICT the standard is below average largely because of insufficient hardware or difficulties of access and consequent low use of it outside the specialist-taught courses.
7. As pupils move through the school from Year 7 to the end of Year 9, the limited statistical evidence available from national tests suggests that they make sound progress overall. On the evidence of pupils' work and lessons seen during the inspection, inspectors judge that pupils' progress and achievement in their studies are sound overall – satisfactory in English, mathematics, art and modern foreign languages; unsatisfactory in ICT for the reasons stated above; but good in science, design and technology, geography,

history and physical education (PE). Pupils make good progress when teaching is pacy and rigorous. Progress is unsatisfactory in a small minority of classes where lessons are slow and uninteresting.

8. In the GCSE examinations of 2000, pupils' overall attainment was well below the national average on all the usual range of measures. Although the 2000 results were the school's lowest since 1995, they were largely consistent with the low overall level of attainment pupils had two years earlier. Over the four-year period since the last inspection, GCSE results (on the basis of pupils' points scores) have been either below the national average (in 1997 and 1999) or well below average (in 1998 and 2000). The proportion of Year 11 pupils gaining five or more of the higher (A\*-C) grades over the 1996-2000 period, for example, was 28-42 per cent against a national average of 43-47 per cent. The trend in the school's results over the whole of the 1994-2000 period was below the trend nationally, but pulled back up to be in line with the national trend in 2001.
9. Although the school's GCSE results are consistently lower than average, so have pupils' overall levels of attainment been on entry. The school does not yet have the data to track pupils' progress fully through the whole of their secondary education. Taking into account pupils' achievements in the national tests two years earlier, however, most pupils make satisfactory progress as they move through the school from Year 9 to Year 11.
10. There is, nevertheless, evidence of some slippage over Years 10-11 in the overall progress of year groups of pupils. This is because the underperformance of a significant minority of pupils pulls down the overall achievement of the year group. The major factor in this underperformance is the poor or intermittent attendance of a minority of pupils, especially in Year 11. Those pupils who attend well generally reach appropriate standards in GCSE. If the results of those Year 11 pupils with less than 80 per cent attendance are excluded from the analysis, the results of the remainder are in line with the national average. The school's performance in GCSE is sound.
11. In the core subjects pupils' attainment of a grade in the range A\*-C in GCSE in 2000 was well below average in all of English, mathematics and science (at around seven-tenths of the national average). Although the results in 2001 were still below average, they increased markedly over the previous year in all these three subjects. When pupils' performances in all the subjects they take in GCSE are compared with one another, pupils did significantly better in at least three years of the 1997-2000 period in geography, history, German, PE and business education. Pupils did consistently worse in English and science. No pupil achieved the highest A\* grade in either 2000 or 2001 in English literature, biology, drama or business education.
12. Girls achieved a greater proportion of the higher (A\*-C) grades in GCSE than boys in 2000, but the overall gap between the sexes was smaller than it was nationally. The school has not retained full sets of comparative data about the relative performances of boys and girls in earlier years. In 2000, girls did much better than boys in English, gaining about twice as many higher grades as boys, but they performed worse than boys in science. The performance of boys and girls was about the same in mathematics.
13. When the school's average point scores at GCSE are compared with those in schools with a similar "free school meals" background, this school's performance was similar to most others in 1999, but well below average in 2000. By the same measure, pupils' overall performance was well below average in science in 2000. The major difference between the two years is that the school's slightly lower free meals grouping in 2000 put it into a different, more stringent category of performance. Additionally, the reasons for the drop in performance outlined earlier apply equally here in at least partly explaining the school's apparent underperformance in this set of comparisons.
14. In work seen during the inspection, pupils' overall standard of attainment was close to that expected nationally by the end of both Year 9 and Year 11. By the end of Year 9 it is average in most subjects, but below average in ICT and well below average in religious education (RE) because of the limited teaching time given to it. It is above average in PE. By the end of Year 11 the overall level of work is close to average. It is of an average standard in most subjects, above average in PE and RE, but below average overall in English, mathematics, science, ICT and German. The progress of most pupils with special educational needs (SEN) or of those who are gifted and talented is broadly satisfactory overall. It could be greater with more support for SEN work or through more consistently challenging work for those of highest

ability.

15. In English, the overall attainment of pupils is broadly average. Many aspects of their reading, however, are a little above average. Much attention is paid to reading, with periods of sustained reading featuring especially in Years 7-9. Most pupils read aloud well. The planning and execution of written tasks are average overall, but with a good overall standard of handwriting and presentation. Drama makes a good contribution to pupils' competence in speaking: the overall standard is average, but there is a very wide variation in the clarity of pupils' speech. Most pupils listen carefully.
16. In other subjects across the school pupils' standard of reading is average overall. On the few occasions when pupils read aloud they do so quite fluently and with fair expression, but a significant minority do not, partly because they do not get sufficient opportunity to do so in class. Pupils have a reasonable capability in skimming and researching texts.
17. Pupils' standard of writing is average overall. High-attaining pupils usually produce work of an appropriately high standard, although the amount of extended, analytical writing is less than often seen. The writing of many middle- or low-attaining pupils is of a fair standard. The neatness and layout of written work vary widely, but for both boys and girls are above average overall. Most handwriting is good. The taking of notes is sometimes well done, but the skill is too little practised and taught overall. Spelling and punctuation are average in most subjects, below average in design and technology, modern foreign languages and RE, but above average in science and music.
18. The quality of speaking is a little below average overall. Most pupils have much to say, but only a minority do so formally with clarity, precision and confidence – either in group work or in presentations to the whole class. The minority who are very capable speakers have a suitably rich, general and subject-specific vocabulary, but a significant minority of pupils require help to speak audibly and convincingly in formal speech. This is a weakness that requires positive action by the school and the pupils themselves. Most pupils listen reasonably to their teachers and to one another.
19. In mathematics and in numeracy across the curriculum pupils handle numbers and data reasonably well. Most have a satisfactory grasp of the elementary aspects of the subject. The standard of work is average by the end of Year 9 and a little below average by the end of Year 11. The overall standard in science is broadly average by the end of Year 9, but is just below average in Year 11. Basic work is sound. Attainment in information and communication technology (ICT) is below average throughout the school, largely because of a legacy of insufficient and inadequate equipment and too little experience of its applications.

### **Sixth form**

20. The overall results at GCE Advanced (A) level for those students entered for two or more subjects were below average over the 1996-1999 period, reaching at best about four-fifths of the level achieved nationally. They rose consistently, however, year on year, from their lowest, well below average level in 1996 through to 1999.
21. The results in 2000, in contrast, were the best the school has achieved in its time as a comprehensive school. Although the average points that students gained for each subject they entered were close to the national average, the total points gained by each student were well above average. This high level of attainment per student was also partly the result of all students taking a fourth A-level, general studies, in addition to the typical three subjects. The A-level results in 2001 were below average, but still higher than they had been prior to 2000.
22. The proportion of the highest (A-B) grades obtained was about half the national average over the 1997-1999 period, but was close to average in 2000. It dropped back a little in 2001. The pass rate in recent years has been lower than it is nationally: it stood at 82-83 per cent in 2000-2001, compared with the national rate of about 90 per cent, but has improved significantly from the low rates of 1997-1998. Nevertheless, taking into account the quality of grades that they gained in GCSE examinations two years earlier, most students made good progress to A-level in 2000: on the grades and subjects that could be directly compared, students made good (or better) progress in just over half their subjects, satisfactory

progress in over a quarter and unsatisfactory progress in about one fifth.

23. All students who took GCE A-level in 2000 passed in English, physics, art, geography, French, German and economics. In 2001 all passed in English, mathematics, art, geography, French, graphics, economics and law, and all but one passed in physics and PE. The quality of grades was particularly high in some subjects. In 2000, for example, all candidates gained a grade A or B in French, and in 2001 in art and graphics. Progress in history in 2000 was unsatisfactory. By national standards, the level of results was high in 2000 in this school in English, art, geography and economics, but low in history. In no A-level subject did the pass rate fall below two-thirds in 2000, but it dipped just below that figure in 2001 in biology, history and psychology.
24. All students took general studies at GCE A-level in both 2000 and 2001: about three-quarters passed the examination, but a much smaller proportion than do so nationally achieved the two highest grades and the pass rate was below average. Part of the reason for this level of result is that the subject receives a much smaller proportion of teaching time (one period each week) than most other A-level subjects.
25. For the first time in 2001, students took the new-style GCE Advanced Supplementary (AS) level examinations – for many of them this was the first stage towards a full A-level course and examination (A2) in 2002. Students passed the examination in nearly three-quarters of the subjects they entered (the provisional national pass rate is 87 per cent), but the quality of grades obtained was well below average: the achievement of the two highest (A and B) grades was, for example, only 16 per cent compared with a (provisional) national rate of 35 per cent. All students passed in English, art, geography, history and law, and all but one did so in chemistry, physics, PE, economics and psychology. Only half, however, passed in mathematics and general studies and one third did so in German.
26. The pass rates on vocational courses in both 2000 and 2001 were generally high. On the two Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) courses offered by the school, all students passed the business education course in both years and all but one student did so in travel and tourism. Two distinctions were gained in 2001. On the four General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) courses offered at Intermediate (I) level in 2000 or 2001, all students passed in art and design and in business education, and the vast majority did so in health and social care and in leisure and tourism. Both students taking the GNVQ Foundation course in health and social care, however, failed. The overall standard reached on the Key Skills courses, taken by all sixth formers, is broadly average.
27. The overwhelming majority of students feel that they are helped and encouraged by the school to study and research topics independently. The school's video-conferencing/distance-learning system for teaching law and psychology is a prime example of such good, structured provision that is both popular and effective. Only a few students "drop out" of courses: the major reason is to enter employment or specialist training. Just over two-fifths of students from Year 13 went on to university for further study in 2001 and a similar proportion went into employment.
28. Most students skim written material and undertake text-based or Internet research to a fair standard. Dedicated private study facilities and a suitable amount of non-class time enable students to work independently: most use this responsibly to undertake assignments. Discussions are often enthusiastic, but the overall quality of interactive discussion, formal debating and speaking is lower than often found amongst sixth formers. This aspect requires systematic attention. Overall, however, most students make at least satisfactory progress in their studies.

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

29. Across the whole age range pupils and students show positive attitudes towards the school and the provision it makes for them. They form very good relationships with one another, with teaching staff and with other adults. They show respect for personal property, the buildings and the general environment of the school. There are very few signs of graffiti. The level of litter is kept low because of

pupils' reasonable habits and through the regular and effective clearing of the site. Despite the limitations of internal space, pupils move around the building sensibly and with mutual consideration.

30. In Years 7 to 11 pupils' behaviour around the school's premises and site is predominantly good. In lessons it is at least good (and often very good) in almost two-thirds of classes. Unsatisfactory behaviour and attitudes in class are rare, occurring in about six per cent of lessons: they are often the result of uninspiring teaching that lacks sufficient challenge, clarity and momentum. The atmosphere in classrooms and around the school is generally pleasant and cooperative. There is no evidence of pupils significantly harassing one another: pupils themselves assert that there is little bullying in the school and that it is promptly and vigorously addressed, when reported.
31. Permanent exclusions from the school are low in relation to its size – one occurrence over the last full year. Short, fixed-term exclusions, in contrast, are in the high range for schools of comparable size. Systems for determining exclusions are appropriate and soundly implemented.
32. Pupils in Years 7-11 generally appreciate the effects of their actions on others. Impulsive or aggressive behaviour is rare. There is clear sensitivity for the feelings of others: this was graphically illustrated during the inspection by the deeply felt and moving tributes written by pupils in the aftermath of the terrorist atrocities in the United States of America on 11<sup>th</sup> September. Whilst pupils in these year groups show noticeably positive attitudes to their life and work in school, they do not have sufficient opportunities to exercise their initiative and to take on responsibility. There is, for example, no prefect system at this stage, and the year and school councils, through which pupils could consider and debate issues of concern to them, do not currently operate. Pupils clearly demonstrate the capacity to take on such responsibilities.

### **Sixth form**

33. In the sixth form, students are generally courteous and welcoming. They form very good relationships with one another, with their personal tutors and the senior staff. They work well in groups, as was well demonstrated in the Year 12 sessions on Key Skills, and deal with controversial issues in a reasoned and humane way. Their attitudes and conduct in lessons are overwhelmingly good (and often very good).
34. A large number of students take part in activities within the voluntary service scheme. This involves them giving of their own time and effort both within school and in the wider community. Noteworthy examples seen were the trained counsellors who work to support younger pupils in the school and the reading volunteers who support the work of the special educational needs department.
35. There is an active students' council which represents students' interests, needs and concerns. An impressive recent project has been the link forged with a secondary school in South Africa, serving a disadvantaged township area. Students, well supported by staff, have worked hard to raise funds that will promote the educational opportunities of their less privileged peers in Durban.

### **Attendance**

36. The overall attendance of pupils is satisfactory. It was also satisfactory in the 1999-2000 academic year (the most recent year for which full national comparative data are available) at 90.7 per cent – a point very slightly below the national average of 91.3 per cent. In the last academic year it rose a little further to the satisfactory level of 91.0 per cent. This level is a little higher than it was at the last inspection, when attendance was slightly below 90 per cent.
37. The level of authorised absence in the year of the last inspection was close to ten per cent, but fell to around eight per cent in 1999-2000 and dropped further to 7.7 per cent last year. In the last two years the amount of absence without good reason (1.2-1.4 per cent), although lower than in 1996, was still a little higher than the national average of 1.1 per cent.
38. These steady improvements have come about primarily as a result of a concerted and largely successful effort by staff at all levels in the school and the local authority's education welfare service. The attendance

of a minority of pupils, however, is poor and a matter for concern. In the last academic year, for example, a fifth of the Year 11 pupils had an attendance of less than 80 per cent. Almost half the absences amongst Year 11 pupils in the current academic year so far fall into the category of unauthorised absence - not illness or other valid reasons.

39. The result of poor attendance is that pupils achieve less than they could in their school work and in GCSE. It lowers the picture presented of the school's achievements. It also impedes the normal work of teachers and the progress of good attenders, because teachers have to go over some work again, when absentees return to school. Of the 38 Year 11 pupils in 2000-2001 who had attendance below 80 per cent, for example, 32 did not manage to achieve a single GCSE grade as high as C.
40. The school has a very thorough and detailed attendance policy to guide its work and has ambitious targets for continuing to improve pupils' attendance. It works hard to achieve the goal of good attendance. For example, it now makes "first day absence" contact with parents, where absence is unexplained. Its prospectus points out to parents that good attendance and punctuality are the "cornerstone" of school success. Its *School Planner* underlines the same points and includes space for pupils to record their attendance weekly. The school has a thorough, computerised system for recording and analysing pupils' attendance and for helping to identify problems.
41. Both punctuality for lessons and punctuality in coming to school on time are generally good. Only a very small proportion of pupils are late for school on a typical day. This number was, for example, just six pupils on the first day of the inspection and four on the second.
42. Registration is conducted in the normal way each morning. Afternoon registration does not, however, take place until a five-minute slot at the very end of the afternoon session, so contravening (as in 1996) statutory requirements. The staggered nature of lunchtime at the school (with two separate sittings) is the reason for this understandable practice that reduces midday movement around the school.

### **Sixth form**

43. The level of attendance in the sixth form is now good. In the last two years it has reached around 93.5 per cent overall. The attendance rate has improved significantly from its unsatisfactory level of only 87 per cent in 1997-1998. The reason for the improvement is a greater emphasis by sixth-form managers on systematic attendance procedures and an increased recognition by the vast majority of sixth formers of the value of systematic, daily attendance and good work habits.

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

44. The quality of teaching is good overall throughout the school. It is satisfactory or better in over nine out of every ten lessons - satisfactory in nearly three-tenths and good in almost half of them. Additionally, teaching is very good (very occasionally outstanding) in about one fifth of lessons. Fifteen lessons, however, out of the 226 inspected had teaching that was unsatisfactory or (in two instances) poor.
45. The overall quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. In 1996 88 per cent of the teaching was satisfactory or better and 12 per cent was judged to be unsatisfactory. Now seven per cent of teaching falls below a satisfactory level. About half the teaching was good (or better) at the last inspection, but that proportion has risen to two-thirds. In 1996 more good teaching was seen in Years 7-9 than in Years 10-11. Teaching is still a little better in the earlier years, but teaching quality is now fairly evenly spread throughout the main school, though at its best in the sixth form.
46. Teachers generally have good knowledge of their subjects. This gives them confidence in planning lessons, explaining new material to pupils and handling unexpected aspects convincingly. They usually pose appropriate questions to lead pupils on purposefully. Most are well aware of common pitfalls and anticipate them positively. Even in the minority of cases where learning objectives are not absolutely clear, teachers usually have sufficient experience and expertise to provide good learning experiences for pupils.

On some occasions, however, teachers' wide knowledge and enthusiasm for their subjects lead them to over-direct lessons, leaving little room for pupils to contribute.

47. The basic skills of literacy and numeracy are satisfactorily taught overall; they are more regularly emphasised in Years 7-9 than later on in the school. In most classrooms key technical or subject-specific words are prominently displayed and are sometimes referred to in lessons. Teachers generally lay a strong emphasis on the good layout of text, careful handwriting and tidy presentation, sometimes very precisely repeating or reinforcing correct spelling. The result of this effort is that standards of handwriting, presentation and tidiness are better than often found. Only in a few instances do pupils' folders contain many spelling inaccuracies or minimal guidance from teachers about standards of writing. Numeracy is carefully drilled in mathematics and appropriately emphasised in science, design and technology, and geography.
48. Most lessons are well planned in suitable detail and soundly structured. They usually begin with a review of the last lesson or topic. In the best lessons teachers thoroughly but crisply probe what pupils really know, whereas in a few others they tell pupils what they know or make unwarranted assumptions. Most lessons have a suitable variety of activities that successfully stimulate and retain pupils' interest. Sometimes teachers have planning sheets that meticulously outline the content and concepts to be learned, often with stages thoughtfully timed. In an art lesson, for instance, the teacher had planned work on the surrealists in very fine detail, provided good source material and aroused deep enthusiasm amongst pupils.
49. The weakest element of teaching in a few cases is the planning of the ends of lessons. Most classes conclude with a review – thoroughly in many cases – of what has been covered. This is nearly always done orally, but is backed up in the best lessons by the visual display (as, for example, on the board or overhead projector) of a few key words or ideas. In a few cases, however, lessons peter out inconclusively.
50. The majority of teachers set suitably high standards. In the best lessons they pose thought-provoking questions. They are adept at following up both reasonable and inadequate answers with supplementary questions that make pupils think deeply, explain their reasoning or consider a range of alternatives. They teach with a brisk pace, but are not unnecessarily hurried. They instil a sense of purpose, a love of learning and cover much ground in the hour-long lessons. They insist on a high standard of content and presentation in written work. They value oral debate, often ensuring that vital routine information is prepared and distributed, so that sufficient time is left for rigorous discussion. Such lessons are typified by high standards of learning, behaviour and endeavour. Pace and rigour are their watchwords.
51. A small minority of lessons, however, plod along. In these too long is allowed for individual tasks and pupils are not pushed on enough. Sometimes teachers talk too much, do all the work for pupils or do not give clear guidance to them about how to write up the solutions to problems. Such lessons do not have enough rigour, excitement or sense of purpose and sometimes lead to minor silliness or disruption. Very occasionally work is pitched at too high a level and accompanied by a blissful unawareness that pupils are struggling to keep up or chattering. The major weakness, however, is not expecting enough of pupils, particularly in the examination and refinement of ideas.
52. Most teachers use a satisfactory range of effective teaching methods. Teaching the whole class together is normally done well – as, for example, when revising previous work or explaining the purpose and direction a new lesson will take. In the most effective question and answer sessions teachers elicit a wide range of ideas and views, encourage penetrating debate and subtly steer pupils towards positive conclusions. In poorer lessons questions are narrow and answers brief and superficial. Sometimes teachers have to work very hard to draw constructive responses from pupils.
53. Group work is generally handled well. Pupils are usually given a clear shape for group tasks. The best work comes as a result of pupils being made absolutely clear about what is expected and being given – and kept to – firm timescales for such activities as brainstorming, discussion and note-taking. In the best cases penetrating analysis and recording take place. In a minority of lessons, however, inadequate guidance and practice result in discussion that is limp, slow and inconclusive or in teachers making generalisations too soon.

54. The vast majority of classes are managed well. This aspect of teaching is a strength of the school. In a few cases an insufficiently stringent stand is taken towards a small number of pupils who persistently make silly comments and disrupt the learning of others. A few other pupils readily drift off task and become a nuisance. In most cases, however, teachers insist on, and secure, high standards of attention, courtesy and effort. They achieve these high standards by a combination of quiet forcefulness, humour, approachability, pace and standing no nonsense – and particularly by making lessons interesting.
55. Time is normally used well. Most teachers set a high premium on prompt starts to lessons, on close concentration and on some sense of urgency in learning. Even in the two-hour lessons of, for instance, design and technology pupils are encouraged – and respond well – to working assiduously throughout. Where available, learning support assistants give good help to individual pupils by suitable questioning and guidance. Equipment is often handled imaginatively: small A4 whiteboards are used in, for example, science and modern foreign languages for all the pupils in the class to give the correct answer at the same time or, as in geography, to give “true”/“false” responses to summative questions at the end of lessons.
56. In most lessons teachers carefully assess pupils’ standards of work and progress, picking up and remedying common mistakes and clarifying misunderstandings. Many teachers remind pupils about the ways in which their work is evaluated, give suitably constructive comments and indicate clearly how work can be improved. Homework was generally set appropriately and in accordance with the school’s homework timetable during the inspection.
57. Teaching is good overall. It is satisfactory in Years 7-9 in English, ICT and RE; in Years 10-11 in mathematics, science, art and PE; and throughout Years 7-11 in modern foreign languages (although good in German). It is very good overall in geography in Years 10-11 and in design and technology throughout the main school. There is insufficient teaching of ICT in most subjects across the school. The teaching of the personal and social education course is barely satisfactory and requires a careful overhaul of materials and teaching methods.
58. Most pupils achieve satisfactory progress in their studies both in lessons and over longer periods of time. This is because they generally receive good quality teaching, experience friendly guidance and encouragement to do their best, find lessons interesting and in most cases try hard. Pupils with special educational needs usually make satisfactory progress overall – good progress where they receive sufficient help, but not enough in some mixed-attainment classes where they receive too little guidance and support. Similarly, high-attaining pupils generally make satisfactory progress, but in a significant minority of classes (and especially in English, mathematics and science) are not stretched enough – either in the amount of ground they cover or by the depth of their analysis or discussion. In design and technology, in contrast, they generally make very good progress.

### **Sixth form**

59. Sixty 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 five lessons. In no lesson seen was teaching unsatisfactory overall. The quality of teaching is similar in both Years 12 and 13. The overall quality of teaching has improved slightly since 1996. Then almost three-quarters of sixth-form lessons were good (or better); that proportion is now a little over three-quarters.
60. 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, although the overall standard of students’ clarity and precision of speech requires greater attention.
61. 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 concur with these judgements.

62. There are, however, weak features in 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 pupils, with the result that issues are examined fairly superficially. The progress of a minority of students is also hampered by their low level of general knowledge or specialist background. The key skills of written communication, numeracy and ICT are generally taught soundly.
63. Teaching is good overall in most subjects. It is very good in art and in design and technology. Overall, sixth-form teaching is a strength of the school. As a result of this good teaching and their own efforts, most students make sound progress in their studies in the sixth form.

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

64. The curriculum provides a satisfactory range of learning opportunities that mostly meet the needs of all pupils. It is enriched by a sound range of extra-curricular activities and good quality guidance for further education or future employment.
65. In Years 7-9 the breadth and balance of the curriculum are satisfactory overall. All subjects of the National Curriculum and RE are taught. Pupils study either French or German in Year 7 and those with a particular linguistic aptitude take both languages in Years 8 and 9. All pupils are taught drama and receive personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE), which includes education about sex and the harmful effects of drug-misuse, and is taught by a specialist team of teachers. Information and communication technology in Years 8-9 and both PSHCE and RE throughout Years 7-9 are only taught for one lesson each fortnight, so reducing their impact in the curriculum.
66. In Years 10-11 a largely satisfactory range of curricular provision is offered. All pupils study the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, design and technology, a modern foreign language, PE, PSHCE and a short GCSE course in RE. In addition, pupils chose two subjects from an appropriate range of 11 subjects (including business studies, drama and economics) to study to GCSE level. As was reported at the time of the previous inspection, there are no opportunities to study vocational courses, such as those leading to the General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ). The school is actively pursuing the provision of vocational courses through the development of consortium arrangements with a local school and college. A group of 12 pupils for whom the full range of GCSE subjects is not deemed appropriate attend work-related courses at local colleges.
67. The school meets all statutory curricular requirements except those for RE in Years 7-9 and for ICT in Years 10-11. The time provided to teach RE in Years 7-9 is not enough to teach fully what is required by the local Agreed Syllabus for the subject. This deficiency was reported at the time of the last inspection and inadequate progress has been made in addressing this issue. There is no time specifically allocated in Years 10-11 to teach ICT and the programmes of study are not taught sufficiently in other subjects across the curriculum to meet national requirements. The school's teaching time of 25 hours is in line with the minimum recommended by the Department for Education and Skills.
68. The school has no detailed policy or systematic whole-school strategies to raise standards of literacy as part of the National Literacy Strategy. Some departments have introduced appropriate methods to improve standards, but the individual initiatives are inconsistent and not sufficiently coordinated across the school. In order to provide an effective and coherent approach, the school has recently appointed a member of staff as a coordinator of this policy. The National Numeracy Strategy to raise standards in numeracy has been implemented soundly in mathematics, but plans to extend its use to other subjects of the curriculum are at an early stage of development.

69. All pupils have the opportunity to study the full range of subjects offered. Pupils are taught in mixed-attainment groups except in mathematics and modern foreign languages where they are grouped by their prior attainment. This arrangement is broadly satisfactory when work is matched appropriately to the differing needs of pupils. Pupils with special educational needs make unsatisfactory progress in those cases where there are insufficient learning support staff to provide effective help in the large number of mixed-attainment classes. Very few subjects offer an alternative accreditation for those pupils for whom the GCSE examination may not be appropriate.
70. Sound policies are now in place, after some years of relative neglect, for pupils with special educational needs (SEN). These policies and the efforts of the new coordinator for SEN are beginning to have a positive impact on the work of the school. Within subject departments work is usually satisfactory and sometimes good. The level of provision depends unduly, however, on the presence of learning support assistants (LSAs) that are provided for pupils with statements of SEN. There are some good examples of teachers matching work closely to these pupils' needs in English, mathematics, science, geography and history. Overall, however, the mixed-attainment structure of most subjects and classes means that teachers find it hard to give sufficient specialist attention both to pupils with special educational needs and to those who are talented.
71. The in-class support for SEN pupils depends on LSAs and occasional follow-up work by one of the specialist teachers. The quality of this work is generally high, but its incidence is relatively low. The school has very recently appointed two more LSAs. Over 60 pupils, mainly in Years 7-9, are withdrawn for a variety of specialist teaching for up to four times each week. This support appropriately covers both general and specific learning difficulties and is of good quality. The school has made sound progress in addressing the major weaknesses identified at the last inspection.
72. The school has had nearly three years of funding under the *Excellence in Cities* initiative to support gifted and talented pupils, but the results from this are limited. Provision is barely satisfactory in many areas, including the core subjects. There have been some initiatives to extend learning opportunities, but they have been piece-meal. The school now requires a clear, whole-school view of this issue that incorporates coherent planning, consistent identification, close monitoring and a rigorous review of progress.
73. The wide-ranging consultative process that leads to curricular decision-making involves discussions with parents, governors, staff and pupils, and ensures that all views are carefully considered. A very clear and well-written policy statement of basic principles effectively underpins this process. The curriculum is regularly monitored by senior managers through lesson observations and discussions with heads of department. As a result, plans for the future are thoughtful and appropriately focused. Schemes of work are of good quality in most subjects.
74. A good range of extracurricular activities enhances the curriculum. All pupils in Year 7, for example, spend several days participating in a variety of activities in North Yorkshire. Visits are made to Belgium, France, Germany and Spain. Pupils visit the local area to take part in fieldwork and to visit theatres and galleries. There are music, dance and drama clubs as well as a major, annual musical production. A wide variety of sporting activities involves almost two-fifths of pupils who take part in a well-organised programme of inter-school fixtures. They are supported by the strong, voluntary commitment of eight members of staff. Individual subjects organise study support (especially for revision) and help with coursework. Several subjects, including English, mathematics and science, support the work of higher-attaining pupils by visits to lectures and museums or entry to national competitions, but this activity is not coordinated sufficiently across the school.
75. Provision for careers education and guidance is of good quality and well coordinated. Careers education is satisfactory in Years 7-9 and is taught effectively by a specialist teacher in Years 10-11 as part of the PSHCE course. This programme is enhanced by visits to the local careers convention and by participation in Year 11 in an Industry Day that involves local employers. Impartial and well-considered guidance is provided by the careers officer; although this is appropriately focused on those in greatest need, there are good opportunities for other pupils to request interviews and receive support.

76. All pupils in Year 11 participate for two weeks in a well-organised programme of work experience. There are appropriate preparation, a strongly developing process for allocating placements and sound support while the pupil is on the placement. This represents a significant improvement since the time of the previous inspection. Follow-up work, however, is inadequate. The timing of work experience – during October in Year 11 – is inappropriate, because it draws pupils away from their main studies in the final year leading to GCSE examinations.
77. There is a good careers library, but the room in which it is situated is used as a classroom and the staggering of the lunch period seriously limits access to it. Pupils are trained in the use of the library in Year 9. There are suitable computer programs for pupils to access careers information in both the library and the learning support unit.
78. Links with the community are satisfactory. Those with other schools and colleges are good. The school has close links with parents, but, as reported at the time of the last inspection, relationships with industry and commerce are tenuous. Good relationships are enjoyed with contributory primary schools: there are regular visits by staff and a successful programme of induction for new pupils. The school's strong association with other local secondary schools and colleges of further education is being consolidated as a result of current negotiations for consortium arrangements for some courses. Connections with institutions of initial teacher training are strong and the school hosts the training of up to 12 student teachers each year.
79. In Years 7-11 the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is good overall. The extent of provision for their spiritual development is satisfactory. Religious education provides good opportunities in Years 10-11 for pupils to explore personal beliefs and consider how belief may be expressed. Opportunities are, however, not as good in Years 7-9, because insufficient time is allocated to the subject.
80. The school has a clear plan of topics to be covered in assemblies and form tutorials throughout the school. Whilst these topics have some (occasionally tenuous) connection with spiritual feeling, they are often more closely associated with such important ethical issues as kindness and generosity. Some assemblies include brief moments for prayer or reflection, but often miss opportunities for pupils to experience deeper feelings – as, for example, through music and poetry. Pupils responded very movingly, however, to the recent effects of terrorism, particularly in their written prayers and poems which were sent to a New York high school.
81. Pupils extend their spiritual insight by visits to a mosque and a Sikh temple, and ministers from both local and overseas Christian churches contribute to the school's spiritual provision through their talks and discussions with pupils. In some lessons – notably those in art and music – pupils experience deeper feelings when, for example, they study the etchings of Goya or perform choral music to a high standard. The high attention given to the display of works of art around the school helps to enhance pupils' spiritual awareness. As at the last inspection, the school is far from meeting the legal requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils. Inadequate progress has been made over the last few years in putting in place a comprehensive system of collective worship.
82. The school promotes moral education very well. High standards of conduct are set by staff, who usually explain in clear terms why admonishments are given. The good examples set by staff also encourage mutual respect. There is a clearly stated and understood system of rewards and sanctions. Over a period of time the school has established a very orderly regime and a high level of trust that lead pupils to respect property and the rights of others. Clear messages about suitable behaviour are given in assemblies and in form tutorials. Moral issues are presented and discussed sensitively in RE and other daily lessons: in history, for instance, pupils learn about slavery and appeasement, and in PE they develop a sense of fair play through a respect for rules and an understanding of teamwork.
83. Provision for pupils' social development is good overall and in some aspects very strong. The residential visit for all Year 7 pupils, early in their first term at school, develops friendships and social cohesion well. In each subsequent school year, pupils have extensive opportunities to participate in a wide range of both residential and day visits, including to the Lake District, London and the Yorkshire Dales. Cross-curricular days, when the normal timetable is suspended, enable pupils to work in a wide

variety of friendship groups. A broad range of regular, extra-curricular activities also provides good social experiences – as, for example, the school choir and wind band, sports teams and the *Mathematics Challenge*.

84. Within daily lessons pupils work well together, as when, for example, they create group compositions in music, undertake investigations in science and practise speaking and listening in pairs in modern foreign languages. Geography provides good social opportunities through the wide variety of fieldwork visits that are offered.
85. Whilst the school's buildings and site have a pleasant appeal and offer a variety of outdoor spaces for socialisation, indoor accommodation is very cramped. There are no social areas other than the dining room and even there a normal level of conversation is difficult, owing to the dining room's poor, resonating acoustics. Lunchtimes are short and, owing to limited dining space, the serving of meals is organised in two sittings. Limitations of space and time for lunch also lead to a high intensity of use of corridors and a resultant congestion, especially on wet days. The school copes well with this situation, particularly as a result of good staff supervision and pupils' reasonable conduct.
86. Pupils' cultural development is well promoted, especially through educational excursions and visits by professional artists to the school. The work of Opera North makes a particularly strong contribution, not only by introducing opera to the pupils as listeners, but also by using pupils as performers in their productions in this country and abroad. The Manchester Actors Company has presented *Macbeth* to pupils in Year 9 and the school has enjoyed visits by African drummers and an Asian poet. Musicians from the school play in local ensembles and pupils visit France and Germany in connection with their language studies. The school has good links with the Lycée *Adolphe Max* in Brussels and especially strong links with the Velabahleke Secondary School in Durban. Pupils rarely, however, gain regular experience in school of people from ethnic minority groups. The school is aware of the need to develop the multiracial aspect of its cultural provision.

### **Sixth form**

87. The quality and range of opportunities for learning provided for students in the sixth form are good. A suitably wide range of AS and A2-level courses is taught. These include law and psychology, which are successfully studied using such "distance-learning" methods as video-conferencing. The school also teaches a good range of vocational courses for both the GNVQ and the Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) in business studies, health and social care, ICT, and travel and tourism. The majority of courses offered at AS and A2-level build effectively on those that students have already experienced in earlier years. This is not the case with most of the vocational courses, because they are not taught in Years 10-11.
88. The school is actively planning a consortium arrangement with a local school and further education college to extend the range and balance of courses offered. These plans aim to enable students who wish to study currently under-subscribed courses (such as design and technology, music and RE) to undertake some of their studies at another institution, whilst remaining in the sixth form at the school.
89. The school plans the sixth-form curriculum within the framework of a clear, whole-school policy statement and a wide-ranging consultation with parents, governors, staff and students. One recent result of this process was to extend the AVCE course in ICT into Year 13. Subject schemes of work are of good quality for most of the AS and A2-level courses, but those for vocational courses are not customised precisely enough for the school's needs.
90. The school provides a broadly satisfactory programme to extend and enhance the curriculum. A strength of its provision is that virtually all sixth formers are taught general studies (which includes RE) and that Year 13 students take the GCE examination in the subject at A2-level standard. A well-organised course in Key Skills, which includes communication studies, ICT and the application of number, is taught to all students in Year 12; students are encouraged to develop these skills, with the support of staff, in their major subject areas. No curricular time is, however, provided for participation in PE or sports activities, with the result that this area of work is weak.

91. A tutorial course effectively prepares students for further and higher education or the world of work. All students have a mock interview with a member of staff. Although all students also attend an *Understanding Industry* conference with local employers, they do not have the opportunity to experience contact with high-level occupations to expand their expectations. This is a significant weakness in the school's provision. Extensive and well-organised guidance, led by the head of sixth form, is provided for those students wishing to enter higher education. The careers officer strongly assists those who wish to enter employment. A well-stocked careers library and visits to local institutions of higher education enhance this provision.
92. The time when students are not directly taught provides suitable opportunities for them to study privately. The amount of time available varies considerably, depending on the courses that the individual student chooses, but increases for most students in Year 13. This time is not sufficiently monitored or coordinated. Although the school generally provides good facilities for study, the library's resources are inadequate.
93. Extra-curricular provision is satisfactory. An appropriate range of study visits is arranged in a number of subjects. These include field studies for geography and history, an art visit to New York and visits to the law courts for those students taking law. Students arrange social events and are involved in charity work.
94. In the sixth form, provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is good overall. Spiritual development is promoted satisfactorily, an improvement on the situation in 1996. Religious education is taught within the AS- and A-level general studies course. In these lessons students meet speakers from, for example, the Islamic and Jewish faiths and join in debates about issues of belief and tradition. Students are introduced to the notion that prayer can take a variety of forms, including meditation.
95. Moral education is very good. Issues are presented frankly and discussed sensitively in tutorials. Students often develop their ideas, both theoretically and practically, beyond lesson time. For example, when students met the head of the Velabahleke school, they were motivated to raise money to sponsor children and to provide an Internet link at a cost of £1500. Students also work with *The Crypt*, a charity for the homeless. In school they meet visiting speakers who present a range of topics concerned with moral issues. Students have opportunities to discuss issues such as genetic engineering, human rights and the use of CCTV and identity cards.
96. Social education is promoted very well. Sixth-form prefects are attached to classes of younger pupils in school, where they help to teach reading to pupils who need special help. They are involved in mentoring and counselling (for which they receive training) and join some of the lower-school residential visits as helpers. Students take on responsibilities in such regular school events as discos, open evenings, school productions, sports days and in local primary schools. They are involved in a range of fund-raising activities for charities, including the *Love in a Shoebox* scheme for children in Albania.
97. The sixth form provides a satisfactory range of cultural activities. Students are involved in *Operation Raleigh*, particularly in building a school in Malaysia, and in *Gap*, where they spend a year in industry. They take leading parts in such whole-school activities as the choir, the wind band and the school's dramatic and musical productions. Their experience is further extended by such opportunities as visiting Liverpool art galleries and docks, the Yorkshire Sculpture Park, law courts and time in Paris.

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

98. The arrangements for providing care and support for pupils and students are a significant strength of the school. Pupils respond very well to the careful and sensitive work of staff in providing for their welfare and security. Those staff who have leadership responsibilities for this work are dedicated and experienced and earn the justified trust of pupils and students. This mutual respect forms a strong platform for the wider work of the school.
99. Arrangements for child protection are good and staff are sensitive to indications that pupils may need extra support or intervention. Policies for ensuring pupils' health and safety across the school are

sound. The school does not, however, have an adequate system for monitoring and recording centrally significant health and safety issues. This weakness limits the school's ability to account for all aspects of this important area of school life. A number of potential hazards were observed during the inspection – such as uneven flagstones, outdoor seating with protruding bolts, hazardous handrails and potential risks in the overcrowded PE changing areas and on the playing-field site.

100. The school has implemented effective measures to secure good behaviour and prevent bullying. Staff are swift to intervene, whenever such behaviour appears. There is a sound range of sanctions and rewards to guide pupils' behaviour and these are consistently applied. The Learning Mentors and special educational needs staff are now involved with pupils at an earlier stage of poor behaviour. This new preventive approach is having some success. The school works hard to ensure that pupils attend school regularly.
101. The programmes for PSHCE are sound and wide-ranging. They include careers education, citizenship and education about sex and the risks of drugs and other substances harmful to good health. These programmes are taught by a team of some eight teachers across the school, including the sixth form. The quality of teaching this work is, however, significantly weaker than that in the rest of the taught curriculum. It ranges from poor to good, but is barely satisfactory overall. There is no systematic monitoring of the teaching in this area nor evidence of shared approaches to effective teaching methods.
102. Staff who act as form tutors in Years 7-11 are responsible for monitoring pupils' academic progress and reviewing their learning targets. Whilst this process is not yet fully developed, firm plans are in hand to enable both individual tutors and senior managers to gain access to reliable data on the academic and other performance of individual pupils, classes and year groups. The school discharges its responsibilities for the inclusion of all pupils well. Pupils with special educational needs, for example, are carefully assimilated within main school life. The few pupils of ethnic minority heritage are well integrated and both boys and girls receive equality of treatment.
103. Provision for the guidance and counselling of pupils is a strength of the school. The counselling service provided both by sixth-form students and adult volunteers is well used by pupils. These positive opportunities, however, are not fully coordinated with the wider, day-to-day activities of tutors and other pastoral staff, so that responsibilities and accountability for such sensitive work can be clearly established. The programmes of work offered to pupils with statements of special educational need are generally well matched to the requirements of those statements.
104. The school's assessment policy provides good guidance on the assessment, marking, recording and reporting of pupils' work. It stresses the importance of keeping pupils well informed of their attainment and progress as well as what they need to do to improve their work. Within subject departments the quality of day-to-day assessment of individual pupils' work is good overall. In geography pupils' attainment is especially well recorded, their progress is carefully reviewed and the marking of work is detailed, clear and very constructive. All departments ensure that the criteria for reaching National Curriculum levels are displayed in pupils' exercise books. This is a strength of the school's provision and represents a solid improvement since the last inspection.
105. In Years 7-9, assessments relate satisfactorily to national levels and (where applicable) to sub-levels. In Years 10-11 (as also in the sixth form) assessments relate firmly to the requirements of external examinations and, as a consequence, give good indications of pupils' progress as well as providing targets for improvement. Although subject departments adopt different procedures and means of grading pupils' work, some consistency is maintained by the school through, for example, the common use of National Curriculum grades to identify pupils' attainment at the end of Years 7-9.
106. Individual education plans (IEPs) have recently been updated by the new SEN coordinator and are available to all staff. They match diagnosis and statements closely. Assessment processes are carefully applied. Records have improved considerably in recent months after long neglect. The system of annual reviews was in abeyance, but all pupils have now had one in the last few months.

107. The school has worked hard to improve its collection, collation and analysis of data for all pupils, but has archived this poorly and does not yet have a satisfactory system for the precise tracking of the progress of individuals and groups or, for example, the comparative achievements of girls and boys. The school's recent experimental work with a computer-based system and a reorganisation of responsibilities give every indication of improving this aspect of assessment significantly and quickly.
108. Annual reports to parents are presented in a common format that shows clearly the areas of work covered, the national levels and grades attained and the effort that pupils have put into their work. Written comments that aim to clarify attainment, progress and aspects for improvement are, however, often too generalised, lacking the detail or examples that could help pupils and their parents to pinpoint exactly what needs to be done to improve further. A significant minority of parents have expressed dissatisfaction with the information they receive, particularly in respect of their children's progress. In contrast, the assessment procedures and practice for pupils with special educational needs are now good.
109. *Records of Achievement* are satisfactorily collated and completed by the end of Year 11. These are presented in the format recommended nationally and include information about academic achievement, reports on work experience and certificates gained in general school activities. They also include a personal statement in which pupils identify their own strengths.

### **Sixth form**

110. The pastoral ethos of the sixth-form community is very strong. Both the head and assistant head of the sixth form, well supported by six tutors, devote considerable time and effort to guiding students. Great care is taken to provide for students' individual needs, even where this involves very specialised arrangements and support. Students themselves indicate that they feel secure in taking their personal and academic concerns to staff and feel that they will be dealt with in a reliable and respectful way.
111. Assessment procedures are well structured and carefully implemented. Effective use is made of students' GCSE results to guide those embarking on courses of study in Years 12-13. Former students are also involved in this process, especially with a view to giving new students confidence and raising their expectations. Students calculate their own GCSE "points scores" and, together with their tutors, agree on target grades to be achieved in coursework and eventually in external examinations. Progress in coursework is recorded and reviewed every school term.
112. At present, sixth-form staff do not have an easily accessible database to enable them to find and use assessment information efficiently. The school's current development of a computer-based system gives every indication of greatly improving this aspect of assessment and providing alternative ways of judging students' progress towards their target grades. Despite a well-structured system of monitoring, a number of students express dissatisfaction with the information they receive about the progress they are making. Written comments in reports to parents are generally more informative than in the lower school, although in the samples seen during the inspection staff vary widely in giving details and examples of success as well as aspects for improvement.

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

113. Parents hold the school in high regard for what it offers and achieves for their children. They are pleased with the progress their children make, consider teaching to be good and find the school very approachable and friendly. They like the school and the high expectations it promotes and feel that it is well led and managed. This positive view of the school has been maintained since the last inspection: the high (and improved) level of return of the parents' pre-inspection questionnaire and the increasing over-application for the number of places available suggest that the school's reputation has grown even stronger.
114. The only aspects of the pre-inspection parental questionnaire that a minority of parents regarded with less (though still satisfactory) favour were the information received about pupils' progress, the level of homework and the range of activities outside lessons. The reasonable homework timetable, issued to parents at the beginning of each year, is largely adhered to by teachers and the *School Planner*, which

gives parents the opportunity to make comments, is regularly monitored by teachers. Parents' evenings are very well attended and the school deals promptly with any specific concerns or issues. The annual written reports, as noted earlier, are (though with some weaknesses) generally good and helpful. The mathematics reports set the good example of showing parents the test marks their children gain for each major topic covered.

115. There is a regular flow of information, letters and notices to parents, advising them of activities, significant dates and any particular issues upon which the school is concentrating. A suitably wide range of voluntary, extra-curricular and study-support activities is offered and clearly advertised on the school's notice-boards. School visits and outings are notified directly to parents. The school's prospectus provides a helpful range of information, including the aims and objectives of the school. The community newsletter, *Connect*, is a well-produced and attractive bulletin that gives much additional information about the school's activities and achievements.
116. The school has a very active and successful Parent/Teacher Association that organises many social events and fund-raising activities. In addition, the school runs a *Parents' Forum* to seek views from parents about a range of issues, including the future direction of the school. These close and supportive links with parents are a strength of the school and offer sound opportunities for parents to contribute to their children's learning. In contrast, links with parents whose children have special educational needs have been in decline until recently, with an unsatisfactory level of involvement and discussion. The statutory requirement for annual reviews have now recommenced, but the level of attendance and engagement with parents are still not high enough.

### **Sixth form**

117. The return rate of the sixth-form *Students' Questionnaire* was a high 80 per cent. The responses indicate that students are very satisfied overall with what the sixth form offers and does for them. In March each year the school holds the *Sixth Form Showcase* for Year 11 pupils and parents. The prospectus for the sixth-form centre is professionally prepared: as well as course details it contains information about the demands of being a sixth-form student and the benefits of further education. Students find the school very helpful and their tutors very readily available to discuss their work, progress and future aspirations. Students' work is monitored and tracked regularly and termly reviews identify their progress, targets and aspects for improvement.
118. The sixth-form council meets regularly and is an effective forum for both students and staff. Social events are organised outside school time and adequate study and social rooms are provided within the school. The *Students' Questionnaire* gave a lower rating (with around one fifth expressing dissatisfaction) to careers advice and to the provision of worthwhile activities and enrichment courses outside their main subjects. Inspectors judge that the school offers a satisfactory level of careers guidance to sixth formers, but not a wide enough range of enrichment activities to extend students' horizons adequately.

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

119. The school's aims and values are well articulated and widely shared with staff, parents, governors and pupils. These aims place significant emphasis on the quality of relationships across the school and on securing the widest opportunities for all. The ethos of the school positively reflects these important values and aspirations in practice.
120. The quality of leadership of the school is good at all levels of management. The senior leadership group has undergone significant reduction in size and change of personnel over the last year. Despite these changes, the school's leadership has maintained clear vision and direction and given an appropriate pace to the school's development.
121. The new headteacher has made a substantial impact on the school in a very short time. Following a widely respected predecessor, he is setting out to build securely on the solid foundations already established. He confidently brings fresh thinking to existing plans and policies. He has brought considerable vigour and optimism to the school's work and made himself widely accessible to pupils,

parents, staff and governors. He has clear views of the school's development, including the potential benefits of closer collaboration with nearby educational institutions.

122. Since the leadership group is currently reduced in size, existing members carry a broader and heavier range of responsibilities. They pursue these roles with energy and commitment, but require more time to balance necessary future developments with existing demands. The review of the size and structure of the leadership group, currently in progress, plans to address this issue.
123. Senior managers work hard to improve the school and possess the capacity to achieve such an improvement. An overall management information system is not, however, in place to underpin and facilitate change. Such a system and approach are needed in the school to ensure that sets of key data are reliably collected, interpreted and shared, so that the school can evaluate its past and present effectiveness and plan its future development securely.
124. The quality and effectiveness of staff with leadership responsibilities for subjects and for pastoral teams range from very good to satisfactory, but are good overall. In many of these groupings there is a strong spirit of collaboration and teamwork, engendered by good leadership. A suitable range of responsibilities is appropriately delegated to this level of management by the senior team. Systems of communication, consultation and meetings across the school have many sound features. In addition to this formal pattern, staff maintain close, informal communications on management issues.
125. The governing body is well established. It conducts its business competently and with a notable commitment to the welfare and development of the school. Many governors accept wide responsibilities and give significant amounts of time to the school. Governors understand their role in helping to give strategic direction to the school's work and in understanding its strengths and weaknesses. At present, however, they do not have a sufficiently detailed knowledge of the school's achievements and general performance to discharge this mandate in full. In three aspects the school fails to comply with statutory requirements: there is insufficient time for the teaching of RE in Years 7-9; there is not enough time and coverage for ICT in Years 10-11; and a daily act of collective worship is not provided for all pupils.
126. The newly required national system for the performance management of teaching staff is in place and is proceeding appropriately through its prescribed cycle. This involves the monitoring of classroom teaching by subject and team leaders. In addition to this formal requirement, senior managers carry out other selective monitoring of teaching across the school.
127. The school's procedures for establishing plans for improvement are sound overall and have many good features. There is an appropriate focus on a small number of key targets in the three critical areas of standards, teaching and learning, and leadership. Targets and objectives are well specified in the plan and are suitably costed. Subject areas produce their own development plans in keeping with these overall school targets. Some targets, however, lack sufficient detail or priority and require cross-school guidance, in order to achieve consistency of practice. The consultation process leading up to the plan's formation and its periodic review are a good model.
128. The school's financial management and planning are generally good and support its educational priorities effectively. The governing body is well informed about the school's spending patterns, being closely involved in discussing, though rarely taking the initiative on, financial matters.
129. The school has been spending more than its income and its budget is consequently in deficit, with the agreement of Education Leeds. Careful financial management and planning have, however, led to the school anticipating a small budgetary surplus by the end of March 2002. The school has reduced the number of staff in senior management positions and ensured tight control over departmental spending. The most recent audit raised relatively few issues, which the school responded to satisfactorily. Financial management and administration are rigorous and spending within the necessarily tight budget is carefully monitored.
130. The school has made suitable, effective use of external funds for staff training. Other specific grants and funds are used appropriately – as, for example, in the use of funds specifically earmarked for the

ICT training for staff and for the support of newly qualified teachers. The school makes satisfactory use of such new technologies as e-mail and the Internet. When purchasing services, the school takes the principles of best value into account. It has, for instance, installed a closed-circuit monitoring system that has led to a reduction in spending on repairs caused by vandalism. It did not until very recently, however, investigate its potential income from making the school's swimming pool more widely available for community use.

131. The proportion of the school's budget spent on teaching staff is below average. This is in part due to the large proportion of teachers who are relatively new to the profession. The provision of teachers is good and almost all lessons are taught by specialists. In RE, however, the majority of lessons are taught by teachers for whom RE is not their main teaching subject. There are sufficient qualified and/or experienced teachers for pupils with special educational needs. Some, however, have had only short training courses in some specific learning difficulties. There is insufficient support to guide and help pupils with special educational needs in all their lessons within mainstream classes.
132. The school has sufficient technical support except in food technology, where the appointment of a technician is imminent. The number of hours allocated to the administrative staff is above average for a school of this size, but the existing system for their deployment is unsatisfactory, because it leads to uneven pressure of work. The ratio of pupils to teachers is close to the national average.
133. There is a good system of induction to the work of the school for teachers new to teaching and to the school. Opportunities for staff training are generally used well: there has been an improvement in the funding for this aspect, which was criticised at the last inspection. The overall good standard of teaching makes the school an effective provider of initial teacher training.
134. Most subjects have sufficient, suitable accommodation. There are, however, some deficiencies. The drama studio has poor acoustics, receives food smells from the kitchen nearby and is affected by permeating noise from a music room that is not sound-proofed. The acoustics in a second drama teaching room are also poor. As at the time of the last inspection, there is insufficient indoor accommodation for PE and the playing fields are in a poor state. There are firm plans in hand to improve the changing facilities. Although the mobile classrooms used for geography are pleasant, their separation leads to the necessary duplication of such resources as televisions in each room. The accommodation for pupils with special educational needs is too small for the number of pupils who use it. There are no indoor social areas for pupils to use, a weakness identified at the last inspection. This leads to some problems of noise during the split lunch break, because some pupils are in lessons while others have their break.
135. The school's site has many pleasant features. There is little litter, largely as a result of efficient litter patrols. There is very little evidence of graffiti. The clean state of the interior indicates that the cleaning budget gives good value for money. The spending on learning resources is above average, despite the tight budget. The provision of resources is generally satisfactory. There is, however, a shortage of textbooks in design and technology, history, RE and business education. The provision of audio-visual equipment is unsatisfactory in science. Resources for pupils with special educational needs are generally satisfactory.
136. The number of centrally provided computers is about average, but many of the machines are out of date and will not run the latest software efficiently. The provision of ICT within departments is unsatisfactory in English, science, art, history, PE, RE and business education. In these subjects there are insufficient, up-to-date computers available for pupils to use.
137. The library is not a good resource or basis for independent learning. Although it is a pleasant and welcoming room, with both study and soft-seating areas, the provision of resources within it is insufficient. The number of books is much too small for a school of this size and type. There are just two computers with CD-ROMs and Internet access. At the time of the inspection the computers had no printers. Just one quality daily newspaper is taken, but no magazines are available. There is a small stock of audio tapes.

138. The library is efficiently managed by a full-time librarian who is very aware of the shortcomings of the library. Some improvements have been made in the past two years: many old books have been removed, but not enough new ones have replaced them. Activities such as book clubs, book fairs and competitions have been organised to try to improve the popularity and use of the library by pupils.
139. Taking into account its current budgetary deficit and its above average expenditure, set alongside its very positive ethos and practice, the good quality of its teaching and management and pupils' sound progress – the school gives satisfactory value for money.

### **Sixth form**

140. The leadership and management of the sixth form are good. Considerable time and effort have been devoted by senior managers to planning for its future. This thorough planning covers not only the range of courses and programmes to be offered, but also extends to the best forms of organisation for its implementation, including "distance-learning", video-conferencing and collaboration with neighbouring institutions.
141. The deputy headteacher carries responsibility for the sixth-form programmes as part of her wider portfolio for the school curriculum. In the development of the sixth-form curriculum she leads a wide consultative process that incorporates students' preferences as well as the views of subject leaders and the managers of the sixth form. The school's leadership and governors do not, however, have a sufficiently clear awareness of the true costs of providing the present good range of courses in the sixth form.
142. The head of the sixth form, together with the tutors, provides a very positive climate of care and commitment to students that successfully creates a welcoming and secure environment and a sense of purpose. These features are much valued by students, many of whom need support and encouragement in adjusting to the fresh challenges and intellectual demands of sixth-form work.
143. The expenditure on the sixth form is considerably higher than the income the school receives for its sixth-form students. This is because the numbers in many of the classes, especially in Year 13, are very small, with the result that the cost of teachers for these groups is high. In Year 13, for instance, only one group has more than ten students. Numbers are particularly small in mathematics, German and economics. The numbers in Year 12 are a little larger. The number of students who leave before the end of their courses is small. Those who do leave usually do so for good reasons – such as to go into employment or to specialised education elsewhere.
144. Although more rigour and imagination are required in cost-analysis and alternative methods of organisation, the school already uses some strategies that contain costs and provide a good standard of education. For example, it uses distance-learning, via a television link, to teach law and psychology. A consortium arrangement already exists for joint sixth-form teaching with a neighbouring school and college of further education, and the school is in negotiations to extend this arrangement further. The school requires a rigorous overhaul of its sixth-form provision, however, to avoid the sixth form continuing to be heavily subsidised by the rest of the school.
145. The provision of teaching staff for the sixth form is good overall. Staff who teach business education, however, have had relatively little experience in business. The accommodation for sixth-form work is satisfactory. It has been extended since the time of the last inspection, when it was too small. The facilities comprise an adequate social area and two quiet work-rooms.
146. The provision of resources is satisfactory overall. There is, however, a shortage of textbooks in PE, RE, business education and economics. There are insufficient, up-to-date computers in the sixth-form area and only one printer. This restricts students' access to ICT for research and other learning facilities. The imminent installation of five new computers promises to improve this situation considerably. The library does not provide students in the sixth form with a satisfactory resource for independent learning. The stock of books is much too small and no magazines or periodicals are taken. The library's two computers are also used by pupils in Years 7-11.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

To improve and build upon the sound quality of education that pupils already receive, the governors and senior management of the school should:

- (a) improve still further pupils' attainments and progress by ensuring that
- the weaknesses in a minority of teaching are improved;
  - a whole-school policy is developed to increase the amount of rigorous, extended and purposeful discussion in class and to raise the overall clarity of pupils' speaking;
  - class organisation and teaching methods are reviewed to ensure that the needs both of pupils with special educational needs and of the highest attainers are consistently met; and
  - recently formed plans are brought to fruition that track pupils' progress comprehensively and accurately throughout the school and consistently across all subjects (## 9 18 28 30 32 44 46 48-49 51-54 57-58 62 69-72 101-102 107 112 131).
- (b) improve the school's management information systems, so that the performance of all the school's key activities is regularly and consistently monitored, analysed and shared (## 79 99 103 107 112 123 141 143-144).
- (c) take effective steps to make the school's sixth-form provision cost-effective and not be a considerable drain on the rest of the school's resources (## 141 143-144).
- (d) ensure that statutory requirements are met by
- providing enough teaching time for religious education (RE) in Years 7-9 to meet the requirements of the local Agreed Syllabus;
  - teaching and using information and communication technology (ICT) sufficiently in Years 10-11 across the curriculum; and
  - providing a daily act of collective worship for all pupils (## 6 19 65 67 79 81 125 136).

In addition to the key issues above (also referred to in many subject sections), other less important weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the school's future plan of action. These are indicated in paragraphs 16 17 24 32 38 66 68 76-78 86 90-92 99 108 116 118 130 132 134-135 137-138 145 and in subject sections.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	166
	Sixth form	60
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		103

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
<b>Years 7 – 11</b>							
Number	1	30	74	46	13	2	0
Percentage	1	18	45	28	8	1	0
<b>Sixth form</b>							
Number	0	13	33	14	0	0	0
Percentage	0	22	55	23	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 over one percentage point. The total of percentages for Years 7-11 does not equal 100 because of "rounding".*

### Information about the school's pupils

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1005	122
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	155	19

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	45	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	90	4

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	9
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	55

## Attendance

### Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.1
National comparative data	7.7

### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.2
National comparative data	1.1

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for 1999-2000.

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	98	94	192

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	63	54	57
	Girls	77	67	60
	Total	140	121	117
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	73 (53)	64 (59)	62 (56)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	33 (16)	42 (35)	28 (17)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	50	50	56
	Girls	79	62	69
	Total	129	112	125
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	67 (48)	59 (61)	65 (51)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	26 (17)	36 (29)	24 (16)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

Percentages in brackets refer to 1999.

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	82	87	169

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	20	65	68
	Girls	28	75	83
	Total	48	140	151
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	29 (42)	84 (85)	89 (88)
	National	47 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

Percentages in brackets refer to 2000.

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	30.4 (31.7)
	National	38.4 (38.0)

Figures in brackets refer to 1999.

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	19	22	41

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	19.6	22.5	20.9 (14.1)	1.5	1.4	1.4 (2.1)
National	17.7 (17.7)	18.6 (18.1)	18.2 (17.9)	2.6 (2.7)	2.9 (2.8)	2.7 (2.8)

Figures in brackets refer to 1999.

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	94
	National – Intermed.	83 (73)

Figures in brackets refer to 1999.

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

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	6
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	14
Indian	9
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	1
White	1021
Any other minority ethnic group	7

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

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	1	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	127	1
Other minority ethnic groups	0	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)	61.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.2

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

Total number of education support staff	9
Total aggregate hours worked per week	227

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

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	76.2
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	26.7
Key Stage 4	23.1

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2000-2001
	£
Total income	2,987,637
Total expenditure	2,985,237
Expenditure per pupil	2,749
Balance brought forward from previous year	88,630
Balance carried forward to next year	86,230

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

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	19
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	21
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1118
Number of questionnaires returned	565

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	21	67	5	6	1
My child is making good progress in school.	29	57	4	3	7
Behaviour in the school is good.	28	55	10	2	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	22	51	16	2	9
The teaching is good.	33	58	3	0	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	27	51	14	5	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	48	44	5	2	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	54	42	3	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	23	58	8	2	9
The school is well led and managed.	25	68	2	2	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	35	44	8	3	10
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	24	46	14	2	14

### Other issues raised by parents

There were additional comments from parents on 41 of the questionnaires returned.

Amongst the many positive points mentioned were:

- the school's steady improvement in all aspects of its work over recent years;
- the good rate of progress that most children make;
- the high standard of teaching and the friendly care and encouragement that children receive;
- parents' confidence in the school's leadership and management.

Amongst the few concerns expressed in questionnaires were:

- insufficient teaching of ICT and the shortage of up-to-date electronic equipment; and
- occasional instances of bullying.

## PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES: YEARS 7 -11

### ENGLISH

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

**Strengths:**

- pupils' behaviour and attitudes.
- results in the Year 9 national tests improved significantly in 2000 and 2001.
- most teaching in Years 10-11 is good.

**Areas for improvement:**

- the use of data to track pupils' attainment and progress from Year 7.
- pupils' overall level of attainment at the end of Year 11.

147. On entry to the school in Year 7, the proportion of pupils who have already reached the benchmark of at least Level 4 in the national tests in their primary schools has improved since 1997 from being just below the national average to being above it in 1999 and 2000. The rise in the proportion of pupils entering the school at Level 5 more than doubled over the same period. This higher standard was largely maintained in 2001.
148. Results in the national tests in English at the end of Year 9 have varied during the period 1997-2000. They were above the national benchmark of Level 5 in 1997, but fell significantly below it in 1998. In 1999 the proportion was close to the national figure and significantly above it in both 2000 and 2001. Standards are therefore rising. The overall attainment of boys was lower than that of girls between 1997 and 2000, but both boys and girls were close to the national averages for their sexes over this period. When compared with that of schools in similar socio-economic circumstances, pupils' performance was well below average in 1998, below average in 1999, but well above average in 2000. These ratings were higher than those for mathematics and science in 2000.
149. In GCSE English language in 2000, the proportion of pupils gaining a grade in the range A\*-C was well below both the national average and the average for pupils in a similar type of school. The overall proportion of A\*-C grades obtained over the period 1997-2000 was also significantly below the national average figures. In English literature the proportion of pupils gaining a grade in the range A\*-C has varied from 59 per cent in 1997 to 32 per cent in 2000; this latter figure was about half the national proportion. Over the last three years pupils' performance in English language has tended to be lower than that in most of their other subjects. The overall performance of girls is usually much higher than that of boys. The school has not significantly improved the level of its GCSE results since the last inspection. Most pupils, however, make broadly satisfactory progress from their earlier levels of attainment.
150. By the end of Year 9, pupils' overall standard in English is average. Most pupils use well a range of reading techniques such as skimming and scanning texts, identify textual references to support a point of view and deepen their knowledge of language. Pupils in a Year 7 class, for example, extended their understanding of adverbs well, as they created a poem that used adverbs at the beginning of each line. In another Year 7 class, reading *The Secret Garden* by Frances Hodgson Burnett, pupils carefully drafted a letter home from Martha and considered thoughtfully its structure and organisation.
151. Pupils in a Year 8 class, studying spelling rules, drafted mnemonics such as "Friday is the end of the week" to help to remember how to spell the word "friend". In another Year 8 class pupils reading the novel, *Burning Issy*, by Melvyn Burgess found significant information from the text to explain the nature of the burns Issy had sustained. A Year 9 class studying Browning's poem, *The Pied Piper*, deepened their knowledge of description and imagery by considering such examples as "His queer long coat from heel to head / was half of yellow and half of red". When reading Louis Sachar's novel, *Holes*, pupils discussed carefully the author's use of verbs and adverbs and their impact on the reader.

152. Pupils frequently work in small groups as they discuss language or literature. In Years 7-9 there is a suitable focus on key literacy skills, including the development of appropriate spelling strategies and the organisation of writing tasks. A Year 9 class, for example, used small whiteboards effectively to indicate whether the letter "i" comes before the letter "e" in a word such as "piece", when representing the long "ee" sound.
153. Pupils make satisfactory progress overall across Years 7-9. The teaching objectives from the national *Framework for Teaching English* have been included in new schemes of work and the objectives for word- and sentence-level activities are reflected in some lessons. Pupils use appropriate terminology when talking about categories of words and regularly apply that knowledge to work in either literature or language. Year 9 pupils, for instance, use the national descriptors of levels reached to evaluate their own speaking and listening during a presentation to other pupils.
154. By the end of Year 11, pupils' overall level of attainment is a little below average, but most make broadly satisfactory progress. Pupils' written assignments in Years 10 and 11 are generally well organised and use appropriate textual references. In a Year 10 class, for example, pupils studied Simon Armitage's poem, *About his Person*, to extend their analytical skills, noting key points and using appropriate quotations to support their points of view. Other pupils in a Year 10 class, studying the same poem, identified the poet's use of symbolism, whilst another Year 10 class, reading John Steinbeck's novel, *Of Mice and Men*, explored how the author creates tension through the use of dialogue in the card-playing scene in chapter 3.
155. The writing of most pupils in Years 10 and 11 is close to the national average. Most draft ideas fairly reasonably and then organise them into assignments, using textual references when appropriate. Higher-attaining pupils often write with a degree of fluency and maturity of style, but could do even better. Pupils in Year 10 generally use a suitable range of reading approaches when studying texts and show fair capability in discussing their responses to literature. Those with special educational needs usually make satisfactory progress.
156. Overall, teaching is satisfactory in Years 7-9 and good in Years 10-11. Specialist teachers have good subject knowledge and most demonstrate an enthusiasm for their subject. The majority of lessons include clear objectives that are shared with pupils. Across Years 7-9 the implementation of the Key Stage 3 National Strategy for English is incorporated in both long- and medium-term planning and is being systematically introduced into short-term planning. Use is being made of "starter" activities in some classes in Years 7 and 8.
157. Most teachers in the department set high expectations for pupils' learning, enjoy their teaching and work hard to help pupils to be successful. Oral work is a regular feature in many lessons and pupils are occasionally encouraged to make more sustained oral responses. Pupils' overall clarity of speech is, however, below average.
158. Pupils' attitudes are good throughout the main school. The majority of pupils enjoy the subject, listen attentively and collaborate well. Most concentrate well in lessons, respond positively to one another and to their teachers, and are well behaved.
159. Pupils' study of English language and literature makes a significant contribution to their moral, social and cultural development. Pupils consider, for example, the moral issues surrounding the death of Candy's dog in John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* and the social aspects of Louis Sachar's novel, *Holes*. The department also organises a range of extra-curricular activities that includes theatre visits and a poetry competition.
160. The management and organisation of the department are satisfactory overall. Day-to-day administration is effectively organised and there are regular, planned opportunities to standardise pupils' work. The department does not, however, have a rigorous method of tracking pupils' progress from Year 7 that includes data drawn from the Year 6 national tests. The department regularly reviews pupils' work and targets appropriate support for pupils in Years 10-11. The recent appointment of a new "second" in department, who is also the coordinator for literacy in Years 7-9, has the potential to strengthen considerably the overall management and leadership of the department.

161. Departmental documentation has recently been revised to incorporate the objectives from the National Literacy Framework. The English and drama departments work together in Year 9 to introduce work on Shakespeare. This link between English and drama now requires extension to promote further the quality of pupils' speaking and to include the assessment of pupils' speaking and listening at the end of Year 9.
162. Across other subjects in Years 7-11, pupils use a range of reading approaches in lessons, although there was less evidence of the skills of skimming and scanning being used than is normally seen during an inspection. The overall standard of writing is broadly average. In many subjects pupils display a good standard of handwriting – as, for instance, in science, design and technology, and geography. Written work is generally well presented - as in art, history and music.
163. The overall standard of speaking varies very widely from the highly articulate to limited mumbling, and is a little below average overall. Pupils listen carefully in most subjects. Insufficient opportunity is, however, given to pupils to sustain extended responses, when answering questions and providing explanations. The overall level of clarity in pupils' speech requires improvement.

## Drama

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

### Strengths:

- teachers assess pupils' progress very effectively.
- the subject makes a valuable contribution to pupils' standard of speaking and listening.
- the subject is well led and managed.

### Areas for improvement:

- the overall level of attainment by the end of Year 11.

164. The subject is taught throughout Years 7-11. The proportion of pupils gaining a grade in the range A\*-C over the period 1997-2000 has been close to the national average, with the exception of 1999 when it was well below the national figure. In 2000 the proportion of pupils gaining a grade in the A\*-C range was broadly average. Numbers taking the subject at this stage are, however, small.
165. By the end of Year 9 pupils' attainment is broadly average overall. In Year 7 pupils are introduced to a range of drama techniques, including warm-up activities. They follow instructions carefully and refine their sequences of movement. In a Year 8 class, pupils made good progress when considering their interpretations of the poem, *An Astronaut Space-walking*, by Neil Davies, linked to the music of *Mars, Bringer of War* from Holst's *The Planets* suite. In a Year 9 class pupils used key words such as "injustice" and "empathy" appropriately, as they responded to a written stimulus.
166. By the end of Year 10, pupils' overall level of attainment is broadly average. In a Year 10 class, for example, pupils used Michael Rosen's story, *The Car Trip*, to explore and consider the relationship between gesture and voice. They developed their dramatic techniques well, as they recognised the significance of pauses within dialogue.
167. The overall quality of teaching is good throughout the school. Lessons include the use of clear objectives to establish the focus for each lesson. Key words are displayed and discussed to enable pupils to acquire the language of drama. High expectations are established in all drama lessons. Pupils' attitudes towards the subject are satisfactory in Years 7-9 and good in Year 10. Most pupils enjoy their lessons, listen attentively and are well behaved.
168. The drama department is well managed. Although the department is fortunate to have a new drama studio, inadequate sound-proofing allows the intrusion of sound from the music department and poor ventilation allows smells to enter from a kitchen area. An additional space in the new English block provides an excellent space for drama, but this suffers badly from poor acoustics.

169. A detailed scheme of work provides a high level of support for staff, including guidance on tracking pupils' progress in the subject over Years 7-9. Drama was not taught in Year 9 at the time of the last inspection, but it is now. Regular, effective assessment is carried out throughout the main school. Theatre visits and the reception of theatre groups (such as the National Theatre) in school widen the curricular opportunities for pupils.

## MATHEMATICS

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

### Strengths:

- the teaching and learning of skills and techniques.
- most pupils make sound, systematic progress in Years 7-9.
- pupils' attitudes are generally positive and cooperative.

### Areas for improvement:

- more challenging work is needed for gifted and talented pupils.
- the inclusion of more "problems" in using and applying mathematics.

170. The proportions of pupils who achieved either the basic standard or higher levels expected of 14 year olds in the 2000 national tests at the end of Year 9 were close to the national averages. Based upon the average points scored by all pupils, the school's results were also close to the national average for all schools and were above average when compared with those of schools in similar social circumstances. The results during previous years have improved steadily since the last inspection in 1996, except for a dip in 1998, but during this period only one pupil achieved at the highest levels (Level 8 or exceptional performance). Despite annual fluctuations, girls and boys perform about equally well overall, contrary to the national trend where girls generally do better than boys. The results in 2001 have maintained their upward trend and a few boys achieved Level 8.

171. The proportion of pupils who achieved grades A\*-C in the GCSE examinations in 2000 was well below the national average. A much smaller than average proportion of pupils achieved the highest grades (A\* or A) and the proportion who achieved grades A\*-B was well below average. The proportion of pupils who achieved a grade A\*-G was also below average. The results over recent years have remained well below the national average and have not improved since the last inspection, except in 1999 when they were close to (and marginally above) the national average. Based upon the average grade achieved by all the pupils in the school who were entered for the examination, pupils made significantly better progress in mathematics than in many other subjects in 1999 and 2000. Girls perform a little better than boys, similar to the national trend. The results in 2001 improved on the previous year and significantly more pupils achieved the highest grades; additionally, a few more pupils achieved a grade in the range A\*-G.

172. By the end of Year 9, the standard of work of an average proportion of pupils (about two-thirds of them) is at the level expected of 14 year olds. Pupils in the top set generally make good progress and reach at least the expected standard in the routine skills and techniques of, for example, arithmetic, algebra, geometry and data-handling. Many reach a high standard in their use of geometrical instruments. Occasionally they lack appropriately challenging work and spend too long practising easy work such as calculating the circumference, diameter or radius of circles, given a value for one of these quantities. Gifted and talented pupils have good opportunities to encounter suitably challenging work through, for example, entry to national mathematics competitions, but the provision of a similar level of work during lessons is not frequent enough.

173. Many pupils in Year 9 work at an unhurried pace during lessons and are soon distracted. Nevertheless, through the vigilance of their teachers, they make sound progress and achieve satisfactory standards in much of what they do in a broad range of the subject. A high proportion of pupils preparing for the middle tier of the national tests at the end of Year 9 are confident in the ready recall of number facts, especially when couched in everyday contexts. Several soon falter, however, when faced with, for instance,  $7 \times 5 \times 0$ .

174. Low-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs make satisfactory progress overall. Their progress is often good when an effective learning support assistant is also present. One such set of pupils, for example, consolidated well their knowledge of multiplication facts during a well-paced start to the lesson. They went on to answer correctly mental calculations expressed in a variety of such different forms as “half of 64” and “13 less than 50”, stimulated by recording their answers within a game of bingo. The main body of the lesson effectively consolidated and extended pupils’ knowledge of reflectional symmetry by practical methods of learning. Throughout the lesson the involvement of the learning support assistant in helping those pupils with most learning difficulties enabled the teacher to sustain a good rate of learning for the whole class.
175. The proportion of pupils who, on arrival at the school, have attained the basic standard expected of 11 year olds is average. They get off to a good start in Year 7 by learning to identify patterns and making generalisations from the data they generate in such simple practical activities as successively adding “match-sticks” to create rows of contiguous triangles or hexagons. Such activities provide meaningful opportunities to learn algebra. During their first year in the school they consolidate well and extend much of what they learned at primary school. A strong emphasis is placed on the teaching of numeracy, with the result that many pupils are confident and accurate in simple, everyday, mental calculations. For example, in several lessons pupils used thermometers marked in intervals of 5°C to read correctly the temperature above and below zero, including intermediate values.
176. The top sets in Year 8 make good progress. In one of these sets pupils clearly demonstrated through discussion the mathematical meaning and notation for describing probabilities of certain events. They know well the mathematical meaning of such common terms as “even chances”, “fifty-fifty” and “certainty”. Through skilful teaching they went on to develop some understanding of how experimental probability matches theoretical probability, using data generated by throwing pairs of dice. Pupils explained why the pattern of throws emerged as it did and precisely why a total of seven occurred most frequently. Low-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs make sound progress in a limited range of mathematical topics. During one such lesson pupils clearly consolidated and extended their knowledge of factors of numbers by skilful teaching and the help of a learning support assistant.
177. By the end of Year 11, pupils’ overall attainment is below average. All pupils are expected to enter for GCSE. The top set prepare for the higher tier and most other pupils prepare for the intermediate tier. Higher-attaining pupils gain a good working knowledge of arithmetic, algebra, geometry, trigonometry and data-handling and use their skills to solve problems successfully. The gifted and talented, especially, complete a few impressive extended investigations of mathematical problems for the coursework element of their GCSE assessment.
178. At this stage of the GCSE course, just prior to embarking upon a period of work experience, many pupils in the middle sets of Year 11 lack confidence and a ready recall of basic arithmetic and algebra. In one lesson, for example, too many pupils could not confidently expand algebraic expressions such as  $5x^3(2x^2 - 3y^3)$  and, in another similar class, many could not readily add or multiply simple fractions.
179. Pupils in Year 10 generally do well. In a lesson for pupils in the top set, for example, high standards were achieved in geometry. They tackled well the complex diagrams from which, using given data, they were required to deduce the congruence of certain triangles. Very skilful teaching enabled most pupils to provide a logical proof from their knowledge of the properties of triangles. In contrast, the lack of recall of the meanings of basic terminology such as “bisects”, “rhombus”, “perpendicular” and “adjacent” seriously hampered the progress of an upper set that was preparing for the intermediate tier of the GCSE examinations. Low-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs make sound progress in two relatively small classes. They gain confidence and accuracy in the basic skills of arithmetic and algebra through thorough, systematic teaching.
180. Overall, pupils’ response to the teaching they receive is good, and in about a quarter of lessons is very good. Their attitudes are generally positive and cooperative. Many pupils are willing to engage in discussion, answer questions and work at least steadily at the tasks set for them. A significant proportion of pupils, however, are easily distracted and frequently disrupt lessons either by noisy demands for attention or because they do not have the necessary equipment. Such pupils are often

ready to admit defeat without trying to tackle the tasks set for them. These features are particularly evident in a few, relatively large sets that contain a number of pupils with special educational needs, but are without the help of a learning support assistant.

181. Behaviour in lessons is mostly good, because teachers are vigilant, patient and persistent in their expectations of good behaviour. Most pupils respond positively to admonition or to well-targeted questions that return their attention to the work in hand. The minority of pupils who behave badly are a constant drain upon teachers' attention and hamper the progress of others. The majority of pupils form constructive relationships with their teachers and their peers, and enjoy sharing humour.
182. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. Almost all the teaching is competent, over half is at least good and one lesson in seven is very good. A small amount of teaching is unsatisfactory. Teachers are well qualified and have a good range of relevant experience. Their generally good subject knowledge and expectation of what pupils can do usually ensure that lessons match the needs of pupils and lead to sound learning. In Years 10-11 especially, but less so in Years 7-9, weaknesses in ways of developing pupils' thinking and of raising their confidence in using and applying mathematics reduce the quality of pupils' learning.
183. Methods of teaching include clear demonstrations and explanations of mathematical skills and techniques. In the best lessons good questioning develops well pupils' understanding and confidence, especially when they are asked to explain their thinking. All too frequently, however, teachers tell pupils the answers to questions, doing too much of the thinking for them; as a result, pupils tend not to tackle problems without immediately resorting to their teacher for help. In such lessons questioning and discussion do not sufficiently challenge the majority of the class. Occasionally, opportunities to extend high-attaining pupils are missed, because questions do not go beyond the routine level. These factors explain, in part, why GCSE results are not as good as they could be. Elements of these flaws in teaching have not improved since the last inspection.
184. Skills and techniques are taught and practised effectively. Insufficient time, however, is spent using such knowledge to solve a wide range of problems in everyday contexts, especially in Years 10-11. Practical work is used effectively to help pupils to understand new ideas, such as aspects of probability, or to see the geometrical properties of three-dimensional shapes.
185. The pace and progress in lessons are generally sound, but could be faster overall. In only a few lessons do teachers alternate short periods of teaching, during which well-posed questions help pupils to clarify their understanding, with tasks to be completed in a given time. This strategy is not used often enough as a means of increasing the rate of learning. Good use is made of up-to-date text books. The use of computers to enhance learning is unsatisfactory, a weakness pointed out in the last inspection.
186. In Year 11 a few good opportunities are provided for pupils to investigate mathematical problems that require them to decide on lines of enquiry, justify their thinking and hypotheses, and reach general conclusions from their working. Pupils in Year 7 have a brief introduction to such methods of learning mathematics, but they are not used often enough in Years 8-10. The schemes of work contain a useful resource for such problems; some of the shorter ones are particularly suitable to arouse pupils' interest at the start of lessons and establish a positive climate for learning.
187. Relationships between teachers and pupils are generally good. Teachers work hard and patiently to manage pupils' behaviour. High expectations of good behaviour, effective strategies for handling misdemeanours and judicious use of humour generally ensure a reasonable climate for learning. During lessons teachers generally make good, on-going assessment of pupils' understanding and quickly clarify many misunderstandings. Formal written assessments are made with sufficient regularity. Pupils' work is marked regularly and frequently, contains encouraging comments and, occasionally, brief indications how work might be improved. Each pupil's progress is systematically tracked and targets are identified. Homework is set regularly and, in general, tackled successfully.
188. The department is well organised and generally managed efficiently. Pupils' performance from entry and throughout the school is analysed for trends and indications of weaknesses in teaching. The few weaknesses in teaching revealed by its monitoring and evaluation have not been rectified.

189. Pupils' general standard of numeracy is sound and supports their learning in other subjects satisfactorily. In science, for example, pupils handle numbers with reasonable confidence: they carry out appropriate calculations, use sensible degrees of accuracy and generally manipulate the algebra they meet competently. In science, art, and design and technology pupils estimate and measure with reasonable accuracy and generally use correct abbreviations for units of measurement. In modern foreign languages good use is made of everyday situations that involve money and measures.
190. In science, design and technology, geography, history and vocational education pupils draw and interpret appropriate graphs and, where necessary, recognise relationships between variables. Pupils are generally competent in using computers to represent data in graphical form. Pupils' knowledge of common shapes and their properties is used well in art and in design and technology. Most pupils use calculators appropriately: very few examples were seen where they were used to perform simple calculations that should be done mentally.

## SCIENCE

Overall, the quality of provision for science is **sound**.

### Strengths:

- results in Years 7-9 are steadily improving.
- good teaching in Years 7-9.
- pupils' engagement in practical, investigative and experimental activities.
- pupils' strong interest in science and their good behaviour in lessons.

### Areas for improvement:

- greater depth in the planning and evaluation of investigations.
- more challenging teaching in Years 10-11.

191. When pupils enter the school in Year 7, their attainment in the subject is around the national average, although rising in line with the national trend. By the end of Year 9, pupils' overall attainment in the national tests is usually about the national average. In 2000 it was several percentage points above the national averages of both Levels 5 and 6. Boys and girls do equally well.
192. The majority of pupils in Years 10-11 follow the national pattern of taking GCSE double-award science. Usually, a group of some 12-20 pupils is offered the GCSE option of being entered for the three separate sciences of biology, chemistry and physics. Lower-attaining pupils take a *Certificate of Achievement* in Year 10 which, if successfully completed, forms the basis for entry to the foundation papers in GCSE single-award science.
193. In four out of the last five years (all except in 1999), GCSE grades have been well below national averages and below the average result for similar kinds of schools. The proportion of grades A\* and A obtained is also below what is typical nationally. The low level of results obtained in 2000, for example, was, however, consistent with the school's lower-attaining intake five years previously and the well below average achievement in the national tests in Year 9 two years earlier. In 2001 the GCSE grades obtained moved closer to the national average. Science results overall are steadily improving, but pupils tend to perform less well in the subject than they do in many of their other subjects.
194. A small group of pupils is entered for the three separate sciences. In many schools only the most able pupils take this combination of sciences, but in this school pupils showing sufficient interest have been allowed to follow this route. In most years pupils make satisfactory progress, because their attainment in GCSE is in line with what they have attained earlier on in the school. High-attaining pupils often achieve the top grades.
195. In Years 7-9 pupils are taught in classes of mixed abilities, although pupils of similar attainment often work together within those classes. By the end of Year 9 overall attainment is close to average. In one good lesson in Year 9, pupils calculated the growth of bacteria, correctly predicted the shape of the resultant

graph and then plotted its curve. Pupils in this lesson, working at Level 6 of the National Curriculum, successfully understood the shorthand method of displaying large numbers by using the standard form in powers of 10. In other lessons pupils of different ability follow differentiated tasks from prepared sheets. Overall, however, pupils of high ability are not consistently exposed to the extended, scientific debate they require.

196. By the end of Year 11, pupils' overall level of attainment is a little below average. High attainers generally achieve a reasonable standard and the top sets demonstrate, for example, above average competency in the use of graphs. There is still, however, room for many of them to acquire greater depth of knowledge and understanding through rigorous questioning and debate. Most pupils have sound knowledge of basic scientific principles and information, describe with reasonable accuracy the scientific patterns they observe and recognise the features of fair testing. The standard of much written work is close to average. It is generally neat, reasonably spelled and well presented.
197. Throughout the school, pupils enjoy practical work and readily acquire new skills. In the large amount of practical work done in science lessons pupils handle equipment safely and correctly, as when thermometers were used on several occasions during the period of the inspection. Most pupils have reasonable competence in the planning of fair tests, choosing variables, making predictions and subsequently analysing their findings. There is, however, scope for more training of pupils in these aspects of work.
198. Pupils make good overall progress in the subject in Years 7-9 and achieve satisfactorily overall in Years 10-11. A major contributory factor to the positive achievement in Years 7-9 is the good overall quality of teaching at this stage of the school. The best lessons are those that are based on detailed planning and contain a suitable variety of exposition, question and answer sessions and a work summary on the board.
199. The quality of teaching is predominantly good in Years 7-9, satisfactory in Years 10-11 and good overall. Most staff have a large portfolio of teaching styles. These are used to best advantage in Years 7-9, whilst a few lessons in Years 10-11 lack the necessary variety. Good lessons are also typified by scientific and technological examples drawn from everyday life. A lesson on temperature, for instance, captivated pupils' interest as they considered the consequences of damaged nerve endings and the consequential difficulty people experience in handling hot and cold objects.
200. In Years 10-11 a quarter of the lessons seen were good. Two lessons were observed, however, where pupils made unsatisfactory progress. This was mainly due to a lack of pace and to the inclusion of tasks that were time-consuming, but where few gains in skill or understanding occurred. Although good examples were seen, pupils have insufficient opportunities overall to talk about their results or to engage in scientific debate. Whilst pupils with statements of special educational need receive help from learning assistants and generally make good progress, some other pupils with learning difficulties require more assistance to raise their attainments further.
201. The effervescent personality and in-depth interest in science that many staff have convey strongly to pupils the excitement of science as a subject worthy of deep study. This was noted in some lessons where staff referred to their training and careers before becoming teachers. Pupils showed increased interest in the realism that these teachers' prior experiences brought to lessons.
202. Many teachers use class sets of small whiteboards to good effect to check out pupils' understanding of concepts. They are also used to reinforce the need for the correct spelling of key scientific words. Teachers reinforce pupils' literacy skills through the reading aloud of sections of text. The department has prepared class sets of conversation cards for some topics, in order to stimulate discussion in small groups. Their beneficial usage was observed in a Year 9 lesson on the use and potential dangers of drugs.
203. In several lessons teachers used ICT effectively to demonstrate scientific phenomena and stimulate discussion. Computers are, however, underused in the department for word processing and the manipulation of data, particularly with older pupils and students. The level of use of ICT is lower than often found in similar kinds of schools.

204. Since the last inspection there has been steady progress in all aspects of the department's work. The head of department has collated an extensive bank of statistics that cover pupils' attainment throughout Years 7-11. Modular tests are used consistently across the department and the results of these underpin the organisation of teaching sets. Both current and target grades are entered into pupils' exercise books. Pupils appreciate this systematic approach to assessment and feel that it encourages them to improve: they talk realistically about their achievements and their predicted grades.
205. The department operates a policy of taking pupils on visits to places of scientific interest. These include the Thackray Medical Museum in Leeds and the Catalyst Museum in Runcorn. In Year 11 selected pupils have the opportunity to sample university life. These experiences encourage pupils to raise their aspirations, with the result that abler students are now opting in greater numbers to study science in the sixth form. In the lower school, pupils have the opportunity to attend the enrichment activities of the science club. Revision classes are offered prior to GCSE.
206. The leadership and the management of the department are good. The department has nine suited, well-furnished, modern laboratories that are attractive and provide a purposeful learning environment. All rooms have excellent wall displays of pupils' work, supplemented by lists of key words that are linked to the topics being taught. Whilst risk assessments are carried out daily, best practice needs to be systematically applied by all members of the department. Two technicians effectively prepare teaching materials and equipment for the department.

## ART AND DESIGN

Overall, the quality of provision for art and design is **good**.

### Strengths:

- teaching is good overall.
- the overall standard of work in Years 10-11.
- the major contribution that the subject makes to the life of the school.

### Areas for improvement:

- assessment criteria need to be clearly explained to pupils.
- ICT resources are inadequate.
- the curriculum insufficiently represents the world of work.

207. By the end of Year 9, attainment is broadly in line with the national expectation for pupils at the age of 14. The quality of work that is currently produced suggests that there has been a steady improvement in standards since the last inspection. In 2000, GCSE results were below the national average. In the GCSE art and design examination in 2001, however, there was a significant increase in the proportion of pupils gaining grades in the range A\*-C. The percentage of girls achieving A\*-C grades was much higher than that for boys. There has been a steady improvement in GCSE attainment since 1998.
208. The majority of pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 7-9. They currently work at a level that is broadly in line with National Curriculum expectations for pupils of this age. Most pupils in Year 7 are interested in the tasks that are set by their teachers. They use line, tone and colour to produce interesting two-dimensional studies. Most pupils have the basic skills to enable them to communicate their ideas through the use of a variety of different media and materials. Many pupils work with some degree of independence. In general, the quality of drawn and painted studies is good.
209. In Year 8 pupils display a mixed response to the tasks that have been set by their teachers. Some settle quickly to their work and show a thoughtful interest in improving the quality of their drawings and paintings. These pupils develop their own ideas as a result, for example, of investigating Surrealism and the paintings of Magritte and Salvador Dali. A significant minority of pupils, however, experience some difficulty in understanding the content and subject matter of these paintings. In consequence, they tend to lose interest and engage in conversation that is unrelated to the set task. Some find it difficult to understand such terms as "metamorphosis" within context and so do not know how to proceed with the development of their own ideas. Overall achievement is, however, satisfactory.

210. By the end of Year 9 most pupils have acquired the necessary basic skills in drawing and painting to communicate their ideas to others. They express their own views and opinions, for instance, through the two-dimensional drawings they produce in response to Goya's etchings about war. The standard of work produced is satisfactory. The majority of Year 9 pupils demonstrate a positive attitude towards their work, but a minority find it difficult to settle down to tasks within a reasonable amount of time at the start of lessons.
211. In Years 10-11, pupils are actively encouraged to work with much greater independence and to experiment with a broader range of media and materials. This is evidenced by their drawn and painted two-dimensional studies and in their three-dimensional constructions made from clay, wood and card. Although there is a clear emphasis on a conventional approach to art and design, some pupils have started to experiment a little with photography and computers as a means of generating images and communicating ideas. Girls tend to work with much greater concentration and focus than boys and this is reflected in their higher GCSE examination results. The overall standard of work produced is of a good, average standard. Both pupils with special educational needs and those who are talented make satisfactory progress.
212. Teaching is good in Years 7-9, satisfactory in Years 10-11 and good overall. The large size of some classes restricts the quality of both teaching and learning. Some group sizes, particularly in Years 7-9, are too large for the available studio space. This leads to pupils having to draw at times in cramped conditions and on small pieces of paper.
213. Although many pupils are interested in what they had been asked to do in lessons, there is insufficient emphasis on the basic skills of drawing and painting to enable pupils to communicate their ideas with full effectiveness. Equally, some pupils find difficulty with the content of lessons in Years 7-9: some Year 8 pupils, for example, struggled to understand such terms as " Surrealism". Overall, however, teachers are well prepared and plan soundly. Good use is made of appropriate exemplar material in the form of books, reproductions of paintings and specially prepared overhead transparencies.
214. The department is led and managed well. The available rooms, resources and equipment are used effectively to underpin and stimulate pupils' learning. Assessment procedures are broadly satisfactory, but are not made sufficiently clear to pupils. Recording and tracking systems do not enable regular feedback to be provided to pupils. Teachers encourage and support all pupils well, including those with special educational needs, and give them ample opportunity to acquire self-awareness through art and design activities. Pupils are encouraged to develop deeper understanding of their own cultural traditions and those of other cultures such as native North Americans.
215. There are good displays of work both in the art rooms and, significantly, throughout the school. The curriculum has many good features, but does not adequately cater for those pupils who are interested in acquiring a range of work-related skills. At present the ICT resources in the department are few and restrict what pupils can achieve. The result is that pupils do not have access to modern technology in the form of conventional photographic processes, computers, scanners, printers or digital cameras to help to prepare them for the world of work.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the provision for design and technology is **good**.

### Strengths:

- good leadership and management of the subject.
- high quality teaching throughout the department.
- the motivation and pace of learning of pupils.

### Areas for improvement:

- the provision and use of ICT.
- storage facilities.

216. The department has made good progress since the last inspection both generally and in improving the areas of weakness that were identified then. Standards in GCSE have been maintained, the quality of teaching is much improved and there is a more even balance in the number of boys and girls who take the courses in resistant materials. Appropriate attention has been given to the scheme of work for Years 7-9 to ensure that pupils make good progress in all areas of technology and have sufficient understanding, by the end of Year 9, to make suitable choices of future courses. There is still, however, insufficient provision and use of computer-aided design and manufacture (CAD/CAM) throughout the school and not enough opportunity to continue with food studies in the sixth form.
217. By the end of Year 9, pupils' overall level of attainment is in line with what might be expected for their age. In the period 1999-2000 teachers' assessments indicated that pupils' overall attainment was below average. In 2001 pupils' attainment was judged to be much improved: pupils' overall attainment was in line with the national average, although fewer pupils than seen nationally gained the higher grades.
218. From the evidence gained from folders, practical projects and talking to pupils, the overall level of attainment by the end of Year 9 is average and reflects teachers' assessments in 2001, although there are more pupils reaching the higher levels than teachers' assessments would indicate. In food technology pupils learn to produce, for example, pineapple upside-down puddings. They all work safely and efficiently and complete their tasks successfully within tight time constraints. In resistant materials they handle tools well, when, for instance, cutting acrylic for clock faces, and behave responsibly when using drilling machines. Independence of working was a strong feature of one Year 9 class seen. The standard of presentation of written work is generally good, although spelling is a recurring weakness in many pupils' folders. There is less use of ICT for research or presentation than is normally found.
219. By the end of Year 11, pupils' performance is generally average in the aspect of the subject within which they have chosen to specialise, with a few pupils attaining the higher levels. Over the period 1999-2001 the proportion of pupils gaining grades in the range A\*-C was below average, whilst those gaining A\*-G grades was average. Girls' performance is significantly above what they achieve in most of their other subjects. Pupils perform and achieve well in all areas of the subject.
220. The Year 11 examination coursework of last year's pupils, seen during the inspection, showed good levels of research and analysis. Presentation was of a high standard and the standard of skills generally good. One model, created by a girl in graphics, for instance, showed exceptional attention to scale, detail and finish. The best folders of work used ICT well for the analysis of data and for presentation; this high quality of use was most evident in food technology. Because Year 11 pupils were on work experience, it was not possible to observe the lessons for these pupils during the inspection.
221. Pupils generally learn very well. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in such tasks as designing and making a bag-fob in Year 7 or making the housing for an electrical circuit in Year 8. Pupils learn to handle tools correctly and to appreciate the different qualities that materials possess – as, for example, when handling plastic in sheet form or when vacuum-forming. In textiles Year 8 pupils refine their sewing-machine skills, as they appliqué fabric designs onto cushions. There is no overall difference between boys' and girls' capability in any aspect of the subject.
222. In food technology Year 10 pupils learn to design and produce biscuits that would appeal to a five-year-old child. Whilst many of them start by thinking that the task is easy, a fair proportion revise their opinions in the light of greater experience. In textiles Year 10 pupils enjoy experimenting with hand and machine processes, when creating a fabric-panel based, for instance, on the work of artists such as Lichtenstein. Other Year 10 pupils use the "crocodile clips" software to design and test circuits. They quickly learn that logic and careful checking are important features in this work. Gifted and talented pupils particularly benefit from the open-ended nature of these tasks.
223. Key technical words are displayed in all technology rooms and occasionally referred to. Worksheets are carefully planned, with levels of readability taken into account. Dictionaries are available in the food room and used as necessary. Boys are generally quicker than girls to ask questions. Numeracy is encouraged in graphics, where conversion tables are displayed; in food, where accurate weighing is

important; and in resistant materials, where pupils are expected to measure carefully. Too few opportunities are, however, available for using computers. Pupils forget how to use programs, because their experience is fragmented – as was evident in a Year 10 group using *Excel*.

224. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. They are punctual to lessons. They listen well and settle to work with energy and purpose. During the two-hour sessions even the youngest pupils sustain interest and concentration. Pupils enjoy the subject.
225. The quality of teaching is very good overall: it is always at least good and in half the lessons seen was very good (and occasionally excellent). Very secure subject knowledge informs teachers' planning. Teachers' deep interest in both the subject and the pupils in their care is a strong feature. Where teaching is excellent, high rigour and pace ensure that pupils' learning is very extensive and sometimes pupils even surprise themselves by the progress they make. Teachers work very well as a team and technical help is good. Health and safety issues are high priorities. Very good displays exist in all design and technology rooms, but particularly in graphics and textiles. The display seen in the textiles room on "disassembly" was outstanding. Not all teachers are confident when using computers or have the necessary hardware and software.
226. The leadership and management of the subject are good. Departmental documents are well matched to pupils' needs – as, for example, in the use of themes in Years 7-9. The flow diagram of work displayed in all rooms is a very constructive feature and significantly enhances continuity across specialist areas. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues are well promoted. Assessment criteria are shared with pupils and pupils' self-assessment is accurate. Work is marked regularly and homework set appropriately. Storage is, however, inadequate for current needs and there is a shortage of up-to-date textbooks for work with resistant materials. Statutory requirements are met.

## GEOGRAPHY

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

### Strengths:

- pupils achieve better results in geography than in most of their other subjects.
- teaching is good in Years 7-9 and very good in Years 10-11.
- all aspects of assessment are very effective.
- the scheme of work is very detailed and well written.
- leadership and organisation are of a very high standard.

### Areas for improvement:

- the provision for high-attaining pupils.
- the provision and use of ICT.

227. Pupils' overall level of attainment at the end of Year 9 is broadly average. When teachers assessed pupils' work in 2000 at the end of Year 9, results indicated that standards were in line with those expected nationally. The assessments in 2001 indicated an improvement that reflects the slow but steady improvement in the subject since 1997. Girls and boys achieve similar results overall. The overall standard of work seen during the inspection was average.
228. By the end of Year 11 pupils' overall level of attainment is average. Results in the GCSE examinations are broadly in line with the national average for the subject. There has been a slow decline in GCSE results since 1998, but since 1996 pupils have gained higher results in this subject than in most of their other subjects. Overall, pupils exceeded the target grades set for them by their teachers in 2001. There is little difference in the academic performance of girls and boys: boys achieved higher results than girls in 2000, but the reverse was true in 2001.
229. All examination results are analysed very carefully by the department and indicate that pupils make good progress in this subject. A very clear strategy for improvement has been implemented: this focuses on the regular assessment and monitoring of pupils' progress, examination practice,

coursework and revision. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, as the work is well matched to their needs. High-attaining pupils make satisfactory progress because, although the teaching is good, teachers do not develop sufficient depth of understanding in these pupils through rigorous, probing questions and specifically designed materials.

230. Pupils have a sound knowledge of how landscapes are formed and how they may change. In one lesson, for example, pupils in Year 10 used their clear understanding of why earthquakes occur and their aftermath to understand and explain the effects of an earthquake at Kobe in Japan. They build effectively on their knowledge as the course progresses, developing a sound knowledge of places in different parts of the world. Pupils in Year 9, for instance, have a sound knowledge of the main features of the weather, understand why rain falls and know how and why the amount varies in different parts of the British Isles. In Year 10 they extend their knowledge and use it effectively in a different context by explaining clearly the reasons for flooding in Bangladesh and the effects this has on the people of that country.
231. Pupils have a good understanding of the links between people and their environment – such as how people cause soil erosion and the management of possible damage that may be caused by tourism in a National Park. They have a reliable knowledge of geographical terms, of the main features of the globe such as longitude and latitude and where the main places are. Lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs have a secure basic knowledge of the subject and their work is generally accurate.
232. Pupils have good map-reading skills and use an atlas very effectively. In one Year 8 lesson, for example, pupils studied the geography of the European Union and made excellent use of an atlas not only to locate the countries and their capital cities, but also to link size and population, to draw conclusions about the density of population and to understand the geographical idea of core and periphery. In Years 10-11, pupils have a clear understanding of geographical enquiry, the collection of data and the analysis of information to draw conclusions. All pupils have good numerical skills in using tables and graphs effectively. Higher-attaining pupils write accurately and use geographical terms correctly.
233. Overall, the quality of teaching is good. It is very good in Years 10-11. Teachers have a very extensive knowledge of the subject. They provide clear explanations, with attention to detail, ensuring that pupils understand the topic clearly and know the meaning of geographical terms. All lessons are very carefully planned with clear objectives, a variety of activities that develop knowledge and reinforce understanding, and a robust conclusion. Preparation and organisation are excellent, with the result that lessons move smoothly from one activity to the next at a brisk pace.
234. In one Year 9 lesson, for example, pupils studied types of rainfall. The teacher started promptly and briskly, using a picture to review the previous work with sharp, well-directed questioning. Pupils worked through a series of well-structured exercises and gained a clear understanding of the link between land height and rainfall in the British Isles. They made good use of an atlas and of other materials matched closely to their needs, and were skilfully supported by the teacher. The lesson concluded with a brisk and lively session of questions and answers, as the teacher assessed the good progress that pupils made.
235. Teachers' expectations of behaviour and the quality of work are high, so that a good working atmosphere is established, written work is always well presented and books are maintained in good order. Relationships with pupils are pleasant and positive. Teachers are quick to intervene and support any pupils who lose focus or find the work difficult. The resources used in lessons, ranging (for instance) from a textbook and video to an authentic pamphlet from Japan of advice in case of earthquakes, are always relevant and well used. Marking is of a very high quality: it is up to date, in line with departmental policy, and includes clear comments on what is right or wrong and what pupils need to do to improve.
236. Pupils learn well and make good progress. They listen carefully and absorb new information quickly. Pupils' interest and concentration are maintained throughout, owing to good teaching and skilful management. In the front of their exercise books all pupils have a clear marking scheme and the grade

they are currently achieving, so that they know exactly how much progress they are making; their teacher's comments ensure that they know what they need to do to improve. Pupils have a good attitude to the subject. They are well motivated, keen and attentive, settle to work quickly and are fully involved in lessons. Behaviour is generally good and pupils arrive at lessons punctually. When working in pairs or small groups, they cooperate effectively with one another.

237. The curriculum is of good quality and fully complies with national requirements. The scheme of work is well constructed and includes a good range of opportunities for fieldwork. Although the syllabus includes details about the use of ICT, its use is neither consistent nor systematic due to the difficulty of gaining regular access to computers – a weakness also identified at the time of the previous inspection. The procedures for assessment are exemplary: pupils' work is assessed during or at the end of each unit of work; marking is very thorough, using a standardised mark scheme; data from assessments is recorded efficiently; and assessments are used effectively to monitor progress and support the work of individual pupils.
238. The subject is taught by a team of well-qualified and experienced teachers. Resources are of good quality and well organised. Accommodation in a group of temporary classrooms is satisfactory, but their need for separate resourcing is inefficient and reduces that part of the departmental budget which is available for extending the range of resources.
239. The leadership of the department is very good. There is a clear sense of direction for the subject, which is well organised and has a clear mandate to improve standards. The scheme of work, departmental handbook and monitoring procedures are all of high quality. There has been a steady improvement since the time of the last inspection and high standards have been maintained. The staff are very hard-working and committed to high attainment. The department has the capacity to succeed in raising standards still further.

## HISTORY

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

### Strengths:

- teachers have high expectations of pupils.
- most pupils make good progress.
- pupils' attitudes to the subject are good.

### Areas for improvement:

- the depth of questioning for the highest-attaining pupils in Years 7-11.
- the use of ICT.
- the use of fieldwork and the local environment in Years 7-9.

240. By the end of Year 9 pupils' attainment overall is broadly in line with that expected nationally. This is a similar standard to that at the time of the last inspection. Most pupils begin Year 7 with attainment close to the national average. In 2000, teachers assessed pupils' attainment overall as in line with the national average by the end of Year 9; the results in 2001 were similar. The overall standard of work seen during the inspection was average. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. The highest-attaining pupils usually make good progress. In a minority of lessons, however, teachers do not deepen pupils' understanding enough, because they do not give pupils enough opportunities to think through problems by themselves.
241. Overall results in GCSE examinations were above the national average in 1999 and a little below average in 2000. In 2001 the proportion attaining grades A\*-C was above the (provisional) national average. This is a similar standard to that reported at the last inspection. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A or A\* has been above average in every year since 1997 except for 2000, when it dropped to below average. Pupils tend to perform better in this subject in GCSE than they do in most of their other subjects. The overall standard of work of pupils currently following the GCSE course in

Years 10 and 11 is in line with that expected nationally. Pupils with special educational needs reach below average standards, but make satisfactory progress.

242. Pupils in Years 7-9 generally have sound (and in some cases, good) knowledge and understanding about the past. They generally explain the causes of events well. They successfully select and collate information from an appropriate range of sources to deepen their knowledge and understanding. Many pupils see that people in the past had different attitudes from those of 2001. For instance, in a lesson on Henry VIII pupils in Year 8 explained why Henry could not accept the idea of a woman on the throne of England after his death. Higher-attaining pupils see, and explain why, there may be alternative views of the past – as, for example, in work on whether Richard Arkwright was a hero or a villain. Lower-attaining pupils use sources adequately for information, but find it more difficult to make deductions about what the sources imply. Pupils with special educational needs show much better understanding in their oral answers than they do in their written work.
243. The overall standard of work seen in Years 10 and 11 was in line with the national average. Most pupils taking GCSE have good knowledge and understanding of the topics they study. They make good links between causes and effects and understand well the role of individuals in shaping events. They see and explain clearly differences between the past and the present. The highest-attaining pupils use sources well, assessing the reliability of them successfully. They understand and explain how and why people in the past had different views and attitudes from people today. Lower attainers frequently have difficulty in understanding some of the complex texts that they are required to use in the examination course; their written work tends to describe, rather than to explain, events.
244. As at the time of the last inspection, teaching is good overall and never less than satisfactory. It is often very good in Years 7-9. Teachers know the subject well and communicate it effectively, so that most pupils acquire good knowledge and understanding about the past. Lessons are well planned, taking close account of pupils' abilities. The aims of lessons are made clear to pupils, and teachers often return to these aims at the end of lessons to check what has been learned. In some, but not all, lessons teachers provide appropriately modified worksheets for lower attainers, in order to guide them successfully through the work and enable them to make good progress. In a minority of lessons, however, the highest attainers are not sufficiently challenged, because teachers give pupils too much information and do not ask them to think the problems through for themselves. This weakness was particularly noticeable in two lessons with pupils in Year 8.
245. An appropriate variety of teaching methods, including individual study, work in pairs and whole-class discussion, ensures that pupils have good opportunities to learn in a range of different ways. Lessons are sometimes broken into a series of short activities, interspersed with short feedback sessions, in which teachers check pupils' progress. This was particularly successful in a lesson with pupils in Year 9 on factory conditions in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as pupils sorted a number of sources into appropriate categories. This exercise led pupils, and especially those with special educational needs, to make very good progress. Some very effective whole-class teaching helped pupils in Year 7 to begin to understand thoroughly the issue of bias in historical accounts. It also enabled a group in Year 10 to consolidate substantially their findings about the effects of World War 1 on civilians.
246. Teachers expect their pupils to work hard. They maintain a positive working environment through friendly, but when necessary firm, discipline. Most pupils have a positive approach to their work and behave well – important contributory factors to their good progress. A small minority have a less than positive attitude and make unsatisfactory progress. Most pupils listen well to teachers' instructions and explanations. When working individually, they concentrate on the task in hand. Many show interest and clearly want to improve their knowledge and understanding.
247. The subject meets the statutory requirements for Years 7-9. There is a good ethos for learning throughout the department and a strong commitment to improving the performance of pupils taking examination courses. The strengths and weaknesses of the department have been carefully evaluated recently by all members of the department. Strategies to deal with the weak areas have been identified and some have already been put into practice. The system of assessment in Years 7-9 has been

improved by including some testing of pupils early in Year 7, in order to provide a basis on which to gauge and improve progress. A competition has been introduced to encourage greater involvement in history outside the classroom, especially amongst the highest attainers. An additional course has been introduced for GCSE, to provide more choice for pupils in Years 10 and 11.

248. The department does not have sufficient textbooks for pupils taking the *Modern World* course in Years 10 and 11 so that they can always have a book to use at home. The use of ICT is included in the planning of lessons. The department has, however, no computers for pupils to use and cannot always use the centrally provided ICT facilities at times to suit the needs of the subject. This is a weakness which was identified at the time of the last inspection and which still limits the effective use of ICT in the subject. The department does not make effective use of fieldwork or the local environment. In other respects, the leadership and management of the department are good.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in ICT is **unsatisfactory**.

### Strengths:

- most specialist teaching and learning in Years 7-9.
- technical assistance and subject documentation.

### Areas for improvement:

- standards of achievement throughout the school.
- the coverage of statutory requirements for Years 10-11.
- insufficient access to computers for most subjects.
- accreditation for achievement for pupils in Years 10-11.

249. The quality of provision for the subject is satisfactory in Years 7-9, unsatisfactory in Years 10-11 and satisfactory overall in the sixth form. Since the previous inspection, improvements have been made by increasing the time allocated to the subject for Years 7-9 and by the employment of a second specialist ICT teacher and a technician. There is also a better ratio of computers to pupils. The school has responded fairly reasonably to the key issue for action at the last inspection, because ICT is now taught more regularly than before in Years 7-9.
250. Serious weaknesses, however, remain. Years 8 and 9 receive specialist teaching only every other week. Specialist teachers ensure that the programmes of study are appropriately covered in Years 7-9, but what is learned is not applied in all subject areas. Pupils in Years 10-11 receive three-week blocks of time as part of their PSHCE programme. They may theoretically also experience ICT in other subjects, but this rarely happens and the national programmes of study for ICT are not covered adequately: with the exception of design and technology, modern foreign languages, business education and economics, where ICT provision is satisfactory, provision is unsatisfactory and often poor.
251. Insufficient equipment or access to computer rooms and the need for staff training are limiting the use of ICT in most subjects. As at the time of the previous inspection, standards are below (and well below in Years 10-11) what is expected nationally. There is no accredited course for pupils in Years 10-11. Problems with viruses and the network adversely affected specialist lessons both before and during the inspection.
252. Teachers' assessments in 1999 and 2000 indicated that pupils' overall level of attainment was very low by national standards by the end of Year 9. The 2001 assessments suggested that pupils' attainment had risen, but that it was still well below average, with very few pupils attaining the higher levels. The inspection confirms that the standard is below average. Most Year 9 pupils achieve satisfactorily when computers and printers are reliable, but quickly lose interest when, for example, they are not able to print out the questionnaires they have prepared.

253. Because pupils in Year 11 were out of school on work experience during the main period of the inspection, no lessons were seen for this year group. Year 10 pupils, using *Excel* in graphics, had difficulty in recalling procedures learned earlier. Other Year 10 pupils benefited from using the “crocodile clips” programme for electronics, but, as the teacher is aware, examination board requirements are barely met by current provision.
254. Pupils in Year 7 bring widely differing experiences of ICT from their primary schools. They settle quickly in this school and make good progress during the course of Year 7. After this, progress slows, because pupils receive lessons only every other week. Whilst higher attainers with computers at home cope with the lack of regular access to computers in school, other pupils (and especially lower attainers and those with special educational needs) are adversely affected by the present provision. Pupils generally have positive attitudes to ICT and their behaviour is often good. Year 7 pupils cooperate and support one another well. They enjoy the challenge of, for instance, locating the main keys on the keyboard with their eyes closed.
255. The quality of teaching in the specialist ICT lessons in Years 7-9 is satisfactory overall, but occasionally inadequate. Secure subject knowledge and confidence in delivery are the strengths of this practice. In the best lessons humour, pace and regular feedback to pupils are strong features. Weaknesses lie in planning and in having alternative strategies for those times when the network or printers malfunction. Literacy skills are reinforced satisfactorily. Homework is set regularly. The open-ended nature of the tasks set ensures that all pupils can work at an appropriate level.
256. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The documentation produced is good. There is a gap, however, between the school’s ICT intentions and its practice, particularly in Years 10-11. Standards are lower than they might be. The bookings of ICT rooms are monitored, but there has not been a thorough audit of each department’s planned use of ICT. Frustrations arise when teachers are unable to gain access to specialist rooms or when printers are unreliable. The lack of laptops and LCD projectors in the two specialist rooms limits the range of possibilities, particularly for ICT presentations. The technician and the work-placement trainee make very valuable contributions to the school’s ICT provision.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

### Strengths:

- much improved results in GCSE French.
- good results achieved by those pupils who take both French and German.
- the quality of leadership and management of the department.
- the quality of assessing pupils’ work and progress.

### Areas for improvement:

- pupils’ skill in both speaking and writing in French and German in Years 10-11.

257. In 2000, the proportion of pupils attaining a grade in the range A\*-C in the full-course GCSE examinations in French was significantly below the national average. Girls’ performance was significantly lower than in the previous year. The proportion of pupils attaining these grades in German was below the national average and at about the same percentage as in the previous year. The proportion of pupils attaining grades in the range A\*-G was close to the national average in both languages.
258. In 2001, although with more entries than in the previous year, the proportion of pupils attaining grades A\*-C in French doubled. There was a marked improvement in the performance of both boys and girls. More pupils were also entered in German and a slight fall was registered in the proportion gaining grades A\*-C. Those pupils who studied both French and German achieved well in both languages and gained many high (A\* or A) grades.

259. Teachers' assessments of pupils at the end of Year 9 in 2000 suggested that pupils' overall level of attainment was close to the national average. The difference between girls' performance and that of boys was slight. The rising trend over the last three years in the proportion of pupils reaching at least Level 5 shows that attainment is improving.
260. On entry to the school in Year 7, pupils learn either French or German. Some pupils have the opportunity to learn a second modern foreign language in Years 8 and 9. Pupils' overall attainment in their first foreign language by the end of Year 9 is average. Pupils have a satisfactory understanding of the foreign language that teachers use extensively in most lessons.
261. In a Year 7 lesson, for example, all instructions to the class were given in French, to which the pupils responded well. Pupils extract information satisfactorily from cassette recordings. In oral work pupils ask and answer questions with reasonable facility. Lower attainers in a Year 8 French class, for instance, gave short responses about birthdays. One pupil was encouraged by his teacher's prompting to ask for help in French. Pupils in a Year 9 French lesson described other members of the class, and the lower attainers in a German class said what they would like to eat and drink, using words that they had learned in the lesson. Pupils in the second German set in Year 9 gave their favourite subject in school and correctly extended the sentence with a reason, using a *weil* clause.
262. Pronunciation ranges from approximate to good, but there is room for improvement. In their written work high and average attainers display a sound knowledge of the perfect tense in each language. In German, pupils give descriptions and write about their likes and dislikes, giving reasons with *weil* in subordinate clauses. Inversion is generally well used. The written work of a minority of pupils lacks sufficient attention to detail: in some exercise books in French, for example, the past participles in the perfect tense do not have accents.
263. Pupils' overall attainment by the end of Year 11 is average in French and slightly below average in German. In their written work in French, higher attainers show a good knowledge of relevant vocabulary to write about Leeds and about such topics as the environment and healthy eating. In pieces of writing of varying lengths they use the appropriate register and adapt previously learned language for their own purpose. Although there are some mistakes in their writing, their meaning is clear. They use a variety of tenses correctly. This was evident from some of the work on display by Year 11 about holidays. Average and lower attainers know the vocabulary, but are less accurate in their use of grammatical constructions.
264. In their German work higher attainers display a good knowledge of the perfect tense and the use of inversion. Average attainers can describe, for instance, their ideal friend, but at times confuse tenses, and the verb in *weil* constructions is not always used correctly. Coursework produced by pupils in the second set in Year 11 demonstrated a good knowledge of the topic's vocabulary and a good use of inversion. Pupils acquire a sound feeling for German word-order, with good advice from their teacher. One piece of writing, which involved the use of three tenses and very good use of time phrases, was of a promising standard. Lower attainers write short sentences, using the present tense.
265. The achievement of most pupils is satisfactory in Years 7-11 in both languages. Higher attainers achieve satisfactorily in Years 7-9, but well in Years 10-11. Other pupils achieve appropriately in reading and listening, but tend to underachieve in speaking and writing. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory throughout the school.
266. Pupils' behaviour in class is good, but their attitudes vary. When the teaching is lively and stimulating, they respond well – as, for example, in a Year 9 German class when pupils sang well. In another German class, in Year 10, pupils enjoyed hanging words on a washing line. In a Year 7 French class, pupils responded well to chorus work and circulated sensibly in class, as they asked each other questions. In two French lessons, however, pupils lost interest and concentration, becoming talkative and not cooperating fully with the teacher's request for quiet.
267. The quality of teaching ranges from very good to poor, but is satisfactory overall across the foreign languages. It is good in German. Teachers have substantial knowledge of the subject and make good use of foreign languages in class in the majority of lessons. This usage helps to develop pupils'

understanding. All lessons start appropriately with the revision of past work. In most lessons the learning objectives are shared with the class and this helps pupils to focus on what has to be done.

268. Where the teaching is good or very good, teachers appropriately introduce different activities and skills to maintain pupils' concentration and interest. These lessons have pace and the pupils work productively. Teachers employ effective approaches such as chorus work or games. They make good use of resources to introduce new vocabulary or constructions, or to consolidate and extend phrases with a grammatical emphasis. Flash cards are used well to promote speaking. In a Year 10 German class, the pupils made effective use of whiteboards and markers to consolidate the different parts of verbs in the present tense. The teacher was thus able to identify any incorrect answers when the slates were raised and pupils were able to assess their progress in the lesson. In a Year 9 German lesson on likes and dislikes, two different masks were used very effectively to show a happy or sad face.
269. The management of pupils in class is good. Homework is set regularly and is very well marked by teachers. Teachers set targets in many books and their comments are both meaningful and helpful. Few pupils, however, redraft or complete corrections to improve their accuracy. In the two French lessons where the teaching was less than satisfactory, inappropriate tasks and a lack of challenge led to little or no productivity by pupils and to a distinct lack of concentration and interest: pupils became talkative and ineffective class management failed to redress the situation.
270. The department meets statutory requirements for teaching the National Curriculum. Leadership and management are good overall. The department makes a substantial contribution to pupils' cultural development through foreign visits, a foreign language assistant in German and very good displays in classrooms. Good use is made by pupils across the school of a yellow vocabulary and grammar book: this ensures that pupils' red exercise books are restricted to use for written exercises and extended writing. The presentation of written work is generally well done.
271. The department makes thorough use of assessment. The careful analysis of examination results has led to the introduction of coursework for GCSE in French and German, with a view to improving pupils' standard of writing, and of "raffle" tickets to encourage pupils to speak. Satisfactory progress has been made in the subject since the last inspection.

## MUSIC

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

### Strengths:

- the choir and choral work in class lessons.
- the quality of instrumental teaching.
- the department's open-door policy.

### Areas for improvement:

- provision for computer-assisted music in Years 7-9.
- the sharing of assessment criteria with pupils within lessons.
- soundproofing of the instrumental teaching room.

272. By the time pupils reach the end of Year 9 their overall attainment is in line with the national average. Pupils perform, compose and improvise, using electronic keyboards as well as (in some cases) their orchestral instruments and percussion. Pupils gain good familiarity with the music keyboard, although many of them rely too heavily on letter names which are printed on the instruments. They know the names of notes on the staff and understand how familiar scales and chords are formed. They read simple melodies and chord symbols.
273. In one lesson on film music, for example, pupils in Year 9 showed a good grasp of musical features that enabled them to express moods such as the excitement of a car chase. They then played and made variations on a familiar piece, in order to create different moods and effects. Pupils also learn about music from a wide range of sources, including well-known pieces from the classical repertoire as well as

from folk, jazz and popular styles. Those pupils who learn individual instruments attain standards that are above average, as can be seen in their results from Associated Board examinations.

274. Pupils' overall attainment by the end of Year 11 is a little above the national average. In the 1999 and 2000 GCSE examinations, taken together, 12 out of 14 pupils gained grades in the range A\*-C. One of these gained an A\* grade. The results in 2001 followed a similar pattern.
275. In the work seen during the inspection the overall standard of performance, composition and listening was slightly above the national average. In one lesson pupils developed and played their individual compositions; these included songs and melodies with effective accompaniments. One pupil has written and recorded a string quartet, showing a very good grasp of harmony and part-writing. Pupils at this stage also acquire good aural skills and background knowledge of music from both the western tradition and from world music. This listening aspect of their study enables them to make accurate, analytical comments on the music they hear in their regular lessons, in tests and in the final GCSE examination.
276. The quality of learning in Years 7-9 is good overall. Pupils enter the school with a very wide range of musical attainment and experience. They also vary widely in their ability to learn new material quickly. The good teaching they receive, however, enables most of them to acquire reasonably quickly the necessary knowledge and skills on which their creative work is based. This was particularly noticeable in a lesson in Year 7 on rhythm, when pupils converted the rhythms of words and phrases into musical notation. They then went on to invent polyrhythmic pieces over an eight-beat sequence.
277. Most pupils are interested in their lessons. Some classes are enthusiastic and clearly enjoy music. In a lesson in Year 8, for instance, pupils composed their own short diatonic tune which then served as a theme to be worked in variation form. Using keyboards, saxophone, cello and recorders, the class produced an effective piece that enabled them to adapt pitch, register, speed and timbre in the creation of their own *Theme and Variations*. Pupils with special educational needs are well involved in all class music activities. They make good progress and achieve standards that compare favourably with those of their peers. Gifted and talented pupils, too, make good progress in their studies.
278. In Years 10-11 all pupils learn well and make good progress. The requirements of the GCSE course help to motivate pupils to reach appropriate standards in performing, composing and musical understanding. During the inspection, pupils in a Year 10 class worked on a piece of aleatoric music, in which they made musical sounds that were dictated by throwing dice. This provoked them to ask whether music should always have a recognisable tune or rhythm and to gain a deeper understanding of different ways in which sound can be expressive.
279. Overall, pupils' attitudes to learning are good throughout the school and especially so in Years 10-11, where they develop a mature approach to the subject. This is particularly evident when they work independently without direct supervision. Attitudes are broadly satisfactory in a minority of classes, notably amongst a small number of boys in Year 9 who tend to distract one another with irrelevant comments. Whilst poor behaviour is always checked by the teacher, it has an adverse effect on the continuity and pace of some lessons.
280. Teaching is always at least good (and sometimes very good) throughout the whole age-range. This good teaching is characterised by a broad and secure subject knowledge and expertise. Teachers in the department have complementary musical skills that they use to good effect. Often these skills are used to demonstrate how a piece should be played or sung, to accompany pieces or to direct pupils in their listening tests.
281. Good attention is paid throughout to the teaching of literacy and especially to the use and understanding of the technical language of music. In GCSE work teachers pay careful attention to pupils' written English – as, for example, in their background notes to composition. Most of these notes are presented very well with the aid of word processing. Teachers always prepare lessons in detail, with each section realistically timed. Expectations that pupils will work hard and behave well are high. Pupils are managed effectively. A team of visiting instrumental teachers gives lessons to about 75 pupils. These teachers make a very good contribution to pupils' musical education.

282. The day-to-day assessment of pupils' work is satisfactory, but opportunities are missed to share the assessment criteria for success in tasks. Pupils' work is, nevertheless, assessed and recorded very well, usually at the end of a required topic or task. Teachers are very well acquainted with the newly formulated National Curriculum levels. These are used well to check the progress of individual pupils and to monitor the effectiveness of teaching. The department make good use of information about pupils' Associated Board examination successes, particularly to identify gifted and talented pupils.
283. The department is well led. Extra-curricular activities include wind band, guitar club, jazz/rock bands, homework club and choir. The choir, very expertly trained by a visiting voice teacher, sings at a high standard. It gives performances both in school and at such outside venues as a local library and supermarket. The choir has raised substantial money for charities, including a local initiative that helps young people in Romania. Singing is a strength of the department.
284. The department's resources are generally good, but more computerised workstations are needed, particularly to enable pupils in Years 7-9 to gain experience in musical technology. Accommodation is adequate, although there is an urgent need for the small teaching room to be soundproofed. Improvements since the last inspection include a better identification of the more musically able pupils as well as those with special educational needs, and clearer documentation and leadership of the department.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

### Strengths:

- a strong corporate spirit amongst teachers.
- specialist teachers have good subject knowledge.
- good relationships between teachers and pupils.

### Areas for improvement:

- accommodation for both teachers and examination classes.
- the quality of, and access to, ICT and other learning resources.
- opportunities for pupils to learn independently.

285. By the end of Year 9, boys reach a good overall standard in gymnastics and soccer. In gymnastics many control their body weight well and perform such basic gymnastic movements as cartwheels, arab springs and necksprings. About half can move from handstand to forward roll with good control. Nearly all work competently and enthusiastically on apparatus. In soccer ball-control and passing skills are good and a majority of pupils turn very well on the ball, displaying a variety of techniques to beat opponents. Girls attain well in dance, showing the awareness of body tension that is essential for good performance. They work well in pairs, both planning and evaluating their performances soundly. A large majority of girls perform the three major swimming strokes competently.
286. By the end of Year 11, GCSE results are a little above the national average and have been consistently so since 1999. In 2000 three-fifths of pupils entered for the examination gained passes in the range A\*-C and a fairly similar level was achieved in 2001. The practical work seen in lessons is broadly in line with national standards. Girls dance and play competitive games enthusiastically. Boys swim competently, mastering basic strokes and survival techniques. In all years pupils with special educational needs are very well integrated into lessons and progress well. Gifted and talented pupils also make good progress. Year 11 pupils were not in school during the inspection.
287. Teaching is good in Years 7-9, satisfactory in Years 10-11 and good overall. It is occasionally very good. Lessons are competently taught and, where teaching is at its best, an appropriate variety of teaching styles is used to encourage pupils to plan and evaluate their work carefully. Teachers are very enthusiastic. Their encouraging relationships with classes secure very positive attitudes and behaviour. Pupils concentrate well, making sustained efforts. Occasionally, a lack of clarity in planning means that

the purposes of learning are unclear and pupils make insufficient progress. On the minority of occasions where teachers are too dominant, pupils have insufficient opportunity to be creative, take initiative or learn independently.

288. Much management of the subject is good. Staff in the department work well together. Meetings are held regularly and minutes taken. The curriculum has been improved and a new assessment system was introduced in September 2001. There does remain a need to give improved guidance to pupils, so that they can appreciate how they are performing against national standards. Textbooks are in short supply for examination courses.
289. Despite the fact that plans are well in hand to substantially rebuild inadequate changing facilities, there are still significant weaknesses in the accommodation for the subject. There is only one major indoor teaching space and a serious shortage of hard-play surfacing. Problems with poor drainage and the quality of surfaces on playing fields require attention. No ICT facilities are specifically allocated to the subject. Despite this, teachers use ICT satisfactorily for administration and the production of teaching materials. Central ICT facilities are not sufficiently available for the use of pupils and teachers. Reference materials, the Internet, videotapes and CD-ROMs are often inaccessible. This lack of provision restricts the opportunity for pupils to learn independently.
290. Since the previous inspection, dance has been introduced into the curriculum. Extra-curricular provision is good in Years 7-11. There is a wide range of activities from which pupils may select and as many as 35 per cent regularly take part in them.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision is **unsatisfactory** in Years 7-9, but **good** in Years 10-11.

### Strengths:

- the level of attainment and amount of progress by the end of Year 11.
- good quality of teaching and learning in Years 10-11.
- clear educational direction given by new leadership.

### Areas for improvement:

- insufficient teaching time allocated to pupils in Years 7-9.
- consequently, the low standard of attainment by the end of Year 9.
- statutory requirements are not met for Years 7-9

291. GCSE results have recently risen, but are not yet consistently good. The results for 2000 in GCSE religious studies, for example, were below the national average, but the results for 2001 were well above the (provisional) national average. In both years boys reversed the picture nationally by doing better overall than girls.
292. Results in the GCSE short course in 2000 were well below the national average, but provisional results for 2001, whilst still well below the national average, are significantly better. In 2001 boys did very much better than girls on the short course and their results were close to the national average. The results from both examinations, when taken together, show that in 2001 nearly half the pupils in Year 11 received a grade C or above. This compares very favourably with many other schools.
293. The observation of lessons and analysis of pupils' work show that achievement across Years 7-9 is poor and that overall attainment at the end of Year 9 is well below expectation. Pupils do not reach the learning goals specified in the Agreed Syllabus. They have some fragmentary knowledge of important religious figures such as Moses, but show little grasp of why they are important. When asked questions, pupils are reluctant to reply, partly at least because they do not have the background knowledge to formulate a suitable answer. They listen attentively, but speak briefly. They read competently for meaning, but do not write confidently or at length. Overall, pupils' knowledge of religion and understanding of religious ideas are rudimentary.

294. At the beginning of Year 10 a significant change takes place and during the next two years pupils make rapid progress. They rise to the new level of demand, as the content and approach in lessons increasingly match the requirements of the examination syllabus. Pupils present information well, explain the meaning of religious belief and practice, and evaluate religious and moral issues soundly. Those who choose the full GCSE course in the subject show the disciplined thinking and confident writing that lead to above average results.
295. Teaching and learning in Years 7-9 are satisfactory overall, but there is considerable variation. In many lessons teaching is clear and effective, but in some it is unsatisfactory or barely satisfactory. The management of pupils and their classroom behaviour are always good. Other aspects are more variable. Most lessons are planned and structured well, but then end weakly, without sharing learning or celebrating achievement. The teaching of basic skills is satisfactory overall, but teachers do not give pupils enough opportunities to speak or write at length. The allocation of one lesson per fortnight to the subject means that learning is fragmented.
296. In Years 10 and 11, by contrast, teaching and learning are good. Pupils respond well to the discipline and incentive of a GCSE course. Teachers' expectations and pupils' confidence in themselves rise. Pupils benefit from the broad coverage of content and development of skills required by the examination. Assessment is more rigorous than earlier in the school and the measurement of pupils' performance accurate. Pupils on the short course have one hour's teaching each week and pupils on the full course in Year 11 have two hours each week. Enough time, clear continuity and good teaching produce sound learning and achievement.
297. Attitudes and behaviour are good. Pupils listen attentively and work diligently, but they are reluctant to ask or answer questions. Only in Year 11 do positive attitudes and good teaching come together to produce good results. Here pupils' work shows intellectual and emotional maturity. By the end of Year 11, RE has made its distinctive contribution to the spiritual, moral and cultural dimensions of pupils' personal development.
298. Leadership is good. The school has recently appointed a new head of department. Already departmental documentation is detailed and clear. Schemes of work are being revised. The departmental development plan gives a sense of direction for the future, but is not linked sufficiently to the priorities for improvement established for the school as a whole. A matter of concern is the number of lessons (more than half over the two-week cycle) taught by staff from outside the department.
299. The programme of study for pupils in Years 7-9 is broad and balanced, but undermined by a shortage of time and lack of continuity. Less than half the minimum time specified as reasonable by the Agreed Syllabus is given to the subject. Other areas for improvement include more systematic procedures for assessment and the need for new textbooks to match developments in GCSE provision. Better use of ICT is dependent on greater access to the necessary hardware than is currently available.
300. Since the last inspection provision has both improved and deteriorated. The introduction of the GCSE short course and the arrangement by which increasing numbers of pupils achieve success in the full course are major advances. So is the provision of RE in the sixth form. The previous report spoke of the need for a permanent head of department with managerial skills and this need has now been met.
301. In contrast, the need for more subject expertise to improve teaching and learning, also identified in the previous report, has not been met. Since the last inspection, the amount of time for the subject in Years 7-9 has been reduced and the problem has been exacerbated by greater discontinuity. Pupils' attainment has fallen sharply. The curriculum in Years 7-9 does not meet statutory requirements. The school's governing body and senior management now need to take the steps necessary to secure for pupils their full educational entitlement.

## 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 the entry and performance information for the nine courses completed in 2000, the latest year for which full national comparisons are available.

### 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 (GCE)	3	67	89	67	45	6.0	6.0
Chemistry (GCE)	3	67	89	67	42	5.3	5.9
Physics (GCE)	3	100	88	67	37	6.0	5.5
Business Studies (AVCE)	7	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	10.0	10.8
Leisure and Tourism (AVCE)	9	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	10.7	10.5
Art and Design (GCE)	8	100	96	50	45	8.0	6.4
Geography (GCE)	6	100	92	50	37	7.0	5.7
History (GCE)	12	75	89	8	34	3.3	5.4
English Literature (GCE)	8	100	96	50	36	6.8	5.9

### Intermediate vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Leisure and Tourism	16	15	n/a	4	n/a	0	n/a

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

### MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

#### Mathematics

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

#### Strengths:

- a marked improvement in examination results since the last inspection.
- skills and techniques are taught thoroughly.
- teaching is good overall.

#### Areas for improvement:

- insufficient opportunities for students to deduce conclusions for themselves.
- students' answers to problems need to explain how equations are derived.

302. The GCE A-level results have improved steadily since the last inspection. During this period the number of students entered for the examination has varied from three to 11. Of the three candidates entered in 2000, one achieved grade A and another grade B. Both made good progress in the sixth form. The average points score has risen steadily each year except in 1998, when six of the 11 candidates (all of whom were male students) were ungraded. Other than this, male and female students have done about equally well. Very few students do not complete the course. During the last two years students have generally done as well as could be expected from their GCSE results. All eight students who entered in 2001 passed the examination, with three of them achieving the highest (A or B) grades.
303. At this early stage in the school year the standards of work of current students are at the levels expected in the AS and A2 course modules. In Year 13, the student taking A2 modules in pure mathematics and mechanics and the student taking AS-level mechanics are making sound progress as a result of effective teaching that provides well for their individual needs. In some lessons they are taught together. During one such lesson, for example, they drew well on their combined knowledge of vectors to solve an appropriate range of problems, despite some hesitancy in recalling relatively elementary techniques.
304. The achievement of students in Year 12 at this early stage of their AS course is much as expected. They show a good knowledge and understanding of, for example, the techniques of algebraic manipulation on which their subsequent work will build. They make good progress in extending their knowledge of trigonometry from that acquired in the GCSE course to a higher level of generality and a wider range of applications.
305. Teaching is good overall and students make steady, systematic progress. Teachers' good subject knowledge is evident in their questioning, explanations and demonstrations, and in their methods of teaching. Lesson objectives are clear and their expectations of what students can do are appropriate. Methods of teaching tend to be by a thorough discussion of new ideas, calling upon students' previous knowledge and extending it to higher levels of application. Occasionally, during such discussions, teachers do too much of the thinking for students, who then become passive learners, too dependent upon their teachers and lacking the confidence to apply their new knowledge to different problems. In contrast, especially in mechanics, teachers encourage students to think carefully about the situation under consideration – as, for example, a car pulling a caravan – to identify all the forces acting upon both car and caravan and to imagine the consequences of the resultant force. This enables students to tackle such problems successfully.
306. Much of the written work set for students is based on solving text-book problems. Occasionally, the marking misses students' elementary mistakes, especially where the work remains unchecked by the teacher or students. Equally, in some work, teachers do not require students to sufficiently explain how statements or equations are derived from the mathematics of the problem.
307. Students learn at a satisfactory pace. They are attentive, generally work productively and respond positively to the supportive teaching they receive. Students in Year 12, for example, responded positively to the enthusiastic teaching of geometric series, during which the standard formulae for the sum to  $n$  terms were derived. They readily offered contributions, quickly picking up clues from the teacher on how to manage the algebra within the task. Time in lessons is generally used well. Students are ready to help one another. They generally work successfully on the tasks set for private study, particularly in practising newly learned skills and techniques.
308. The subject is well managed and the teaching is appropriately apportioned to the particular skills of the teachers. The schemes of work accurately reflect the new structure of A-level examinations and allow students access to a balanced range of modules. Students' progress is closely monitored.

## SCIENCES

309. The focus was on chemistry and physics, but biology was also sampled. Biology is the weakest of the three sciences offered in the sixth form. No students took GCE A-level in 2000. The results of the three candidates in 2001 were low. The one biology lesson observed on genetics was good: teaching was supportive, yet challenging, and the enthusiastic students made accurate predictions, learning much about the consequences of dominant and recessive genes.

### Chemistry

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

#### Strengths:

- good, well-sequenced teaching both in theory lessons and in practical exercises.
- students as treated as mature individuals.
- empathetic relationships: students feel comfortable in seeking assistance.

#### Areas for improvement:

- better access to, and availability of, ICT facilities.

310. Three candidates took the GCE A-level examination in 2000 and two of them gained grade B. Their achievement ranged from good to unsatisfactory, but was sound overall. In 2001 three of the six candidates entered gained a grade E and one an A grade. These results are typical of recent years.

311. In the AS-level examinations taken at the end of Year 12 in 2001 all candidates achieved at least a grade E and the higher-attaining students reached their target grades of A or B. All but one student who sat the AS examination in Year 12 has continued the study of chemistry to A2-level. Most are achieving satisfactorily, based on their previous attainment in GCSE.

312. The standard of work of the students currently studying the subject in Year 12 is about average. Students exhibit a good knowledge and understanding of such basic concepts as moles, concentrations and chemical rates and equilibria. Students competently handle the numerical aspects of the course whilst in class, but some then struggle when they do not have the presence of their teachers. In a lesson seen on stoichiometry, students were keen to work on the whiteboard, while their fellow students assisted them.

313. In Year 13 students make steady progress as a consequence of effective teaching. The lesson format and structure clearly focus their learning. In one lesson students were introduced to the nitration of organic compounds and then moved on to prepare phenyl methyl benzoate. This Friedel-Craft reaction was performed with the required attention to detail and with due regard to health and safety considerations. Yields of the substance obtained were acceptable, indicating that they had successfully maintained the narrow temperature range essential for this reaction. Students then articulated clearly how they would go on to purify the product and test the purity of the sample, describing the results they would expect to obtain. Most students, when prompted by their teachers, recall knowledge satisfactorily and apply it to new, yet similar, circumstances.

314. The teaching observed was good. Teachers prepare their material well, give lessons clear objectives and schedule the content closely to fit the available time. They have the necessary knowledge to deliver the subject to an appropriate depth. They encourage students to ask questions and then discuss them with suitable depth and rigour.

315. The students' assignments, assessments and written notes submitted for review were mostly complete. Assignments are set to an annual pattern that the students welcome, because they know the shape and extent of them at the start of the academic year. The assignments and assessments are marked and annotated conscientiously to an appropriate level. Assignments are often based on questions taken from the examination papers of previous years. Students welcome this approach. Few examples were seen of extended writing or of access to scientific texts, although one lesson had drawn on science fiction to illustrate quantum levels.

316. The work is shared between two members of staff who meet regularly to review progress and willingly share ideas. This arrangement works well. Students say that they like the opportunity to ask for another perspective on a topic. The department has a valuable bank of assignments, built up over a period of time, to support and extend the work covered in class. Goals are set for individual students, who are realistic about their likely grades in future examinations.
317. The developing link with a local chemical company and access to local universities through the *Excellence in Cities* scheme provide students with an additional platform on which to base their progression to higher education. Students have access to computers within the department, in the sixth form centre and in the library. The availability of computers and access to the Internet are not always guaranteed.

## PHYSICS

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

### Strengths:

- a good quality of teaching from experienced teachers.
- students are interested and committed, with a desire to succeed.
- teachers encourage students to seek in-depth explanations and have high aspirations.

### Areas for improvement:

- greater access to ICT facilities.

318. In the GCE A-level examination in 2000 two of the three candidates entered gained grade B and one a grade E. This level of results represents a sound achievement in the light of the students' earlier GCSE attainment. In 2001 five of the six candidates gained at least an E grade and two of them gained grades A or B. Few students who start the course do not carry on to completion. The ten students taking the AS course in Year 12 represent a significant growth in numbers from previous years. The AS-level results in 2001 were good: students gained grades commensurate with their prior attainment and efforts throughout the year. The overall standard of work of students currently studying the subject is relatively better in Year 12 than in Year 13, but the standard in both years is at least sound.
319. In a Year 12 class, during a practical lesson that plotted the path of light rays through glass blocks, students clearly showed that they had made a sound transition from GCSE-type work to sixth-form study. They demonstrated that they were appropriately conversant with reflection, refraction and the effects that different refractive indices have on the changes of the angle of refraction. They effected and recorded accurately the angles of incidence and refraction, and then determined the critical angle for internal refraction. They were pleasantly surprised to discover that it matched that determined by more sophisticated means by the manufacturer.
320. In a Year 13 class, students studied a topic on polarisation. They appreciated the availability of polarising filters and experienced individually the consequences of crossing two filters in differing planes. Questions from the group and carefully led discussion by the teacher explored the reasons for many natural phenomena, such as the *aurora borealis*, rainbows and why the sky is blue. The students worked at an appropriate depth and made sound progress. Students brought to the discussion knowledge of previously covered topics and one had taken the study of physics beyond that covered in lessons.
321. Most students recall knowledge well in lessons, often when carefully questioned and supported by their teacher, but the assignments available indicate that Year 12 students have yet to acquire fully the analytical skill to distil the more important aspects from other points of lesser value. A few students find difficulty in manipulating the formulae they encounter.
322. In the three lessons observed teaching was good. In both years students progressed satisfactorily. The major factor in this success is the effective teaching from two experienced members of staff. Lessons are constructed in several, small sections, each of which covers an important aspect of the syllabus. The sections are then moulded together, so that each topic progresses logically. In a Year 12 lesson a CD-

ROM package was used to good effect to summarise the learning objectives that had been stated at the beginning of the lesson. Lessons are carefully planned and students are encouraged to explore ideas with both their fellow students and the teacher. Students work well together. They recognise the different qualities and abilities amongst the group, contribute to discussions reasonably and seek clarification without hesitation.

323. Theory is appropriately supported by practical work in class. Structured questions are used to assist students to check out their understanding and to prepare them for external examinations. The written work in assignments is at an appropriate level and generally commensurate with students' prior attainment. Writing is, however, rarely extended beyond practical reports. Assignments are marked appropriately, with errors corrected, and annotated with recommendations. Throughout the department students have insufficient access to computers. Whilst they have developed methods of gaining access to computers around the school, they do not have easy access to ICT facilities throughout the school day and immediately afterwards.
324. Work in the subject is the direct responsibility of the head of department and is well led and managed. He has a realistic vision for the development of the subject. The smooth transition to the new arrangements for AS and A2 has been achieved through careful planning and a sensible sharing of the workload. The year's work is thoroughly planned: students are fully aware of the internal deadlines for assignments and the external ones required by the examination board.
325. The small numbers in classes enable staff to know students very well individually. Students have wide opportunities to extend their horizons and speak appreciatively of courses that have been made available to them at a variety of universities, both locally and across the country, through the *Excellence in Cities* scheme. These opportunities enable students to explore careers and raise their aspirations in line with their attainment and personal qualities. Staff and students set realistic targets together, to ensure that each student has an attainable goal.

## **ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING**

326. Only design and technology was inspected within this curriculum area. Just one lesson was seen in Year 12, but further examples of students' work were scrutinised. Numbers taking the subject are small and all current students are male; no female has taken the subject at this level since 1998.
327. By the end of Year 13 students' overall level of attainment is below average. Over the period 1999-2000 the proportion of students gaining grades in the range A-B or A-E was well below average. In 2000, the last year in which students were entered for this level, the three students tended to perform below what they achieved in their other subjects.
328. In the Year 12 lesson seen, students revealed considerable knowledge about car logos, as they used computer software to control a new vinyl cutter. The potential of this tool was fully appreciated by the students, led to a good level of discussion about its application to their coursework and sparked considerable enthusiasm. Attainment was high, the quality of teaching and learning very good and attitudes to work exemplary.

## **BUSINESS**

329. The main focus was on business studies, but economics was also sampled. Economics is offered at both GCSE and GCE A-level. Although the three passes in 2001 were all at grade C, results at A-level are usually above average and students make sound progress. In the Year 13 lesson seen both teaching and the response of students were satisfactory, but the overall level of understanding of aspects such as barriers to the liberalised marketing of cars was below average. Folders and notebooks are generally well organised.

## Business studies (V)

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

### Strengths:

- above average results.
- systematic teaching that emphasises appropriate standards for success.
- frequent, helpful oral feedback to students on their current work.

### Areas for Improvement:

- a settled composition to the teaching team.
- the adoption of standard procedures and format for written feedback.
- updating of the departmental handbook.
- industrial and commercial updating for staff.

330. The Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) results were above average from 1998 to 2000, although no student achieved a distinction in 2000. The numbers on the course have been fairly stable, but have slightly fallen over these years. Seven students completed this qualification in 2001: a high standard was maintained by one candidate gaining a distinction and five others a merit. For the six-unit, VCE-AS level in 2001 (the first time it has been available) there were nine entries. The results were low: no candidate achieved higher than a grade D and six candidates were unclassified.
331. The overall standard of work of students currently studying the subject at AVCE (four in Year 13, but none in Year 12) is barely satisfactory. There is considerable variation in the standard of work within the group and, on present performance, a full pass rate is not predicted. Portfolios do not show a pattern of sustained improvement over the four terms' work. In class, students show a fair capacity for grasping ideas and discussing them when the topic is of interest to them, but only intermittently give full attention to the work in hand. Students drew well on their own work experience, however, in discussing health and safety at work and this motivated them to write up their research on this aspect. Their writing and word processing skills are satisfactory, but their skills in research and oral presentations are below average.
332. Teaching is sound overall. Lessons are well organised, briskly run and supported by appropriate resources. Structures for subsequent work and necessary data are built up clearly on the board during lessons. Themes and learning previously encountered are drawn upon frequently. Teachers regularly emphasise to students the standards required for success in the qualification. Rigorous efforts are made to help students achieve the necessary higher standard in their writing of reports. Access to ICT is usually available, when required. Staff help students in class by giving positive, oral feedback. Written feedback is often not full enough to make it clear to students what they need to do to improve their performance. Overall, rapport in class is good.
333. The work of the department has been affected by the loss of experienced staff and several changes of staff last year. The head of department is currently assisted by two part-time teachers, one of whom at the time of the inspection was only contracted until the end of the autumn term. The organisation of the department's work is, unhelpfully, largely through informal meetings. The useful departmental handbook provides a framework for staff guidance and support, but sections of it need revision. Teachers tend to teach their own part of the course independently: there is no common format for the planning of students' work or giving written feedback to students.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

334. The subject was lightly sampled during the inspection: one lesson was seen in each of Years 12 and 13. The overall standard of students who took the vocational, three-unit, AS-level course in 2001 was well below average: only one student out of 19 gained a grade as high as B, seven gained the lowest pass (E) and seven others were unclassified. The low level of results is partly owing to the fact that the school offers no accredited course in Years 10-11 and students have therefore much ground to cover in the two years of the sixth form.

335. In Year 13 the attainment of those students following the course at A2-level is a little below average. Students are very positive about the course and the help they are given by their teachers. Many aspire to use ICT as part of their future careers. They work hard, are questioned pertinently and make satisfactory progress. The course's tight structure provides the essential help many students need, but also cushions them from learning independently. The computer resources in the sixth form centre are poor and printers often prove unreliable. In the Year 12 lesson seen students were remarkably tolerant when the ICT system crashed, even though they lost valuable working time.

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

336. The main focus was on travel and tourism, but two lessons of physical education (PE) in Year 13 were also sampled. Four students were the first group in the school to complete the GCE A-level course in PE in 2001. Results were slightly below levels that might have been expected from a comparison of the same students' GCSE results. The group was, however, too small to make any valid statistical comparison with national levels.

337. The teaching in both lessons seen was good, well planned and effective. Students are very keen and well motivated. Their written work is broadly in line with expected standards, but does not reflect sufficient evidence of independent learning. Poor reference resources and limited access to ICT facilities limit this aspect of students' development. The marking of work is thorough, detailed and up to date. Teachers include constructive written comments to encourage higher standards, a feature appreciated by students. There is no PE on the timetable for students who do not follow the examination courses. The school does, however, support league teams in soccer, hockey and cricket.

### **Travel and tourism (V)**

Overall, the quality of provision in travel and tourism is **satisfactory**.

#### **Strengths:**

- knowledgeable, enthusiastic and well-organised teaching.
- the positive approach and steadily improving performance of students.

#### **Areas for improvement:**

- increased emphasis on students' development of independent learning skills.
- an agreed format for written feedback on students' work.

338. Results on the AVCE course in leisure and tourism and in the (current) travel and tourism course over the past three years have been close to average. Of the ten students whose course finished in 2000, seven obtained merits and two passed. In 2001 all five passed – one with distinction and five with merit. AS-level results were close to average in 2001: of the 18 entries all passes were at grade C or below and five were unclassified. The standard of work seen on the course varies from above to below average, but is broadly satisfactory overall.

339. The teaching is nearly always good. It is carried out by knowledgeable and enthusiastic staff who provide well-structured and briskly paced lessons. They ensure, through clear instructions and explanations and the use of well-tuned questions, that students' work is suitably structured to meet the requirements of each unit and of the new examination requirements. On occasions, however, this leads to an over-direction of students' learning and insufficient attention to developing the skills that will help students to plan and promote their own learning.

340. In some lessons well-structured discussion helps students to explore their current knowledge or to review the information they have collected before embarking on the next actions they need to take. Close attention is paid to keeping students focused on the requirements of the course and the deadlines by which tasks must be completed. Constructive feedback is usually provided to students on their work, but it is not always closely related to grade descriptors in a way that maximises students' understanding of how to improve their performance.

341. Students are, in the main, positive in their approach to their work. A small minority, however, do not show obvious commitment to the tasks they have to undertake. The majority in the early stages of Year 12 lack the skills of planning and executing their own programmes of work, but the more able students have a firm grasp of research skills. Only a few talk confidently about their work. Year 13 students readily discuss information on such themes as holidays as a basis for identifying and planning the investigation of different kinds of provision. All compile satisfactory notes and make appropriate use of ICT. Students in Year 13 show steady progress over the four terms that they have been following the course: writing has improved in both quantity and depth and now contains more analysis of information rather than its simple transmission.
342. The organisation of the course benefits from the experience and roles in the school of the staff who share the teaching of the units and from their involvement in regular meetings of the GNVQ/AVCE team. The details of the teaching of the course are agreed at departmental level, however, in a largely informal way. The result is an insufficient consistency of style in organising portfolios or in providing feedback on students' work. The careers service makes a valuable contribution to some units.

## VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

343. The focus was on art and design, but graphics art and GNVQ (Intermediate) art and design were also sampled. In graphics art, GCE A-level examination results were well above average in 2001: all four candidates gained either a grade A or B. On the GNVQ Intermediate course in 2001 all eight students passed: just one student achieved a merit grade and none a distinction. There has been a significant increase over the last two years in the number of candidates taking the GCE A-level graphics course – up from four last year to 18 this year.
344. The one graphics lesson observed in Year 12 was of high quality. Students' attainment was above average, showing a solid degree of independence in their work and a substantial body of research work in their visual diaries. The teacher made excellent use of his own work as a professional graphic designer to stimulate effective discussion. Lesson organisation and planning were very thorough. Learning objectives were clearly stated and understood by the students.

### Art

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

#### Strengths:

- examination results were well above average in both 2000 and (especially) 2001.
- results are within the top quarter obtained in schools in the country.
- teaching is very good and students are encouraged to form their own ideas.
- the subject is led and managed well.

#### Areas for improvement:

- students work only with traditional materials and media.
- the limited use of modern technology and little vocational orientation.

345. The GCE A-level examination results in 2000 and 2001 showed a significant improvement over results in previous years. In both years they were well above average. In 2001 all four students who took the examination achieved the top grades (A or B). Most of the students who embarked on the course completed it in 2001. Students make good progress in this subject and achieve well.
346. Although very close to the start of their course, Year 12 students have a sound level of attainment and already show strong enthusiasm for their work. They work hard to improve their basic skills in drawing and painting, using a variety of different media and materials. Some have acquired new skills in printmaking to a reasonable standard. Most demonstrate the capacity to think and learn for themselves and to work with some degree of independence, when carrying out their initial research. Their ability to organise their work, to develop ideas and to take them to a satisfactory conclusion is improving steadily.

347. In Year 13, students generally work with great assurance and self-confidence. They have learned to rely heavily on their own views of the world around them as potential subject matter for exploration and investigation through art activities. Some experiment with new techniques by, for example, combining paint with plaster of Paris. This has arisen as a direct consequence of their exposure to the work of the American artist, Jasper Johns. Students are encouraged to draw widely on both historical and contemporary contexts. At present, most students tend to work with such traditional fine art materials as watercolour and oil paints. There is little resort to the potential of such technology as photographic or computer-generated images as a means of communicating their ideas to others.
348. Teaching is very good. Lessons are well structured. Students have access to a wide range of traditional media and materials. Teachers are well prepared. They encourage students to work independently, carry out research and develop their own ideas in an informed way. At regular intervals students are obliged to discuss their work with other members of the group and indicate how ideas might be developed.
349. This emphasis on oral communication is reinforced through written tasks that provide students with ample opportunity to achieve credit for the key skill of communication. Students are asked, for example, to write about the lives and work of artists, craftspeople and designers from a historical and contemporary perspective. Although individual students are largely responsible for determining the pace at which they work, teachers are always on hand to ensure that ideas are moved forward in a coherent fashion. Students are discouraged from working mechanically or repetitively to produce poorly researched final objects.
350. There is good interaction between teachers and students and much assessment is carried out on an informal basis, involving one-to-one discussion. Insufficient attention is, however, paid to the need for a formal process of assessment towards a written record, as a means of underpinning a full analysis of students' attainments and progress.
351. Students have a very positive approach to their studies. They are keen to develop their ideas. They apply themselves conscientiously to the task of acquiring appropriate skills, understanding and knowledge. Their visual diaries record clearly both initial research ideas and independence of thought. Many students confidently carry out independent research. They make substantial use of books as a source of relevant material, but not enough use of computers and ICT generally.
352. The department is managed and organised well. Students are encouraged to explore the work of artists, craftspeople and designers from their own and other cultures. They visit galleries in Liverpool and London on a regular basis, have travelled to New York and attend life drawing classes at a local college of art. The vocational, work-related perspective on art and design is underexploited. Overall, however, the department provides a fine art education for its students.

## **HUMANITIES**

353. The main focus was on geography and history, but law and psychology were also sampled. Both the last two subjects are taught by distance-learning materials and methods, purchased from an external provider. Film Studies has also been offered in the past through this system. Twice-weekly sessions are provided by video-conferencing facilities or (on three or four occasions each year) by face-to-face contact with a tutor. The courses are based on carefully organised and well-presented materials, which include worksheets and assignments.
354. GCE A-level results in law are above average: all five candidates in 2000 achieved a pass at grade D or above and two students gained grade A. A similar pattern was repeated in 2001. Results in psychology were below average in both years, individual results in 2001 ranging from grade C at best to two out of five students failing to reach grade E.
355. Students show very positive and mature attitudes to this method of teaching and learning. The level of concentration is high and intense. The overall level of attainment in the three lessons seen in law and psychology was broadly average overall. Its best feature is the very disciplined way in which students build up information and concepts. The quality of oral exploration of topics is reasonably searching, but – inevitably because of the medium – rather laboured. Work in Year 13 shows an increased

sophistication and depth over that in Year 12. The teaching on these courses is good and challenges students to think and plan carefully. Feedback on work is full and explicit.

## Geography

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

### Strengths:

- GCE A-level results in 2000 were above average.
- teaching is well planned and effective.
- thorough procedures for assessment, including marking of very high quality.
- the subject is led and organised very well.

### Areas for improvement:

- the low level of provision and use of ICT.

356. Overall, students' standard of work is broadly average. The GCE A-level examination results in 2000 were above average, showing a slight improvement since 1998. Students' progress was almost invariably good. Results declined in 2001, but all students who took the examination passed and few who started the course did not continue to the end. Results at AS-level were well above average and all eight students who took the examination passed. The department analyses examination results carefully and has implemented clear strategies to improve standards still further.
357. Students in Year 12 have an average knowledge of the subject and satisfactorily explain how landscapes and places change. They successfully extract information from such resource material as texts, maps, photographs and statistical data. In one group, for example, students used their knowledge of coastal features and evidence from maps to explain the shape of the coastline of North Yorkshire. All successfully described the coastal features and how they were formed, but some found difficulty in linking them to the underlying geology. They understand how the actions of people give places a distinctive character. Written work is generally well structured, but lacks precision and illustrative detail.
358. In Year 13, students achieve appropriate standards overall. They have a sound knowledge of the topic they are studying and use it to make informed decisions in answer to geographical questions. In one lesson, for example, students were asked to identify the best location for a high-technology company moving to their local city. They effectively used their skills in map interpretation, synthesising a range of information about the firm and the city to find the best location, and explained clearly to the rest of the group why it was chosen.
359. In another lesson students used their knowledge of mathematics, science and geography fieldwork methodology to carry out a survey, testing soil samples, to explain the differences in soils on the school's site. Students have little opportunity, however, to use ICT in lessons, as access to computers is difficult. As a result, few students use ICT effectively. They have a good knowledge of geographical terms and use them successfully in written work.
360. The quality of teaching is good overall. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject and use it effectively to plan carefully structured lessons with a range of relevant activities. They focus firmly on clear objectives and provide students with clearly illustrated explanations. A strength of the teaching is that students are expected not only to acquire knowledge and understanding, but also to use what they have learned in a new context.
361. Students are actively encouraged to participate in lessons individually, in pairs or in groups and to carry out their own research. In one lesson, for instance, students in Year 12 used information from a video about the movement of people from the countryside to Mexico City. From a series of well-structured exercises in pairs and groups, they gained clear insights into the reasons for changes in population and patterns of housing in the city, and reported their findings effectively to others.

362. Teachers maintain a good pace throughout lessons. Resources are of good quality, but teachers often do not exploit these or their own knowledge sufficiently, in order to pose incisive questions that challenge pupils enough. Marking is of good quality, particularly of the regular essays and examination questions that are set. Written comments clearly inform students how they may improve.
363. Students learn well. They are keen and well motivated, rapidly assimilating information from a range of sources to substantiate an argument. They ask pertinent questions, try hard to be accurate and are well focused throughout. They help one another well in groups or pairs and discuss the answers to geographical problems maturely. They persevere with lengthy pieces of work and take pride in the research and analysis required to complete a geographical enquiry. Students are very positive about the quality of education in this subject and the progress they make towards their targets.
364. The scheme of work is well written and detailed; it includes good opportunities for fieldwork. The procedures for assessment are very thorough. Students have regular information on how they can improve, owing to close monitoring of their progress, self-assessment and target-setting. Resources are of good quality and lessons are generally accommodated in specialist rooms. The subject is very well led and managed, and there is a clear strategy and commitment to improve standards still further.

## History

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

### Strengths:

- teachers set work that is appropriately demanding.
- teachers expect students to form and justify their own views and opinions.
- thorough marking, with detailed comments, helps students to make good progress.
- students have a mature and positive approach to their work.

### Areas for improvement:

- students' attainment in both AS and A2 examinations.
- students' selection of relevant material for inclusion in essays.
- students' knowledge, understanding and accurate use of correct terminology and vocabulary.
- Year 12 students' precision and accuracy in oral answers.

365. The GCE A-level examination results in 2001 were the lowest for the past four years. There has been a steady decline in overall attainment since 1998, and the results in 2001 (as in 2000) were well below the national average. The proportion of students who gain the highest grades (A or B) is significantly below average, as it has been for the past four years. Students tend to perform worse in history than in their other subjects. Most students perform a little worse than their previous GCSE results in the subject would suggest. Staff absences over a period of time, which resulted in students' work being unchecked and in work not being completed, seem to have been part of the reason for this low achievement. The results in the AS-level examination, which students took for the first time in 2001, were below the (provisional) national average.
366. Although only a few weeks into their courses, students currently taking the subject in Years 12 and 13 produce a standard of work that is in line with course requirements. Students in Year 13, for example, successfully select and synthesise information from a range of textual sources to build up their own views and opinions, which they then express clearly in essays. They understand well that historians do not always agree about past events and the highest attainers successfully evaluate the different views. Their work on sources indicates a good level of understanding of analysis and evaluation. Most students make good notes, but those of a minority are too brief to be of much use for revision. Oral responses in discussions are generally good and many argue a point convincingly. A minority, however, find it quite difficult to express themselves well in writing.
367. Students in Year 12 achieve the standard expected early in the course. They show at least sound knowledge and understanding of the events they study. They understand and explain the significance

of events and actions. Essays on the Russian Revolution of 1905, for instance, showed good understanding of long- and short-term causes and their relative importance, although some essays included much material that was not relevant to the question. In oral work some show a lack of confidence in their own ability, but many are hesitant and lack precision and clarity of expression.

368. Teaching is good overall and contributes much to students' good progress early on in their courses in Years 12 and 13. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, which they communicate effectively. The work set is appropriately challenging and matched well to the requirements of the examinations. Work is marked to examination criteria. The usually very detailed comments on marked work provide students with clear guidance and targets to improve their answers in the future. Students are set practice examination questions, both essays and source evaluation, early in the course. Students' notes are checked carefully by teachers and comments are made on whether or not they reach a satisfactory standard.
369. Teaching methods provide students with opportunities to research, form their own views and then justify them, either orally or in writing. In a lesson in Year 12, for example, students had prepared work on the origins of the Labour Party and were questioned on it orally by other students and their teacher. As part of work to improve the quality of their essay writing, students in Year 13 were asked to read and synthesise information from a large number of short, textual sources and to create a series of categories relating to the reasons for Stalin's becoming leader in Russia. This would then provide the basis for an essay.
370. The emphasis in all lessons is on students working as independent learners and not relying on their teachers simply giving them information. Teachers rightly emphasise and encourage students' oral contributions to lessons and give them good opportunities for oral work. In most lessons teachers insist on students using correct terminology accurately when they speak. Occasionally, however, students' errors are not corrected and they continue to use incorrect vocabulary.
371. Students learn well. They bring a very positive approach to their work and show interest, enthusiasm and a commitment to hard work. They are well prepared for lessons, completing homework as required. As a result, teachers can move on to new work effectively. They respond well to the challenges set by their teachers. Their files of work are generally efficiently organised and most are well presented. Many clearly spend much time writing up notes or word-processing them after lessons. Despite their lack of confidence, students in Year 12 participated in oral work quite willingly. A commitment to work and a wish to improve are leading to good progress.
372. Students' work as independent learners is restricted, however, by the poor provision in the library. The number and range of books available to them are much too small for them to read widely and acquire the depth of understanding needed to gain top grades. Their ability to make use of ICT and the Internet for research is restricted by the small number of up-to-date computers and a lack of Internet access in the sixth-form study area, although they do have access to the Internet elsewhere in the school.
373. The subject is well led and managed. The relatively new head of department has identified some of the reasons why achievement has been low in past years. He has begun to introduce some changes, such as the inclusion of a personal study as part of the examination in Years 12 and 13. It is anticipated that this will help to improve students' overall performance.

## **ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION**

374. The main focus of the inspection was on English, but modern foreign languages were also sampled. In the GCE A-level examinations in French and German in 2000 all five candidates passed, including three at the top A and B grades: the French results were well above average and those in German average. In 2001 the two candidates in French obtained grades C and E. There were no candidates in German. At AS-level in 2001 results were low: only two out of six students received classified grades in German. There were no candidates in French.

375. The standard of work of current students in German in Year 13 is average overall. In the lesson seen, students gave suitable oral presentations about the lives of different people, but relied too heavily on prompts. They asked each other questions and answered unexpected questions satisfactorily. They read and write about an appropriate range of topics – advertising, the press, the Euro and family relationships, and have acquired the relevant topic vocabulary. In addition, they cover satisfactorily a range of grammatical points: during the lesson, for example, the students learned how to recognise and use verbs in the past tense of the passive.
376. Students in Year 12 are generally confident in reading aloud texts in French. Their pronunciation ranges from good to satisfactory and is sound overall. In their written work they display a sound knowledge of different tenses. In German, students give short answers when, for example, describing a cartoon on the screen and working out what the characters would be likely to say. Their pronunciation is satisfactory. They consolidate knowledge of verbs and tenses and understand satisfactorily the lessons that are conducted almost entirely in the foreign language. Students demonstrated positive attitudes to the subjects and a willingness to learn.
377. Teaching is good. Teachers make good use of the foreign languages in class to challenge students. Lively questioning in the Year 12 German lesson ensured that all eight students were closely involved in oral work. In the Year 12 French lesson, the teacher engaged all four students in exploring different ways of using adverbs of time. Sentences involving the use of the passive arose three times during the Year 13 German lesson and the teacher used each opportunity to reinforce its use.

## English

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

### Strengths:

- results in 2000 were well above average and students achieved highly.
- students use their sound grasp of analysis effectively, when interpreting texts.
- teaching is good: lessons are well planned and effective.

### Areas for improvement:

- students have insufficient background knowledge of the subject.

378. The GCE A-level results in English literature in 2000 were well above average and students made good progress from their GCSE results two years earlier. All eight students passed the examination in 2001; three gained grade B. In the AS-level examination in 2001 all 12 students passed with a minimum grade of D; three students gained grades A or B.
379. The overall standard of work of current students is above average. Year 13 students achieve well and are making good progress from their earlier GCSE studies. In the lessons seen they responded well to the carefully structured teaching that required them to apply their knowledge of literary criticism. In one lesson, for example, they focused thoughtfully on key elements of characterisation in *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood and very confidently demonstrated their knowledge of the character of Offred. In another lesson students compared and contrasted sensitively the two versions of Emily Dickinson's poem, *Safe in the Alabaster Chambers*, of 1859 and 1861, discussing perceptively how language and form shaped meaning. Students' knowledge of literature was deepened through the process of comparing and contrasting the two versions of the poem.
380. Students in Year 12 are achieving as expected. They are keen to learn, able to accommodate different points of view when responding to literature and listen carefully to advice on how to make the most of their learning. In one lesson, for instance, students deepened their understanding of the conventions of the fairy-tale form and identified these features in *Pangs of Love* by Jane Gardam. The careful structuring of the lesson enabled students to make sound progress. In another Year 12 lesson, in which students continued their work on John Donne, some students had downloaded appropriate background information from the Internet.

381. Teaching is good overall, with the result that students make good progress. Lessons are well planned, with clear objectives explained at the beginning of each lesson. Students in Years 12 and 13 are encouraged to apply their existing knowledge of imagery and to be confident in the spelling of such terminology as “onomatopoeia”. Students’ written work is of a good standard. Their progress is enhanced by effective and relevant feedback on assignments. Students learn effectively and in discussions respond in a coherent and often lively way to different points of view. They are keen to learn and support one another, as they acquire and use new insights into literature.
382. The high degree of commitment from teachers ensures that all students make good use of time and resources. New courses have been well integrated into the department’s work. Students’ attainment and progress are carefully monitored.

### **KEY SKILLS**

383. Accreditation for communication, application of number and ICT is available to all students in Year 12. The programme is supported by initial, diagnostic testing and followed by lively, well-structured lessons from specialised staff. Evidence for portfolios is provided through the students’ work in other subjects. This work is monitored in the specialised lessons and in tutorials, using the students’ *Work Planner*. Both staff and students are new to this method of collecting evidence, but it provides a solid foundation for later success. The lessons observed were used to prepare students for demonstrating and recording the required skills: the school uses well-designed recording sheets for this purpose. Not all the specialist teachers involved have had the opportunity for appropriate training, but staff are familiarising themselves with the support that students require to validate their work.