

## INSPECTION REPORT

### OAKWOOD SCHOOL

Horley

LEA area: Surrey

Unique reference number: 125273

Headteacher: Mr Andrew Thompson

Reporting inspector: Anthony Shield  
3569

Dates of inspection: 26 – 30 November 2001

Inspection number: 199461

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 students:	11 - 16
Gender of students:	Mixed
School address:	Balcombe Road Horley Surrey
Postcode:	RH6 9AE
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr. P. Hawksley
Date of previous inspection:	March 1998

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
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9970	John Acaster	Lay inspector		Students' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
15268	John English	Team inspector	Mathematics	
23393	Brian Dower	Team inspector	English	
22691	Ray Woodhouse	Team inspector	Science	
20247	Roger Parry	Team inspector	Special Educational Needs Equal Opportunities	
15606	Christine Hill	Team inspector	Art	
31779	Vivian Harrison	Team inspector	Design and Technology	
18638	Chris Shaw	Team inspector	Information and Communication Technology	How good are the curricular opportunities offered to students?
4647	Judy Evans	Team inspector	Physical Education	
31705	John Mason	Team inspector	Music	
10759	Katherine Barrett	Team inspector	History	
27666	John Dockrell	Team inspector	Modern Foreign Languages English as an additional language	
12566	Barbara Jones	Team Inspector	Geography	
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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Oakwood School is a mixed comprehensive school for students aged 11 – 16, situated in Horley in the south-east of Surrey. The school's intake represents a good social and academic balance, although some students come from economically advantaged homes. At around seven per cent, the proportion of students eligible for free school meals is below average. There are 1506 students on roll, with slightly more boys than girls in most years. Numbers on roll have been increasing rapidly. Attainment on entry overall is average although the percentage of students with special educational needs is above average, with 381 students on the register of special educational needs; this represents around 29 per cent of the school roll. Most of these are for learning or behavioural difficulties. Forty-four of these have Statements of Special Educational Need. The school houses a small unit for students with dyslexia. The overwhelming majority of students are of white UK heritage, with relatively small numbers from other ethnic groups. Seventeen students have English as an additional language, and five of these are at an early stage of acquisition. In common with many schools in the area, the school experiences high levels of staff turnover, but was fully staffed at the time of the inspection.

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

This is a good school in which above average standards are promoted by good teaching. All students achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. The headteacher's strong leadership has successfully promoted a culture of high expectations and good levels of achievement. He is well supported by his governors and staff, who work with high levels of commitment to secure and maintain high standards in all areas of the school's work. The school provides good value for money.

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

- Improving standards at all levels are the consequence of good teaching which is enabling students to achieve well.
- The inspirational leadership of the headteacher is setting high expectations and giving a clear sense of direction and purpose.
- The commitment of staff and the very good quality of relationships throughout the school community is encouraging students to have positive and enthusiastic attitudes to learning.
- The broad curriculum, particularly in Years 10 and 11 which provides very well for the range of students' abilities and aptitudes.
- Very good procedures are in place for the monitoring of students' academic and personal development because of the effective work of heads of year and form tutors.
- The very good opportunities provided through extra-curricular activities for students to extend and enrich their learning.

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

- The rigour with which the school's policies are implemented and monitored to ensure greater consistency and assurance of quality throughout the school.
- The consistent use of information and communication technology in some subjects.
- The use of short-term learning targets to enable students to understand the progress they are making and how they might improve.

*The school has considerably more strengths than weaknesses. The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.*

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

Overall improvement since the last inspection in March 1998 has been good. The school has made strong improvements in GCSE performance, considerably faster than the national trend. Improvements in national test results at the end of Year 9 have been less marked but results are improving. The quality of

teaching has improved and in particular the percentage of good and better teaching is higher than at the time of the last inspection. Key issues from the previous inspection have been satisfactorily addressed, including the requirements to improve provision for information and communication technology (ICT) and special educational needs. Some aspects of the quality of the accommodation are better but more remains to be done.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved at the end of Year 11 based on average point scores in GCSE examinations.

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

\* similar schools are those with a similar proportion of students eligible for free school meals.

In 2001, the school's test results at the end of Year 9 were below average in English, and average in mathematics and science. In recent years results in mathematics have improved steadily, those in science have remained constant, while the results in English have varied from year to year. Despite the below average results in English, inspectors found no evidence of below average standards amongst these students. A number of English papers were submitted for re-marking and results were upgraded. Overall the performance in tests has held steady over recent years and the average points score for all subjects has not improved as fast as the national average.

The school's GCSE results of 57 per cent of students gaining five or more A\* to C grades in 2001 were above the national average. Although comparison with schools with a similar proportion of students eligible for free school meals suggests that achievement is below average, the achievement of students in relation to their prior attainment at the end of Year 9 was at least satisfactory. In addition, inspectors found very little evidence of any underachievement of students in GCSE courses. The percentage of students who achieved five or more GCSE grades A\* to G was also above average. Students of all levels of attainment make at least satisfactory progress through Years 10 and 11, and both boys and girls do equally well. Results at GCSE have been improving strongly and at a faster rate than the improving national trend.

Students in 2001 did not quite meet the challenging targets set for them by the school. Those set for 2002 are both challenging and realistic.

Standards in work seen in most subjects are above average overall, including in English and mathematics. In science standards are above average in Year 9, but only average in Year 11, in part, reflecting the lower entry standards of pupils at present in Years 10 and 11. Students make good progress through the school and their achievements are good, given that standards overall on entry are average and that by the time the students leave in Year 11, they are above average. Progress of the current Year 11 is less marked although most students are achieving at least satisfactorily.

## STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Most students are keen to learn and participate enthusiastically in lessons and extra-curricular activities.
Behaviour, in and out of	Good. Most students behave responsibly and sensibly in lessons and



classrooms	around the school. A few examples of less thoughtful behaviour were observed.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. The quality of relationships amongst the whole school community makes a strong contribution to the students' progress. Senior students act with maturity and take seriously the opportunities to take responsibility.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Figures for both authorised and unauthorised absence are similar to the national average.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching is good throughout the school, and has improved since the time of the previous inspection. Seven out of ten lessons observed were good or better, and little unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Teaching in English and mathematics is good throughout while science teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Teaching in other subjects is mostly good, but does vary from very good in drama, to satisfactory in information and communication technology, geography in Years 7 to 9 and music in Years 10 and 11.

High expectations, good relationships, good pace of learning and confident classroom management characterise much of the good teaching. Planning is usually effective in meeting the needs of all students, and students with special educational needs in particular are well supported and make good progress. The teaching of both literacy and numeracy is satisfactory. In almost all cases, the quality of learning matches the quality of teaching, helped by students' positive attitudes in lessons.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. The curriculum has very good breadth and balance, and very good provision is made in Years 10 and 11 for students of all abilities and aptitudes. The very good range of extra-curricular activities effectively enriches the curriculum.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Satisfactory. Although students make good progress as a result of good teaching, support in subjects is not always well focused because individual education plans are not sufficiently specific. Provision for students in the dyslexia cluster is very good.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	Good. The few students with English as an additional language quickly acquire the necessary skills.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. The school has planned its provision carefully across all subjects. Opportunities for social development are very good. A strong moral ethic underpins much of the school's work and cultural development is particularly encouraged through good opportunities in the arts. Opportunities for reflection on spiritual issues are satisfactory.

How well the school cares for its students	Very good. Child protection and welfare procedures are good, and the pastoral and academic support provided by tutors and heads of year is very effective. Assessment procedures are good and the school is increasing its use of assessment data to inform planning.
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The school works hard to involve parents and to consult them on issues affecting their children. It listens to their views and the recently established focus group is proving an effective forum for consultation.

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

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The energy and clarity of the headteacher's vision has ensured a strong sense of shared values and purpose. He is well supported by his senior team, and management at all levels is mostly effective in promoting high expectations and improving standards. Procedures to assure quality are not always so rigorously implemented.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. Governors are committed and hardworking and bring a wide range of experience and expertise to the school. Statutory requirements are met except in relation to collective worship.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The school's procedures for reviewing its performance are systematic and priorities identified in the school improvement plan are appropriate.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The budget is prudently managed, and planned with educational priorities in mind. Best value principles are applied whenever possible.

The match of teachers and support staff to the needs of the curriculum are good. Accommodation is just satisfactory overall, although limited in some areas as the school's roll has grown. The accommodation for drama and learning support remains inadequate and the playing fields and multi-play area are unusable at certain times in the year. Resources are satisfactory overall.

#### 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>• Students are expected to work hard and achieve their best</li> <li>• Leadership and management are very good and the school is very approachable and responsive</li> <li>• Teaching is good and students are making good progress</li> <li>• The very wide range of activities outside lessons</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A minority of parents considers their child does not get the right amount of homework</li> <li>• A small number of parents are concerned about standards of behaviour and the information they receive on progress.</li> </ul>

Inspectors agree with the positive comments made by parents about the school, and with the majority of parents who think that the amount of homework set is about right, that behaviour is generally good and that reports on progress are detailed and comprehensive.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

#### **The school's results and students' achievements**

1. Overall standards on entry the school in Year 7 are broadly in line with the national average although lower than the county average. The proportion of students with special educational needs is above average. An analysis of national test data on entry and of the county screening scores indicates that attainment on entry to the school has been improving and the current Years 7, 8 and 9 had higher attainment levels on entry than those students in Years 10 and 11. The average National Curriculum level of the current Year 11 on entry was 3.84, while that of the current Year 7 is 4.11.
2. In national tests taken at the end of Year 9 in 2001, students' performance in English was below average and well below the average for schools with a similar proportion of students eligible for free school meals. When measuring the percentage of students achieving Level 5, students' performance was close to the national average. In mathematics, students' results were in line with the national average although below the average for similar schools. In science, results were around average and well below the average for similar schools. There is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. Results in English have varied from year to year, but have generally been above or in some years well above average. This variation in the results has given the school some concern, as its perception is that standards have at least held steady, in line with standards in both mathematics and science. A number of English scripts were returned for re-marking after the 2001 results, and most were up-graded. Inspectors judge standards in English in Years 7 to 9 to be above average and find no evidence of declining standards, or of below average standards in the current Year 10. Overall standards in English, mathematics and science have held steady since the last inspection, and have not risen as fast as the rising national trend.
3. At the end of Year 11, the proportion of students gaining five or more A\* to C grades in 2001 was 57 per cent, above the national average and in line with the average for similar schools. The proportion of students gaining five or more A\* to G grades was also above average. The average total points GCSE score per student in 2001 was 41.1, above the national average of 39.1, but below the average for similar schools. Although this suggests some underachievement in GCSE results, inspectors found no significant levels of underachievement amongst students currently following GCSE courses. Based on an average of the three years 1998 - 2000, both boys' and girls' results have been above the national average for boys and girls, and there are no significant differences between the achievements of boys and girls. The rising trend has been faster than the rising national trend.
4. Most students taking GCSE in 2001 achieved at least satisfactorily, and progress based on their attainment in Year 9 tests in 1999, was average. Results in most subjects were above the national average for the percentage of students achieving an A\* to C grade. In geography, drama and in the religious education short course, they were well above. Results in mathematics, French and German were close to the national average. In music, results were below average but the numbers taking the examination are too small for comparisons to be statistically valid. GNVQ results in construction and the built environment, leisure and tourism, and health and social care indicate average standards. In English, mathematics and science, the performance of boys was consistently above the average for boys nationally. This was also the case in geography. The success of boys in particular is a key factor in the rising trend of GCSE results over the last five years.
5. The ambitious GCSE targets set for 2001 were not quite met, except in relation to the percentage of students achieving at least one or more grade A\* to G. Targets set for 2002 are both realistic and challenging.

6. In work seen during the inspection at the end of Year 9 and Year 11, standards overall are above average, in line with recent GCSE results but higher than recent tests at the end of Year 9 would suggest. This is partly because of an improving ability profile of students in the school, but also because standards are improving as a consequence of the improving quality of teaching. Most students' achievements are good given their prior attainment on entry and most students make good progress through the school.
7. Students with special educational needs make good progress in relation to prior attainment and difficulties on entry. The majority has moderate learning and/or emotional and behavioural difficulties. A smaller number has a physical impairment such as hearing or sight. Some are travellers and others refugees. All these students take national tests towards the end of Year 9, and several subjects for GCSE, GNVQ and other accredited courses at the end of Year 11. They contribute to the rising trend of success in the school results.
8. Students with statements of special educational need for dyslexia enter the school with reading ages, spelling ages, and comprehension of written communication well below average. Frequently their self-esteem is low because of a sense of failure. Through the cluster, students improve their reading and spelling significantly, and they write with increasing technical accuracy as they progress through each year. Their self-esteem, confidence and ability to learn independently increase enormously as a consequence. Students complete national tests in Year 9 and take several subjects for GCSE at the end of Year 11. Given their very low levels of reading, writing and spelling on entry they make very good progress by the time they leave the school. For example, students use an interactive computer program with audio prompts to correct and improve their spellings. This helps older students to complete GCSE coursework with accurate spelling.
9. There is no significant variation in the progress made by different groups of students. There are a small number of students with English as an additional language. They quickly acquire the necessary language skills and make good progress. Students from ethnic minorities and the children of travellers are well supported and make at least satisfactory progress. Students of higher attainment generally make as good progress as others in the school. The school has worked hard to provide them with extended opportunities and more challenging activities. However there are some missed opportunities in lessons, particular when work is not planned specifically to meet their needs. Nevertheless the school is increasingly focused on the need to challenge more students to achieve the highest grades at GCSE, and has some effective strategies in place.
10. In work seen in English during the inspection, standards were above average at the end of Year 9, higher than the 2001 Year 9 national test results would suggest, and more in line with results over the last few years. Given their attainment on entry, students make good progress and achieve well through Years 7 to 9. This good progress is maintained through Years 10 and 11, where standards are also above average.
11. Standards of literacy throughout the school are generally good. Students are confident and fluent when speaking and have the reading ability to understand the range of texts they meet in all subject areas. They listen well and can concentrate for extended periods of time. Most are able to adapt their writing to the varied demands of the curriculum but there are students who struggle with technical accuracy in some subjects.
12. In work seen in mathematics, standards are above average at the end of Years 9 and 11. Students' achievements in relation to their prior attainment are good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Attainment is above average in most aspects of mathematics although there are weaknesses in the students' ability to solve problems.
13. Overall standards of numeracy are in line with national expectations. Numerical skills support the progress of high attaining students in mathematics and other areas of the curriculum. For middle and low attaining some are hindered by a lack of confidence in using multiplication tables, understanding of the decimal system, and of strategies to work out number problems in their heads.

14. Standards in science are above average in Year 9 and average in Year 11. Pupils are making good progress in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory progress in Years 10 and 11. This reflects the improving quality of teaching particularly in Years 7 to 9 and the ability profile of the current Year 11. Students have a good grasp of scientific principles and are learning to apply them in a range of contexts.
15. In other subjects, standards are above average in history, art and design, physical education (PE) and religious education (RE) at the end of Years 9 and 11, in information and communication technology (ICT), French and German at the end of Year 9, and in geography at the end of Year 11. In drama they are well above average in Year 11 and above average in Year 9. In all other subjects, standards are average. Most students' achievements are good in all subjects throughout the school, and in art, students achieve very well in Years 7 to 9. Only in, geography in Years 7 to 9, and French, German, music and ICT in Years 10 and 11 is achievement less than good. However it remains at least satisfactory in these subjects. In drama students achieve very well in Years 10 and 11.

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

16. All students, including those with special educational needs and from ethnic minority groups, have very good attitudes towards their school. Most find their work enjoyable, with about the right level of challenge and difficulty. Parents confirm this by remarking on an ethos of achievement, which permeates the school. Students are impressed by the range of activities available outside lessons. They are rueful when these clash, or when work pressures cause them to have to be missed. They very much appreciate the very good relationships generally in the school, and the friendly atmosphere these create. Some students are less positive about the overcrowded corridor areas and the problems caused by the short lunchtime. Although some boys in Year 11 show some less positive attitudes to school, overall these very positive attitudes to learning are shared by all groups in the school.
17. Behaviour overall within the school continues to be good. In most lessons students are very well motivated and show purposeful attention. They apply themselves readily to what is expected and most show good levels of concentration. Occasionally attitudes and behaviour are excellent. This was seen, for example, in a history lesson with a top set in Year 9, where examination of the Victorian workhouse system caused students to read dense source material rapidly, extract factual information to support their opinions, culminating eventually in presenting splendid and confident speeches. Similar skills of selection and analysis were seen to very good effect in a Year 11 English lesson taken by a newly qualified teacher. Unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour shown by a minority of students sometimes disrupts the pace and quality of learning even when teaching is satisfactory. In Year 7, some classes are noisy and immature. Behaviour around school at break times and lunch is generally orderly and sociable. Students are friendly and polite. No bullying was observed during the inspection, and students report that bullying is not a significant problem, being very promptly and effectively addressed. The level of temporary exclusions is reasonable given the size of the school. Considerable care is exercised before such action is taken, and permanent exclusions are uncommon.
18. The quality of personal development and relationships has improved since the previous inspection and is now very good. Students relate very well to each other and to staff. Clear leadership and concerned management shown from the top translate into a strong ethos of mutual respect. Both teaching and non-teaching staff provide very good role models, and there is a supportive climate for the students' personal development. Students generally co-operate well together. Most students have a good understanding of the impact of their actions on others and show appropriate respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others. Through various opportunities provided, for example the mentoring of younger students by those in Year 11, and the arrangements for tutor group representatives meeting with their head of year, students show good qualities of initiative and responsibility. This is particularly well developed in the many extra-curricular events available. This includes many types of sporting activity, including the very good course for junior sports leaders, which draws out leadership, management and communication skills. Similar qualities are developed in activities such as the Duke of Edinburgh's award and the army cadet force. Within

school, the many prefects have substantial duties. Students on the year and school councils take their responsibilities seriously, testing opinion by questionnaires among the student body, organising events and making choices involving the spending of money.

19. Attendance is satisfactory, with levels, which are similar to the national average. Punctuality is generally good.

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

20. The quality of teaching is good throughout the school, and has improved since the time of the previous inspection. Very little unsatisfactory teaching was observed during the inspection, and seven out of ten lessons are good or better. Nearly one in four lessons was judged very good or excellent.
21. The overall quality of teaching in English, mathematics and science is good, although science teaching in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. This is leading to good learning in these core subjects, and a strong foundation for good progress in other subjects. However, some unsatisfactory teaching remains in occasional lessons in both mathematics and science. Teaching in other subjects is at least satisfactory, and is good in art and design, design technology, history, modern foreign languages, physical education and religious education, geography in Years 10 and 11 and music in Years 7 to 9. It is very good in drama. Teaching is satisfactory in information and communication technology, geography (Years 7 to 9) and music (Years 10 and 11).
22. Good teaching is characterised by the teachers' secure subject knowledge and understanding, high expectations of what all students will achieve, good relationships and confident classroom management. In these lessons students often make rapid gains in skills, knowledge and subject understanding. Typical of a number of very good lessons observed was a Year 8 history lesson in which students were studying the Reformation in England. Previous learning was summarised at the beginning of the lesson alongside a clear statement of today's lesson objective. Students were challenged to think and probe deeply into understanding the issues through effective use of questions. Very good pace was maintained throughout and the students kept on task until the end of the lesson. The teacher's lively and sometimes amusing explanations ensured their full attention. The student's understanding was carefully monitored and as a consequence they all made very good progress.
23. Another very good lesson observed was a Year 10 physical education lesson in which students were applying existing defensive skills and strategies within a basketball game. The students were highly motivated by the enthusiasm and energy of the teacher who provided an excellent role model. He was a knowledgeable specialist, confident in teaching advanced tactics and able to answer questions with authority. Very good management and organisation of the learning kept the students on task. Good co-operative skills were encouraged and feedback on the students' performance was effective in analysing how to improve further. Praise was used appropriately to encourage and celebrate success. Students made very good progress as a result of the very effective teaching.
24. Some students lack confidence in their learning and are easily discouraged when things go wrong. The most effective teaching offers encouragement but also raises expectations of what might be achieved. A particularly good example of this was observed in a Year 10 art lesson when students were working on their own studies based on still lives. Despite some unsatisfactory attitudes at the very beginning of the lesson, effective use of praise encouraged and promoted the students' self-esteem, and by the end of the lesson all students had made very good progress in their drawings. The teacher's skilful management of behaviour and high expectations ensured successful learning.
25. Teaching is particularly successful where the learning is made relevant by reference to everyday applications or local relevance. A number of good examples in design and technology were seen during the inspection. Students in a Year 9 electronics lesson were asked to assemble and test

an electronic timer. They responded very positively to the practical and relevant nature of the task. In history good use is made of local sites to enhance interest. Low attaining students in a Year 11 French lesson, made progress because they were challenged to learn language relevant to their needs on holiday in France.

26. The teaching of literacy is satisfactory. A number of subjects are adopting good practice in taking account of students' literacy needs in their approach to their teaching. Good use is made of word displays and technical vocabulary in design technology and in religious education, where discussion is a central feature of classroom work. Original writing is undertaken in science as part of coursework investigations and there is good use of supporting texts. Teachers of modern foreign languages make effective use of a framework for writing when they encourage students to write at length. However in a few subjects, the teaching of literacy is neglected, and insufficient opportunities are given for students to develop different kinds of writing and to extend their reading through subject specific texts. The school must now ensure that the work, which has been done on developing cross-curricular provision is implemented consistently by all staff.
27. The teaching of numeracy is also satisfactory and the school is beginning to develop a coherent strategy across all subjects. Good examples were observed in geography where students accurately use a variety of graphical representations of data, and in art where students use their knowledge of reflective symmetry to enhance their creative work. In science a class of Year 7 students discuss the interpretation of graphs showing the different ways in which related measurable quantities vary. In design technology, students make accurate measurements and draw to an acceptable standard when designing and making.
28. The teachers' use of ICT in lessons to support learning across all subjects is not consistently good. While confident and effective use is made in design and technology, art, modern foreign languages and business studies, other subjects do not plan for its use with the same consistency.
29. Good class teaching by subject teachers effectively promotes the progress of students with special educational needs, as it does for other students. In lessons where teachers take full account of the special needs of students their learning is most effective. For example, in a Year 11 science lesson, a low ability class revised their understanding of food chains, the atmosphere and pollution. The teacher quickly established a vigorous working mode with the students, and dealt with immature comments easily. A very high quality worksheet was adapted for different levels of ability within the class so all students worked well, reinforcing key facts by research and writing. However such outstanding planning is not consistently seen. For example, in a Year 7 ICT lesson (a third of the class with special educational needs), the teacher did not identify what they should learn in the lesson on databases. A worksheet supplied the same tasks for all students irrespective of ability.
30. Students' individual education plans do not specify their learning targets sharply enough for all subject teachers to interpret them clearly in their lesson planning. In addition, guidance for teachers on the range of approaches for teaching different special needs could be more explicit and helpful. In lessons where additional staffing is provided it is used inconsistently. Learning support teachers attached to faculties are often well briefed in the knowledge and content of lessons. In a Year 7 science lesson the support teacher worked successfully with a number of students with special educational needs so that they completed a practical test to show acid being neutralised by an alkali. Teaching assistants are not always well deployed when teachers do not plan their support for students' learning. Students with special educational needs withdrawn from class for individual teaching make good progress. For example, a Year 10 student with hearing impairment is achieving more in mathematics because he can discuss his understanding individually with his support teacher. When he grasps a process he speedily finds solutions to problems he is set.
31. Specialist teaching of small groups of students with dyslexia in the cluster is excellent. The teacher has a deep understanding of the needs of students with dyslexia and is very skilful in providing for their learning. Students learn very effectively in intensive literacy lessons because they are active, alert and prepared to accept challenging questions. For example, in a Year 9

lesson observed, their spelling improved through constant practice, but it is made fun through a game. The teacher selected words that students have difficulty with in lessons so that learning across the curriculum is reinforced. Students enjoy the competitive edge, and rapid pace of these intensive sessions. They receive constant feedback on their progress so they know how well they are succeeding, and where they need to improve. When a student misspells a word the teacher just says, "Put a line through that", and the word card is put back in the pack of cards for the next session. Learning is reinforced through self-assessment, and in the small group there is friendly rivalry to increase their success with spelling. Students make effective use of ICT through an interactive programme and increase their independent learning. They also learn to use syllables and vowels to aid their spelling. Teachers and assistants support students in lessons very effectively by checking they can start tasks. In a Year 9 textile lesson two students completed an appliqué design using felt. It involved following written instructions, drawing and labelling a design, and using the skill of stab stitching. The students concentrated hard on the task after some initial guidance.

32. The challenge for the school is to lever up the quality of teaching to that of the best, and to ensure more consistently good and very good teaching throughout the school. There are a number of factors, which are characteristic of satisfactory and the sometimes unsatisfactory teaching. These include the lack of planning to ensure challenge for students of all prior attainment, ensuring that learning objectives are clear and explicit, and the quality of marking and target setting to enable students to know how to improve. The use of information and communication technology across all subjects is not consistently well developed. In addition, satisfactory teaching is often characterised by the lack of opportunities for students to exercise some responsibility and independence in the way in which they tackle their learning. Sometimes this is the result of the teacher seeking to control and over-direct the learning because of concerns about the students' behaviour and motivation.
33. The quality of marking is satisfactory, but varies both within and between subjects. In English and religious education, marking is regular and conscientiously carried out, but does not always give enough guidance on how the individual student should improve. In both mathematics and science, the quality varies. In French and German, teachers assess students' work regularly, but do not consistently set targets or relate progress to National Curriculum. In general, teachers' comments are supportive and encouraging but sometimes miss opportunities for challenging the students to improve further. Praise and recognition for sustained effort need to be balanced by setting fresh demands. The school's good work in target setting, particularly for those students on GCSE courses, should now be extended to the level at which students know the next learning step.
34. Planning is mostly well done and learning builds on prior attainment in a logical and planned sequence. Schemes of work are carefully considered. In English, extension work is planned for high attaining students and activities often modified to ensure that they are appropriate for lower attainers. However planning in some subjects is not always effective in meeting the needs of all students, and more should be done to plan lesson activities and learning outcomes for different levels of prior attainment. This leads to a lack of challenge for some students, most noticeably though not exclusively, higher attaining students, particularly in French, German, art and design and information and communication technology. On the other hand, in one Year 7 ICT lesson observed on databases, a challenging task was set for all students, but some struggled to come to terms with it. The lack of planning for students' individual needs meant that not all students approached the task logically and lower attaining students in particular failed to make the progress they should. On the other hand, in art, while good support is offered to lower attaining students, the lack of planning for higher attainers means that their progress is sometimes more limited. While the school is beginning to make good provision for its gifted and talented students in a number of subjects, there is still a need to plan challenging activities in lessons for these students.
35. Teaching for students with English as an additional language (EAL) is good. Students' learning requirements are generally well known and the quality of provision is good. Students are well supported through the county support service and within school.



36. In almost all cases, the quality of learning in lessons matches the quality of teaching, helped by students' positive attitudes in lessons. Overwhelmingly students demonstrate good attitudes to learning. In general, all students work and try hard, concentrating and listening well, and there are no significant differences in the progress made in lessons between different groups of students. While students in Years 10 and 11 have a growing self-awareness of their progress, particularly as they work towards their target GCSE grades, students in Years 7 to 9 are less aware of how they are progressing.

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

37. The breadth, balance and relevance of the whole curriculum are very good. In Years 7 to 9 students study the full range of National Curriculum subjects, plus drama. Most students study two languages and ICT is taught as a discrete subject.
38. In Years 10 and 11 most students take the double science GCSE examination and at least one foreign language. In addition to the statutory curriculum the school also offers GCSE courses in business studies, drama, media studies and statistics and GNVQ courses in vocational subjects. The vocational studies programme is wide ranging and consists of leisure and tourism, health and social care, engineering and construction and the built environment. The very flexible approach for students in Years 10 and 11 means students can choose from a wide range of options to suit their needs. In addition to the regular work experience programme, the school also offers students the option of having their lessons wholly or partly in the workplace. This is very much appreciated by the participants and means that they continue to receive an education from which they might otherwise have been excluded. The range of design and technology options, the commitment of teachers and the participation of local firms play an important part in this very good provision.
39. Curricular provision in subjects is at least satisfactory and mostly good. Art and religious education are particularly strong. In design and technology the full range of subject options in Years 10 and 11 is available, and the food and textiles areas are particularly strong.
40. The school has developed an effective framework to enable all members of staff to make the teaching of literacy skills a part of their routine classroom practice. A policy for cross-curricular provision is in place and members of staff have received initial training on the strategies to be adopted. A steering group has been formed, with representation from all subjects to disseminate good practice and coordinate and monitor the implementation of the strategy. Systems have been agreed for monitoring the effectiveness of provision and will involve tracking the literacy skills of small groups of students, tutor oversight of how their students are improving and evaluation of progress at the steering group's meetings. The learning resource centre contributes well to improving students' literacy skills.
41. The mathematics department has made a good start to rectify any shortcomings in standards of students' numeracy on entry in Year 7, through the implementation of the Key Stage 3 strategy. There has also been some good training for all the staff towards developing a strategy for improving numeracy across the curriculum. Staff in other departments have a growing awareness of their potential contribution to numeracy, and have a designated member of the mathematics staff to advise them. It is too early to see any impact from this work, and the school has yet to plan for the monitoring and developing of the support for numeracy development across the curriculum, but a good start has been made. In tutor time in the lower school there is a regular number challenge, which encourages students to practise their number skills.
42. All students with special educational needs follow an appropriate curriculum. Those older students who cannot cope with the full range of academic courses are offered alternative programmes that link work experience with school studies. For example, a Year 11 student is gaining experience of a tyre fitting business, while being assessed for the certificate of competence in such aspects as working with clients and staff. Weekly visits by a teacher provide opportunities for GCSE subject progress to be checked, and for homework to be set. The student reports that he is now more motivated to succeed in his studies than when he was attending formal classes at school. A homework club helps students with special needs to understand their tasks more clearly. They are

given helpful and supportive guidance from teaching staff. Some higher attaining Year 10 students have been trained to support Year 7 students who have difficulties with reading in a paired reading scheme.

43. The school's provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is good. Specialist staff teach the programme which includes a good programme of sex education, drugs awareness and citizenship. Careers and vocational programmes are integrated and good use is made of external agencies and visiting speakers.
44. A well-designed and comprehensive careers education programme provides for students from Year 8 onwards. Good opportunities to learn about careers, to discuss personal choices and to consider further education options are provided. Students in Years 11 have an interview with the local careers education service and students in Years 9 and 10 may have one if they wish. The school involves parents who meet with tutors to discuss examination options and post 16 choices.
45. The provision for extra-curricular activities is very good. There is wide participation and enthusiasm for a host of after-school activities. These include sports, art, music, drama, maths challenge, chess and engineering. The homework club is popular and much appreciated.
46. All departments plan and teach an inclusive curriculum, designed to encourage and stimulate students of all levels of ability and background. In those subjects where girls traditionally out-perform boys, staff are making an effort to address this imbalance. The art department, for instance, runs a club designed specifically to appeal to the artistic imagination of boys. The provision for high attaining and gifted or talented students in Year 9 is very good and the pilot scheme is being extended to Year 8. The school identifies these students through parental consultation, teacher and form tutor advice, feeder school information and test results. Students are then provided with an individual education plan with challenging targets in chosen areas and extra curricular activities such as the Latin club. The school involves the students themselves in the whole of this process. Students themselves are extremely enthusiastic and this is beginning to raise the expectations of all students.
47. Students with dyslexia participate in the full curriculum of the school, although some adjustment is made for older students. They reduce their option choice by one subject. This provides time for work on other subjects. They use the cluster base and specialist teacher as a resource. An intensive literacy scheme is an important part of the teaching provision. It is a feature for students of all ages. Older students do course work and use the computers in the base room. They continue to receive intensive literacy teaching to support their subject work. A homework club, run for four sessions each week, is popular and most helpful for organising students with their tasks, and providing support so they can work independently.
48. The local community and industries make a good contribution to students' learning through the support they give to the work experience and work placement programmes. Some local employers are involved in a mentoring scheme through work-shadowing. The school links very well with local primary schools. Some art students in Years 7 to 9, for example, are involved with a maths project with Year 6 in a local primary school. Links with other secondary schools, further education colleges and universities are also good.
49. The school has very good links with its local community, maintaining a high profile. The local paper runs a regular page featuring the school. Students frequently gain experience by taking part in events, both civic and private. The steel band and the school choir are particularly appreciated at many different functions, whether in residential homes or in the town centre. The impact of these links on students' attainment and progress is considerable.
50. During the past year pupils have helped to celebrate the local links with France arising out of war service. Students submitted many imaginative designs for gates to the war memorial. A winning entry was selected from the school's entries and the project was completed in a notable public ceremony. In the summer students visited the twinned town of Vimy, toured the battlefields and visited Paris. Another civic project has been the establishment of a skate park. A group of

students, 'G Force', initiated this amenity, planning and lobbying sufficiently cogently to persuade the local councils to provide the necessary money. Councillors speak very well of students' assistance to the town.

51. The school welcomes many sections of the community within its campus. The sports facilities are very well used, both by individuals and by teams of all ages associated with the local football club. Pupils present seasonal entertainments to which particular community groups are specially invited. Students from other schools visit on Saturdays to join in music-making.
52. The school uses a rich range of contacts in the area to further pupils' experiences. This is particularly valuable as regards careers experience and in obtaining vocational qualifications. In the latter, for instance, pupils plan and manage a range of events using real life situations, such as in social care for a senior citizens' party. They may also use nearby industries, such as hotels or Gatwick airport, to research for practical tourism projects in redesign or refurbishment. Practical building work can be provided at such stimulating places as Gatwick Zoo. Most students obtain the type of work experience they seek through the school's network of local contacts. A well-enjoyed special tradition is the holding of an annual 'Anything You Can Do' day. In this bit of serious fun students are challenged to guess, by asking questions, the occupation to which a variety of people belong, who may not conform at all to the usual stereotype. Various businesses have close sponsorship links, which may include monitoring selected students. An imaginative multi-faceted pilot project supported by the health authority promotes awareness of mental health through the personal, social and health education curriculum, the provision of student counselling and wider specialist advice concerning emotional well-being, and the promotion of the town's youth club facilities.
53. The governors are very supportive of the curriculum and have made a valuable contribution through a range of committees. Each faculty has a link governor who takes a close interest in developments. The curriculum committee monitors changes closely and critically and plays an important part in ensuring that national initiatives such as the literary strategy are implemented effectively. Since the last inspection the school has continued to develop the curriculum well, responding rapidly to local needs as well as national demands.
54. The school practises its belief in "making the difference" by a strong focus on social inclusion and ensuring good access and opportunity for all students. One week annually is devoted to issues of equal opportunity, and in Year 9 for example, students are given time to explore the range of curricular options which best match their aptitudes and interests. Debates on issues such as gender balance, ensure that both students and staff are kept alert to the importance of ensuring equality. The school monitors that its courses appeal to both boys and girls, and has been successful in improving boys' achievement. The school is inclusive and the learning support department skilfully helps those students whose education has been interrupted to settle into its routines, in particular students from travelling families, refugees, and those with medical conditions. Careful consideration has been given to the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 to promote a relevant and a more vocational dimension for some students. By linking work experience and tutoring in the work place the school successfully provides the motivation these students need to continue with their studies and complete examination courses. Good provision is also made through college link courses. Access has been improved to most parts of the school premises for physical disabled students.
55. Overall provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is good, as it was at the time of the last inspection. The school continues to consider these aspects of the curriculum to be an important element of school life, in line with its aims of developing responsible and caring individuals who value and respect all. A co-ordinator has been appointed and audits have highlighted the contribution that departments can make. However, the execution of these ideas has not been monitored and implementation has been patchy, with practice ranging from very good to satisfactory.
56. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. A few departments make a positive contribution. The religious education syllabus explores the quest of man for meaning, purpose and identity.

Students in history reflect on the holocaust and human dignity. In other subjects, such as science, opportunities for reflection are missed when for example, students study the solar system or birth. A programme of formal assemblies for one year group each day has a spiritual dimension; there is a prayer and a little time for quiet thought. This does not happen in form time during the rest of the week. As at the time of the last inspection, the statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship is not met, although the size of the hall makes this particularly difficult to provide. However, some aspects of school life enhance the spiritual experience. A remembrance garden provides an oasis of silence. The school's reaction to the events of September 11 in New York show an awareness of the importance of promoting the students' capacity to respond to something beyond themselves.

57. Students' moral education is good. Many subjects effectively support considerations of right and wrong. The personal, social and health education programme explores a range of issues such as racism and students in religious education debate a number of moral dilemmas such as euthanasia. Good and evil in pre-war Germany is directly explored in history lessons. Drama students consider the duty to care for animals. Whole school polices reinforce correct conduct. The behaviour management framework highlights right and wrong attitudes and behaviour. Teachers, on a daily basis, set a fine example and reinforce moral values by their attitudes and responses. For example, they carefully explain why it is important to look after books and return them in good order. Clear values that encourage students to consider others are promoted. Consequently students organise and support a large number of charities, exemplified by the continued sponsorship of two Third World children. A noteworthy aspect of the school's provision for moral development is the active involvement of the students as prefects, mentors and members of the school council.
58. Participation in these activities also enhances social development, which is very good, and a strength of the school. For example, the school council is involved in the decision-making process and matters discussed are substantive and difficult. A range of residential visits cement good relationships. There are many opportunities to collaborate in music, drama and sport where students react as part of a group and learn to rely on each other. Co-operative work in pairs or small groups is a feature of many lessons. Extensive extra-curricular activities help students to achieve success in a variety of social settings, thereby enhancing self-esteem and facilitating personal development. Form tutors often negotiate individual targets that have a social dimension and students have access to mentors and a counselling service to help them overcome difficulties. The school tries very hard to successfully create the conditions that allow students to develop social awareness and skills, with good relationships between staff and students a key aspect of this provision.
59. The development of cultural awareness is good. A wide range of trips and visits contribute to broadening cultural horizons as does the extensive extra curricula and enrichment programme. The Duke of Edinburgh scheme, work experience and industrial mentors provides opportunities to be involved with the local community. The school participates in the harvest festival but links with the local churches are not strong. Different subjects contribute to increasing understanding of cultures outside Britain. In mathematics, students are referred to Islamic and Celtic art. Students learn about Brazil, African American scientists and African music. Religious education teaches the beliefs of the main faith communities. Students listen to steel bands and make Divali decorations in art. However, students are not provided with a good range of experiences that will enable them to recognise and comprehend the challenges faced by a local community, which lives in a multi-ethnic society. Although Year 9 English classes explore the social divide separating Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland there are too few opportunities for students to consider the economic, social and cultural impact of the diverse ethnic groups who live in Britain.

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

60. The school's provision for the welfare of all its students is very good overall. They receive very good educational and personal support and guidance, which is very effective in maintaining and supporting their achievements. About three times as many students are currently on the school's roll of special educational need than at the time of the previous inspection. The school's

arrangements for the promotion and monitoring of good work and good behaviour are very good, despite the unevenness of outcome, which sometimes results. Assessment procedures are generally good. The information is satisfactorily used on a day-to-day basis in the classroom and to guide curriculum planning. Overall the school's monitoring of students' academic performance and personal development is very good. The school is strongly and successfully committed to ensuring educational inclusion and the provision for those with statements of special educational need is good. The general quality of support for students has improved significantly since the previous inspection.

61. The very good quality of educational support and guidance stems from the school's philosophy of 'making a difference'. Through the dynamic attitude of the headteacher, who seeks to know every student by name, staff at all levels are encouraged to treat all students as individuals. This is assisted by tutors and heads of year remaining with their students when moving upwards through the school.
62. Very good systems exist to record personal and academic information on students. Heads of year maintain a standard computerised database. This charts, for instance, the motivation of each student across the range of subjects, marked on a scale from 1 to 4. Another table shows at a glance estimated attainment levels. In both cases the previously assessed figure is shown alongside for comparison. The resultant average scores in each respect give a clear indication of academic attitude and progress. The record of attendance and the incidence of any disciplinary measures are also charted. A further schedule, currently being refined, gives an indication regarding homework. Heads of year thus build up a very comprehensive dossier on each of their students over the years, shared and commented on with the tutor of each group.
63. Very good use is made of this information. Importantly it enables tutors to prepare thoroughly for student review interviews. Tutors are further informed by the structured self-review which each student undertakes in his or her preparation. During the ten minute interview progress towards targets is discussed, the reasons for any difficulties are probed, and fresh targets are generally able to be agreed. Tutors keep a running record of these for each student, besides ensuring that they are entered into the student's organiser. Thus the process is holistic, very thorough, and is concerned with moving the student on, 'making the difference'. Students value the review sessions.
64. The school promotes good standards of behaviour very well. Its expectations are clear and consistent. Students like the graded reward structure, and tutor groups vie to come out best in the informal achievement assemblies held half-termly. Prowess and motivation in each subject is formally recognised at an assembly held towards the end of the academic year and a presentation evening in the autumn term. Parents are invited.
65. Poor behaviour and bullying are also very well addressed. A minority of students have behavioural difficulties and thus present a constant potential problem. The school seeks to identify and address such matters at an early stage. The recently adopted policy uses a clearly understood 'traffic light' system of green, amber and red. Classroom management of behaviour is generally consistent and alert. Subject departments note lapses through incident slips passed to heads of year. When faculties impose 'time out' or other detentions internal comments are made. Heads of year interview students with a poor disciplinary record with their parents, and a range of strategies for ensuring improvement are imposed. These range from agreeing simple targets and monitoring through report cards, through to the use of outside agencies. In Year 10 the curriculum may be adjusted to more suitable, practical ends by using work experience and college placements. The school actively involves the local education authority support service when necessary. The education welfare officer is used to assist in and monitor difficult cases. A counselling service is also available. The accent throughout is on support and inclusion.
66. Bullying, when identified, is addressed promptly and firmly. Students may lodge complaints through the 'bully box' in the student office. These are dealt with immediately. Great care is taken to ascertain the full facts of any situation. Where these may be in doubt parents are consulted. The school seeks the support of parents in any more serious case. Evidence taken is carefully

filed. In general students report few problems in respect of bullying, but some individuals do voice concerns. The school treats these seriously.

67. The school is effective in supporting students with special educational needs. Students' statements of special educational needs are met. They receive appropriate levels of support from within the school and from outside agencies. For example during the inspection there were visits from the travellers service, the school doctor, hearing impaired service, and the educational welfare officer among others. At meetings of learning support staff students' progress, needs and concerns are shared so all are kept informed. The newly appointed Learning Support administrative assistant is providing very good support in dealing with a wide range of administrative matters. This gives the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) more time for the development of learning support across the school. Key teachers have very good knowledge of a number of students with statements of special needs and attend annual reviews, and other review meetings to provide details of progress to parents, students, and representatives of supporting agencies outside the school. Tutor review days provide very good opportunities for students' progress to be assessed against targets agreed with students and parents.
68. Procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are very good, underpinned by a curriculum and atmosphere, which cause students to enjoy coming. Registration is generally swift. Data is recorded electronically and is monitored weekly. Unexplained absences are normally queried by tutors after three days but the student office, which records lateness, also checks up on the first day if certain students fail to arrive. Senior staff patrol corridors and look in on classrooms as part of their monitoring routine, through which any internal truancy may be checked. Parents are reminded of the importance to their children of prompt and consistent attendance.
69. Procedures for ensuring students' overall welfare and health and safety are generally very good. However, while faculties conduct their own risk assessments, and much on-the-spot monitoring takes place, the school does not make an annual overview of graded risks, with governors having assurance that appropriate procedures have been followed. Child protection follows the local guidelines, the two co-ordinators have recently received refresher training, and staff are aware of the good procedures. Students are well taught about health and safety through the personal, social and health education programme and also within other subjects such as design and technology and physical education. Extra-curricular activities support this, for instance when students go on residential visits or learn about life-saving. First aid support is readily available within school. Procedures are regularly followed for the servicing and maintenance of equipment, and the holding of fire drills.
70. There are very good arrangements for keeping track of students' overall academic progress. Students' work in each subject is marked regularly and teacher comments are encouraging and supportive in tone. The comments do not, however, give clear enough advice and guidance about what the students should do to improve their work nor how they might achieve that improvement. Students' work is also assessed formally at intervals during the year and then recorded centrally twice a year. This policy allows faculties flexibility over the types of assessments they use while requiring each to report results on a common attainment scale - National Curriculum levels in Year 7 –9 and GCSE grades in Years 10 and 11. This balances the need for manageability for teachers with the need for simple, consistent information for students and tutors. A strength of the system is that it helps form tutors and heads of year to quickly spot anyone who is falling behind or doing particularly well. Information is shared with parents keeping them in touch with their children's progress. The system helps to motivate students in Years 10 and 11 by setting clear grade targets to maintain or improve their current performance level. Students in Years 10 and 11 are given appropriate and helpful support using information and communications technology to compile their personal statement for the National Record of Achievement issued at the end of Year 11.
71. The progress of students in the cluster with dyslexia is assessed frequently to check improvement and identify areas that require further work. Their individual education plans provide very clear and helpful targets, and guidance on teaching approaches to help subject teachers. A very good feature of each plan is an evaluation by the student of their needs and how teachers can help

them. Students receive the level of support they are entitled to. They participate in annual reviews on their progress.

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

72. Parents as a whole think very highly of the school, and the school has the confidence of the community it serves. Almost all parents consider that it expects students to work hard and achieve well. The headteacher's leadership is widely recognised to be inspiring. Parents find the school readily approachable. Through good teaching students are seen to be making good progress. Parents praise the wide range of activities outside lessons. They say that the experiences their children receive are making them more mature. About one in five parents considers that their child does not get the right amount of homework, some wanting less, but the larger number wanting more. Concern is expressed about behaviour by some parents, and a similar number would appreciate more information about the progress their children are making.
73. The inspection team agrees with all the positive comments made by parents. The team considers that in general the homework arrangements are satisfactory. They find behaviour in the school to be predominantly good. There are good arrangements for keeping parents informed about progress, and the annual written reports are detailed and comprehensive.
74. The effectiveness of the school's links with parents is very good. Most parents are very pleased with the information they receive. Many are impressed with the care taken to explain about the school when their children first join. Very informative and practical handbooks are issued to guide parents and students about the arrangements, for instance in reporting progress, throughout the school. Parents like the frequent newsletters. Questionnaires are used to seek their opinions, and the school has recently started a focus group of parents by which to make regular informal soundings. Above all, parents often comment with admiration on the positive tone, openness and swift responsiveness of the relationship.
75. Parents receive good information about progress. Most find the 'student organisers' helpful in enabling them to keep abreast of what their children are studying and how well they are achieving. Some report that this provides a good method of maintaining a dialogue with teachers. Parents are invited as observers to attend the reviews, which students hold with their tutors in the autumn term at which targets are agreed. Many respond to this invitation. They are also invited to the progress review held with each faculty, usually in the spring. Concerns can be raised at any time, and indeed parents remark favourably on the readiness of the school to draw problems arising to their attention.
76. The quality of written reports is good and all students receive at least one interim and one full report on progress during the school year. These draw upon subject teachers' remarks concerning homework and motivation as well as an assessment of students' likely attainment. Careful scrutiny is made for any indications that performance is beginning to slip and the process is a thorough one. Annual reports grade attainment in considerable detail against National Curriculum indicators. Written advice as to how students might improve in their subjects, however, is not consistently provided.
77. Parents of students with special educational need are appropriately consulted concerning the framing and review of individual education plans for their children. Close liaison similarly takes place when personal support plans are drawn up for other students whose educational needs give rise to particular concern.
78. Parents' involvement makes a good impact on the work of the school. Most parents support their children well, for instance by taking an interest in the work being done and by signing their organisers weekly. Many facilitate students' attendance and return from the many school activities held outside lesson times. About nine out of ten parents attend parents' evenings when their children's progress is discussed. When problems arise most parents are very concerned to work with the school to address them, and this support often brings positive results. The Friends organisation is strongly influential for the good of the school in terms both of sociability and

resource. Parents are, however, tending increasingly to take holidays during school time. This disrupts students' learning. A few parents do not comply with the spirit of the home-school agreement, as in the matter of sending in absence notes.

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

79. Leadership and management are good. The school has maintained its improvements since the last inspection, and is now confidently placed to continue moving forward. The school's values are reflected in its commitment to good relationships, a challenging approach to learning and a sense of the community working together on shared ideals and purpose. The school is committed to "making the difference" and most students respond positively to this challenge. The school is socially inclusive and values individual achievement.
80. The headteacher provides very good and inspirational leadership. He is clear about the direction of the school and has communicated his vision with clarity and dynamism. His knowledge of the school is unparalleled and he is able to inspire both staff and students to work together with similar energy and commitment. He is well supported by his deputy headteacher and assistant headteachers who provide the school with good role models of effective management.
81. The senior management team is a recently created team, and the strengths of different members of the team effectively complement each other. The team is a good forum for the discussion of ideas and is able to pick up issues as they arise. The school's management systems are now effectively in place. Although the impact of many recent initiatives has yet to be felt, inspectors share the senior management's confidence that management at all levels is improving and beginning to make a difference to students' performance in the classroom. The senior team has a good understanding of standards and the quality of provision through annual reviews of subject performance, and through line management meetings. However, there is a lack of consistency in the way some staff implement school policies. For example, the school's policy on developing literacy across the curriculum is clear and well documented, but is not consistently applied. While some faculties teach literacy skills as part of their routine teaching, others do not. Similar inconsistencies are found in the school's approach to numeracy, the use of ICT, marking, and lesson planning to ensure the needs of all students are met. To some extent this is the consequence of a number of staff new to the school and the fact that the inspection took place relatively early in the academic year. In addition, heads of faculty are given considerable autonomy within their areas of responsibility. However a more rigorous implementation and monitoring of agreed policies is necessary to ensure greater consistency and quality assurance.
82. Nevertheless, management at other levels is at least satisfactory and more frequently, good. Heads of faculty, heads of subject and heads of year have a good understanding of their role and responsibilities. Many heads of faculty are providing very effective leadership of their subject, working hard to secure improvements in teaching and learning, and giving a clear lead based on a careful evaluation of standards and provision. Heads of year are taking an increasingly active role in monitoring the academic as well as the personal development of students.
83. The governors' performance management policy has been implemented well and is now an integral part of the school's performance review cycle. The emphasis on enhancing the skills of all teaching and support staff through continuous professional development is proving effective. The further development of teaching strategies and training for support staff is a priority in the school's long-term improvement plan.
84. The open approach to management and the concern shown to take all views into account is highly valued. Communication systems are good and a daily staff briefing ensures all staff are well informed about day to day issues. Staff morale is high and all staff are committed to improvement and share the school's values and ideals. The school's capacity for further improvement is good.
85. Monitoring of teaching and learning through lesson observations is carried out by heads of faculty and senior managers when appropriate. All teaching staff are observed on a regular basis and oral and written feedback ensures that best practice is shared and that the drive to ensure more



consistently good standards of teaching and learning is constantly on the agenda. Some monitoring is helpfully focused on particular school initiatives, such as a common approach to starting lessons. This has led to a more consistent approach to teaching and learning.

86. Overall leadership and management of the learning support department are satisfactory. The co-ordinator is effective in dealing with parents and students, and is sensitive to their concerns and backgrounds. However the absence of effective communication between the department and heads of faculty inhibits discussion about individual students and their needs. Targets set are insufficiently precise and are rarely subject specific. This issue was key at the time of the last inspection and remains outstanding. However recent changes in the line management arrangements are likely to ensure that appropriate subject specific targets be set. A thoughtful briefing pack for teachers to use in preparing for tutor review days has been produced. It emphasises the importance of setting sharply defined targets, appropriate for the student to achieve, and measurable within a reasonable time span.
87. The dyslexia cluster co-ordinator gives outstanding leadership to the team of three assistants. Management is excellent. Documentation is clear and refreshing. For example, a leaflet of parents' information has a warm and welcoming tone. Parents will be left in no doubt that the dyslexia cluster will make a positive difference to their child. A newsletter for parents keeps families informed of developments in the cluster and the school. The co-ordinator trains assistants, and one experienced assistant has prepared an induction handbook for new assistants joining the cluster. This shows much initiative and commitment. Two former assistants have qualified as teachers. The co-ordinator monitors the classroom work of assistants and provides written feedback so their skills continue to develop. Accommodation is limited to a small room for teaching small groups. It has an appropriate collection of book resources, and teaching materials, three computers and a TV/video. It serves as the office base for the co-ordinator.
88. Governors are committed and hard working. They are proud of its social inclusion and its close relationships with the local community. Governors bring a good range of experience and professional expertise to the school's governance. The chair and vice chair have fortnightly meetings with the headteacher and are well informed about both day to day issues and more strategic planning. Communication with faculties is good through the link governor, who visits informally but who also attends the departmental and faculty annual review. Staff welcome governors' involvement at this level, and comment on the fruitful and positive relationship between staff and governors. Discussions in committee and full governors' meetings are detailed and comprehensive. Governors are confident in their ability to challenge and question the senior management. Statutory requirements are met, except with regard to the provision of a daily act of collective worship.
89. Increasingly this is a reflective and self-evaluating school in which all members of the school community are involved in monitoring and reviewing practice and seeking ways to improve standards. The school improvement plan has provided a good framework over the last three years for development. It is a detailed and comprehensive document which places raising standards and improving teaching and learning at its heart. All governors and staff are appropriately involved in establishing priorities, setting targets, monitoring and review. The plan is securely based on an audit of current standards and provision, and priorities identified are appropriate.
90. The school's budget is being very well managed, and budget planning to ensure that resources match educational priorities is very good. Governors have a good overview of a tight budget and are kept regularly updated with monitoring statements. They monitor the educational impact of spending decisions and have a satisfactory understanding of issues related to best value. The school seeks best value wherever possible in its spending decisions. The most recent audit of the school's financial systems and controls was in July 2001 and indicated that all controls and financial procedures were satisfactory. Designated funds, including those for special educational needs and social inclusion are used appropriately. The school is efficiently administered and it makes good use of information systems to process data and ensure that information is readily available for governors and staff to manage the school effectively. It manages the bureaucratic demands from both local and national sources well.

91. Staffing levels overall are satisfactory throughout the school and there is a good match between teachers' qualifications and their deployment in most subjects. In mathematics where there is an unqualified teacher and two primary trained teachers, the three colleagues are judiciously deployed and well supported. There have been a significant number of new teaching appointments over the last two years, a situation which is not uncommon in this part of the country. At the time of the inspection one science post was unfilled, but covered by two part-time specialist teachers on temporary contracts. The school's approach to filling teaching vacancies is pragmatic and effective.
92. Good systems are in place for the induction of new staff and newly qualified teachers speak highly of the support they receive. In modern foreign languages, for example, there is shared lesson planning with the newly qualified teacher and the fortnightly induction programme provides well for the needs of this colleague. The school also operates an effective graduate teacher-training programme and employs a small number of graduate trainees.
93. The number and expertise of support staff are good. The school is well served by its administrative staff and there is an appropriate level of effective technician support. The help students with special educational needs receive from the teaching assistants is of a high quality and contributes significantly to their good progress.
94. The school is located on a single site, housed in a mixture of buildings where every available space is fully used. The premises are well managed and organised and the grounds are well maintained and kept litter free. Overall the adequacy of accommodation is just satisfactory, and is limited in some areas as the school has grown. For example, putting two classes together in the mezzanine floor in the hall for mathematics teaching is not satisfactory, despite some imaginative team teaching. Accommodation and the learning environment were a key issue in the last inspection and although many improvements have been made this continues to be a priority in the school improvement plan to maximise facilities for both students and staff.
95. All subjects are grouped together and since the last inspection, a new art and humanities block has been opened, two science laboratories have been refurbished and two rooms designated for the teaching of music. However the provision of rooms for special educational needs remains unsatisfactory along with drama, which is still housed in a condemned building. Displays in classrooms celebrate students' achievements and are especially good in music, design and technology and science and very good in art and religious education. The design of the buildings and the narrow corridors creates congestion and has an impact on the movement of students around the school. There is a lack of management space for senior staff and heads of year. Outdoor facilities for physical education are inadequate. Both the playing fields and the multi play area are poorly drained and often unusable.
96. The school is working hard to improve the environment and facilities it needs. A new improved security system has been installed providing a safer and more secure environment. Dining facilities have been improved, but this space is still small for the number of students using this area. The toilets have been refurbished for both students and staff. New car parking arrangements are now in place, but the provision of play space is still limited for students use during break and lunchtime.
97. The overall provision of resources is satisfactory. The learning resources centre provides books to subject areas by request and to tutor periods for quiet reading. Staff actively seek to support current developments, for example provision for gifted and able students and for issues in citizenship education. The number of computers in the school is just adequate and the level of technical support is satisfactory. However, provision is unsatisfactory in several subjects. For example the lack of computers in physical education, the shortage of subject specific software in design technology and some hardware problems in music. Other classroom based resources are satisfactory although photocopying resources are over used in some subjects.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

98. In order to improve standards and the quality of provision further, the headteacher, governors and staff should:

- Adopt more rigorous procedures for implementing and monitoring school policies by (paragraphs 81 and 86):
  - ensuring line management procedures systematically review school policies.
- Ensure the use of information and communication technology across all subjects is more consistent\* by (paragraphs 28, 109, 122, 124, 131, 137, 147, 159, 165, 166, 168, 177, and 187):
  - improving the resources and facilities, particularly those in departments;
  - ensuring that the ICT opportunities and requirements identified in the National Curriculum are fully implemented;
  - ensuring the sensing and control aspects of the curriculum are fully covered;
  - implementing a training programme for staff in the use of ICT.
- Develop the use of short-term learning targets through assessment and marking to enable students to be more aware of their progress and of how they might improve (paragraphs 30, 32, 33, 110, 124, 131, 132, 167, 173, and 194).

\* This issue is already identified by the school in its improvement plan.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	197
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students	57

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	5	41	92	54	4	1	0
Percentage	2.5	20.8	46.7	27.4	2.0	0.5	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching.

### Information about the school's students

Students on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11
Number of students on the school's roll	1506
Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals	108

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	44
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	381

English as an additional language	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	17

Student mobility in the last school year	No of students
Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	26
Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	29

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.2
National comparative data	7.7

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.4
National comparative data	1.1

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

**Attainment at the end of Year 9**

Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	156	128	284

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	80	114	114
	Girls	85	93	89
	Total	165	207	203
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	62 (80)	73 (70)	72 (64)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	18 (51)	46 (46)	34 (31)
	National	31 (28)	42 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	110	121	105
	Girls	105	97	86
	Total	215	218	191
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	76 (72)	77 (70)	67 (60)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	36 (26)	48 (46)	32 (29)
	National	30 (31)	41 (39)	32 (29)

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

**Attainment at the end of Year 11**

Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	157	125	282

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of students achieving the standard specified	Boys	89 (60)	146 (120)	151 (122)
	Girls	73 (82)	120 (123)	123 (123)
	Total	162 (142)	266 (243)	274 (245)
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	School	57 (58)	94 (99)	97 (100)
	National	50 (47.4)	89 (90.9)	95 (95.6)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score	School	41.1 (43)

per student	National	39.1 (38.4)
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Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those students who achieved all those they studied	School	50	66
	National		N/a

#### Ethnic background of students

	No of students
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	4
Indian	7
Pakistani	2
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	4
White	1466
Any other minority group	20

#### Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	155	1
Other minority groups	2	0

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

#### Teachers and classes

##### Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	86.14
Number of students per qualified teacher	17.5:1

##### Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	35
Total aggregate hours worked per week	782

##### Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	73.3
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##### Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	26.5
Key Stage 4	19.6

FTE means full-time equivalent.

#### Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	40.5
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#### Financial information

Financial year	2000-1
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	£
Total income	3,693,467
Total expenditure	3,556,912
Expenditure per student	2,386
Balance brought forward from previous year	-4,092
Balance carried forward to next year	138,365

Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	43.3
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Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0.52
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	1425
Number of questionnaires returned	463

**Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	39	51	7	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	40	51	6	1	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	19	62	11	3	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	24	53	17	4	1
The teaching is good.	31	59	5	0	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	30	53	11	4	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	53	40	4	2	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	60	37	2	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	35	50	9	2	4
The school is well led and managed.	64	32	1	1	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	42	47	7	1	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	47	43	4	1	5

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

**ENGLISH**

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

**Strengths**

- Students achieve well at GCSE, particularly the boys who attain higher standards than boys nationally.
- Teachers work well as a team and are committed to improving teaching and raising standards.
- Students enjoy their work in English and benefit from the very good working relationships with teachers.
- The work of teachers new to the faculty is having a positive impact on students' learning because of the quality of the support they receive.

**Areas for improvement**

- The monitoring of students' progress in Years 10 and 11 is not as effective as the monitoring undertaken with the first three years.
- Marking, although regular and supportive, does not give sufficient information to students on how to improve their work.

99. Standards of English on entry to the school are broadly average. The proportion of students achieving a grade in the A\* to C range in the 2001 English Language GCSE examinations was above the national average for boys and girls. The girls' results were better than those of the boys, although the boys' performance was much higher than boys nationally. Nearly all students achieved a GCSE grade in the subject and this is an indication of the good progress made by students with special educational needs. These above average results are consistent with the trend of recent years and are an improvement on the standards attained at the time of the last inspection when the 1997 results were average when compared with all schools.

100. In the 2001 English Literature GCSE examinations the proportion of students gaining an A\* to C grade was above the national average because the boys achieved better results than boys nationally. Girls' results were in line with the national standards. The trend of recent years is for the results of both boys and girls in this grade band to be above the national average. There has been improvement since the last inspection when the results were close to the national average. The media studies results in 2001 met expectations with all but one student obtaining a GCSE grade and the majority achieving in the A\* to C grade range. Far more students were entered for the subject than in 2000 when all obtained a GCSE grade, most at the higher levels. The challenge facing the subject is to increase the number of students achieving at grades A\* and A.

101. The proportion of students reaching Level 5 in national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2001 (62 per cent) was close to the national average (64 per cent) but below average when compared with similar schools. When measured by average points score, performance was below the national average, because fewer students achieved the higher Levels. Results have varied in recent years but have generally been above the national averages. Teachers' assessments in 2001 had indicated that the standards of work were above average. A small, random sample of scripts was submitted for remarking, and resulted in the grades being raised for most of the students in the sample. The subject has performed better than mathematics and science in three of the last four years but for the first time in 2001 performance dipped to just below the standards of those two subjects.

102. Standards in work seen during the inspection are above average at the end of both Years 9 and 11. The standards in Year 9 are higher than test results in 2001 would indicate, but consistent with students' average test performance in 1998 to 2000. Attainment in English on entry to the school is in line with national expectations, and most students make good progress, and achieve well through Years 7 to 9. In relation to the standards they reached at the end of Year 9, students also



achieve well by the end of Year 11. This is the case for all students, including those with special educational needs and the small number from minority backgrounds. Both boys and girls do equally well.

103. Standards of written work seen during the course of the inspection are good. The majority of students of all ages are able to write fluently and the variation in standards seen at the time of the last inspection is no longer evident. A small number of younger students need help with spelling and punctuation and are unable to use a complex sentence. By the time they leave school, however, their standard of accuracy and command of grammatical forms have improved. An appropriate range of work is undertaken and students are given opportunities to write at length in a variety of forms. They have developed their note taking skills and the planning and drafting of written work is done well. In Years 10 and 11 students' critical writing on the set literature texts is of a high standard. This was seen in their GCSE coursework where the students' analytical skills were evident in their critical writing on J B Priestley's 'An Inspector Calls'. They could describe how suspense was heightened through the use of dramatic devices and what the unfolding moral and social issues revealed of the principal characters' values and beliefs. The writing was clear and the ideas well supported with textual references.
104. Students' standards of reading are good in all years, as they were at the time of the last inspection. They read with understanding a range of increasingly demanding texts and can comment perceptively on what they have read. They read aloud clearly and expressively.
105. Standards of literacy in different subjects are generally good. Most students have the reading ability to understand the range of texts they meet in all subjects, and are able to adapt their writing appropriately. The technical accuracy of some students' writing is not consistently good in all subjects.
106. Students in Years 10 and 11 display good analytical skills in media studies, showing discernment in their work on film and magazines. In a Year 10 lesson on the psychological thriller students could identify the impact made by various dramatic techniques and explain how lighting, music and camera angle contributed to the film's suspense. In the Year 11 lesson seen students were able to make inferences about contemporary attitudes to men and women from the stereotypical way they were portrayed in magazine photographs. The standard of work seen in both years was good.
107. In nearly all lessons seen students listened well and could sustain their concentration throughout the lesson. In the best lessons students reflected on the points made by others and their learning was enhanced by their attentiveness when explanations were given and questions asked. Standards of speaking, however, were more variable. Although most students are confident and articulate and can adapt their speech to a range of situations, there are some young people in all years who find it difficult to speak at length when responding to questions.
108. Students achieve well because of the good teaching at all levels and their own positive attitudes to the subject. Learning is also good. This is the case with media studies as well as English. Teachers are well qualified and have a sound knowledge and understanding of their subject and teaching techniques. They are committed to continuous professional development and work well as a team to raise standards. This is particularly apparent this year with the induction of four colleagues new to the faculty, only one of whom is an experienced teacher. They are well supported and are already having a positive impact on students' learning. Teachers plan effectively and set appropriate learning objectives which are explained clearly at the start of each lesson. Extension work is planned for those of high prior attainment and work is modified for those who need additional help. Teachers have developed very good working relationships with the students and have in place strategies to ensure that all groups, including the small number of students for whom English is an additional language, progress well. Behaviour in lessons is very good in all years.
109. Teachers plan for the development of students' skills in using computers to organise and present their writing through a series of lessons for Years 7 and 8. One good lesson was seen where

students had to use metaphor, simile and oxymoron in writing which was intended to persuade the reader to a point of view. The computer program provided extension work for those of high prior attainment and support material for those who needed help with basic skills. The result was that all students made good progress in writing persuasively. Provision for the use of information and communication technology is not planned on a regular basis for the older students although they do have access to computers for word processing.

110. A good balance is achieved in lessons between the teacher leading and explaining and students working collaboratively to learn from each other. Students become more aware of their own strengths and weaknesses through evaluating their own and each other's work. This was effectively managed in a Year 7 lesson where the students were encouraged to reflect and then comment on how well they responded to questions. Later in the lesson they read their creative writing aloud and offered critical comments on what they liked about each other's work and how it could be improved. In the best lessons time was given at the end of each lesson for reflection on what had been learnt and for preparing homework or explaining forthcoming work. There were instances, however, where there was no consolidation of what had been learnt and where the next phase of the work was not mentioned because time had not been planned well. Marking, although regular and detailed, does not give sufficient guidance to students on how to improve their work. Teachers take every opportunity to motivate students by writing encouraging comments and recognition is always given for good effort. The recording of what students have to do to raise the standard of their written work would now make feedback constructive as well as supportive. Effective systems are in place to record and monitor students' progress in the first three years. However, systems in place for monitoring the progress of Years 10 and 11 are not as systematic and therefore not as effective.
111. The leadership and management of the faculty are good. The head of faculty provides clear educational direction with the focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning through the sharing of good practice and the adoption of national initiatives to raise attainment. Standards of teaching are monitored on a regular basis through classroom observations and discussions at regular faculty meetings focus on strategies to improve teaching and learning. Development planning is good and links clearly with the school's improvement plan priorities. She has created a sense of common purpose and is supported by committed and capable colleagues who work well as a team. Good provision is made to extend students' knowledge and understanding of the subject through an extensive range of extra-curricular activities. These include a reading club and a literacy and numeracy games club, a public speaking competition, the national poetry day, book week, book reviews and awards, theatre trips and visiting theatre companies. Year 9 boys are also involved in a paired reading project at the local primary school. The faculty also works closely with the learning resource centre, which makes a significant contribution to developing students' reading and research skills. Good progress has been made in addressing the issues identified for improvement at the time of the last inspection.
112. The faculty is well placed to improve the quality of its provision still further because of the teachers' innovative and developmental approach to their work.

## **Drama**

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

113. Standards in the GCSE examinations are well above the national average and have been so for some time. The proportion of students obtaining a grade in the A\* to C range in 2001 was very high when compared with the national figure, with boys and girls achieving very good results. In 2000 the standards were also well above average. The quality of the work seen with older students during the course of the inspection was impressive and showed a command of dramatic technique and an ability to work collaboratively and evaluate performance. The standards of work seen in Year 9 were above average.
114. All students have very positive attitudes to the subject and they enjoy the work. Several students thanked the teacher as they left the room at the end of a Year 10 lesson, and in conversation

many students express their appreciation of the educational experience they receive in the subject. They have many opportunities to extend their understanding of drama beyond the work in the classroom and there are theatre visits and workshops arranged on a regular basis.

115. The quality of the specialist teaching seen was very good and accounts for the high standards in public examinations. Members of staff are not only knowledgeable and skilled in teaching; they also bring an enthusiasm for the subject, which sparks interest and motivates the students. The work is demanding but delivered in such a way that all students make significant learning gains. The teaching assistant gives very effective support to those students with special educational needs and makes a significant contribution to extra-curricular activities. A particular strength is the ability of students to evaluate their own and each other's work and this is because the learning objectives have been so clearly communicated.
116. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. The head of department provides clear educational direction and is well supported by committed and able colleagues. The space provided for the teaching of drama is good and the resource levels are satisfactory but the up-keep of the studio accommodation has been neglected and it is in urgent need of repair and renovation or replacement. It is an unsatisfactory situation that the third teaching space has to be shared with another subject and is some distance from the two studios.
117. Drama contributes significantly to students' cultural, moral and social experiences as well as being a powerful influence on their personal development.

## **MATHEMATICS**

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

### **Strengths**

- Standards are above the national average as a result of good teaching, particularly in Years 7 to 9.
- There are comprehensive records of students' attainments, which are used effectively to check on progress
- The behaviour and attitude of the majority of students are good
- The department is very well led and organised. New staff are very well supported

### **Areas for improvement**

- Use of problem solving and information and communication technology for learning
- Assessment of learning during lessons, so that mistakes are identified and corrected quickly, and successful students challenged more
- Continue to develop the teachers' whole class interactive skills, particularly to improve students' understanding of underlying principles

118. Standards in mathematics on entry to the school are broadly in line with the national average. In 2001 national tests 73 per cent of students scored Level 5 or above, compared to the national average of 66 per cent. There is no significant difference between the performance of the girls and that of the boys. Standards in terms of the average points score per student have improved steadily over the past four years, and are close to the national average. A significant group of students, above the national average, reach Levels 6 and 7, and in the past two years 19 students have reached Level 8.
119. In the GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2001, the proportion of students gaining a grade A\* to C: 43 per cent was close to the national average of 47 per cent. The proportion gaining a grade A\* to G was slightly above the national average. Boys were more successful in gaining grades A\* to C than were the girls, and a significantly greater number of the boys achieved the highest grades. This was not the case in the previous year when the girls were slightly more successful than the boys. Nearly half of the students attained a lower grade in mathematics than their average score for all their GCSE results, and only 1 in 8 did better than their average. A major contributing factor to these results in 2001 were the difficulties with teaching staff which resulted in

a change of teacher for five sets between Years 10 and 11, a situation which has now been resolved. In 2000 the proportion of students gaining a grade A\* to C was just above the national average.

120. Overall by the end of Year 9, standards are above average, and the students' achievements are good. A high attaining class in Year 7 was seen working out areas of triangles by relating it to the area of a rectangle, and many were comfortable with the algebraic formula for the process. A set in Year 9 was establishing the ratios that were associated with angles in a right-angled triangle, and developing a good groundwork for understanding the basic principles of trigonometry. Standards of numerical calculation were good, and students generally have a good set of strategies for mental calculations. One middle attaining set in Year 9 was seen developing a good understanding of Pythagoras' theorem and how to use it to find lengths in a right-angled triangle. They made very good progress because of very good teaching and good learning materials.
121. By the end of Year 11, standards are above the national average, higher than last year's GCSE results would indicate. However, students in Years 10 and 11 are now achieving at least satisfactorily as a consequence of more settled teaching staff in the department. Students in two higher attaining Year 10 sets were seen learning how to solve simultaneous equations by elimination. They showed a quick ability to work out for themselves how the method worked, and were able to set out solutions using precise mathematical processes. Some of them were less sure of the meaning of their answers. Numeracy is good and supports the students well in reaching intuitive answers to problems posed. Students at intermediate levels are able to do accurate geometrical drawing, and to transpose shapes precisely on a coordinate grid. A lower attaining class in Year 10 could plot co-ordinates accurately, and another was able to use information and communications technology to produce a range of graphs to illustrate the data they had collected as part of a survey. Other parts of the National Curriculum are covered at an appropriate level in each of the classes in this key stage, although investigational mathematics is mainly used as an examination requirement and rarely as a way of developing an understanding of the key issues in the mathematics curriculum. Numeracy and mental arithmetic are inadequate for all students below the higher attaining sets, including students with special educational needs, and inhibits their progress. Over the course of the key stage, taking into account all the work seen, both boys and girls, and students from ethnic minorities make at least satisfactory progress. The progress of students with special educational needs is good overall.
122. Numeracy both in mathematics and across other subjects is satisfactory, although some students are over-reliant on calculators when asked to work out a problem involving numbers above 10. In the lowest attaining sets standards of numeracy are poor and the students lack strategies to work out problems in their heads. They are more comfortable using standard written methods even when these are not the most appropriate for the purposes. A low attaining set in Year 9 was seen doing an investigation on polygons. They could follow the process, and graph the results but had difficulty understanding the purpose of the investigation. Students cover the National Curriculum, with a greater emphasis on number and algebra, shape and space, and data handling than on investigational mathematics. Insufficient use is made of information and communications technology in teaching. Taking into account all the work seen in this key stage, students make good progress during the course of the three years, particularly in high attaining sets
123. Students' attitudes and behaviour overall are good. In Years 7 to 9 they are good or very good in most lessons, and in Years 10 and 11 they are good in the higher and middle attaining sets, but some low attaining sets are affected by poor behaviour from a minority of students, mostly boys. The best groups show an interest in the work, listen carefully to the teachers and contribute appropriately in whole class sessions when they are asked to. For example in many lessons students are used to going to the board to write up answers to problems, although they are less comfortable explaining these answers in their own words. Many of them organise their work carefully in their books, taking a pride in their work, but a significant minority at all levels in both key stages have not developed appropriate habits of presentation, so that sometimes they make unnecessary mistakes, and even deface the front cover and some inside pages, showing little pride in what they are producing. There is a significant minority of students, particularly in Years 10 and 11, who lack the skills and the temperament to take part in whole class lessons because

they are unable to listen, keep quiet and resist the temptation to disrupt the proceedings. In most cases, because they are well handled by the teachers, they only disrupt their own education, but in a small minority of classes this affects the progress of the whole class.

124. The quality of both teaching and learning is good overall, and this makes a major contribution to the progress of the students, especially in Years 10 and 11. In the first three years, the teachers have adopted many of the techniques of the national Key Stage 3 strategy and are beginning to learn how to use them to inject pace and variety into the lesson, which engages the students' attention and enhances their understanding of the key underlying concepts. Throughout the school, lesson planning is good, although teachers could be clearer about what it is that the students will be able to do at the end of each lesson, and make this explicit to the students. Key vocabulary is a feature of all lessons, and some of the teachers cleverly build up the vocabulary during the lesson, using it as a type of agenda or record of the lesson. They work as a team to share ideas and resources, and in this way continually strive to improve their teaching. They explain key processes and requirements of tasks clearly and succinctly, but do not spend enough time inviting the students to talk about their understanding of the concepts under discussion. This would both help the students and give better information to the teachers about the progress the students were making in developing their understanding. Some of the teachers provide opportunities for the students to write about the concepts they are learning in order to help them to understand them better, and to help them develop independent learning habits. In many cases, particularly in Years 10 and 11, students can obtain correct answers to problems without really understanding what they are doing, and this limits their ability to retain the knowledge and understanding in the long term, or to relate similar ideas in different branches of mathematics. The teachers keep good order in most classes, although there are some very challenging students. They make detailed records of the students' performance in national examinations and in school tests, and use them to keep a close watch on the students' progress. Marking is generally done on a two week basis, and students are given encouraging comments and occasionally indications of how to improve, but answers to questions done in class should be checked more frequently and systematically so that students mistakes and misconceptions are picked up and corrected more quickly. Insufficient use is made of information and communication technology to support learning.
125. Improvement since the last inspection is good. There have been many developments in planning, teaching and organisation of the department. Standards and achievement have risen. The quality and variety of the teaching is improving, although there is scope for further improvement. The department is well led, and is responding very well to the current challenge of integrating and supporting teachers new to the school in the past two years. The personal commitment of the two most senior staff and several of the other established teachers to providing this support at considerable cost in terms of their energy and non-teaching time is outstanding.

## SCIENCE

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

### Strengths

- Standards in GCSE examinations have improved since the last inspection, as a result of the improving quality of teaching.
- Relationships between teachers and students are good, especially in Years 7 to 9.
- Assessments of students' work are regular, and grades are related to national standards.

#### Areas for improvement

- There is a lack of consistency across the faculty in the implementation of school and faculty policies.
- Planning in lessons does not adequately cater for the full range of student attainment.
- The use of information and communication technology is not sufficiently integrated into the work of all teachers and all students.
- The setting of individual targets for students, in order to challenge them to improve their standards, is not well established.

126. Standards in science on entry to the school are generally in line with the national average. In national tests in 2001 at the end of Year 9, overall standards were also in line with the national average for all schools, but well below those for similar schools. The proportion of students gaining the higher grades showed a slight increase on the previous year. However, one student in five had not improved their National Curriculum level since entering the school, reducing the average points score for the year group. Results in general in the last three years, therefore, have been consistently in line with national averages. Although this represents satisfactory achievement since the students entered the school, overall standards in Year 9 do not compare as favourably with national figures as at the time of the last inspection. Standards are now similar to those in English, but below those in mathematics. There is no significant difference in the results obtained by boys and girls.
127. In the GCSE examinations taken at the end of Year 11 in 2001, the proportions of students gaining grades in the ranges A\* to C and A\* to G are both above the national average. Results have been consistently at this level in the last three years, an improvement since the last inspection. For the first time in four years, boys obtained far better results than girls. Students' achievements since their national tests at the end of Year 9 were good overall, and very good in the case of boys. Students performed better in science than in most of their other subjects.
128. In work seen during the inspection, standards were above average in Years 7 to 9, and average in Year 11. In Year 9, this is higher than recent national test results, and for students in Year 11, this is lower than recent GCSE examination results would suggest. Both judgements, however are in line with the teachers' assessments for these particular year groups, and reflect the improving ability profile of students in the school. In Year 9, it also reflects improving standards of teaching and the teachers' confident approach to their work. Students' achievements overall are good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. In Year 7, students in all classes respond positively to the increased challenge in the work. They particularly enjoy practical investigations, such as extracting the colour from red cabbage to use as an indicator for acids and alkalis. Their practical skills, for instance in using a bunsen burner, improve as a result. There is a very good level of co-operation in their groups. In Year 8, average attaining students show a sound understanding of the effect of the rotation of the earth around the sun, and learn that our seasons are caused by the inclination of the earth's axis. By Year 9, students in a lower attaining group can relate events such as the rate of dissolving to the molecular structure of solids and liquids. In all classes in these year groups, students' attitude and behaviour are at least satisfactory, and very good in one third of the lessons seen.
129. During the inspection, most classes in Years 10 and 11 were involved in revision for examinations taking place in the near future. This inevitably had some impact on the nature of the work seen in these lessons. In Year 10, higher attaining students are able to calculate the potential energy of a weight held above the ground; they have more difficulty in understanding the concept of power, and that it is related to time. A class of average attaining students is given topics to research and discuss using text books, but many of the groups are too large and there are too many off-task conversations for effective learning to take place. In Year 11 also, students' approach to their work is variable, and even varies according to which teacher is taking the class. In a minority of lessons, teachers encourage interest by repeating demonstrations seen in Year 10, rather than just reviewing the theory. This helps to consolidate students' understanding, as in a lesson about the periodic table and the alkali metals. Students have less involvement when revising the different types of radiation emitted by a radioactive source, in spite of the excellent diagrams provided,

because there is no demonstration using a counter to recall how the radiation is absorbed. Students' investigations for their GCSE coursework are of a good standard, though the analysis and evaluation of their results by lower attaining students are lacking in detail.

130. Across the school, higher attaining students are achieving well in science. They are taught at the appropriate level, and encouraged to seek improvement in their standards. Students with special educational needs are well known by their teachers who understand their specific areas of difficulty. They make good progress in Years 7 to 9 because of the additional help given by support assistants. Their progress in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. There is insufficient differentiation of work for students with learning difficulties, and also for those aiming for the higher grades. The progress made by students with English as an additional language and those from ethnic minorities is similar to all other students. .
131. Teaching is good in Years 7 to 9, and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Teachers mostly have a good knowledge and understanding of their subject and their planning of the subject content of lessons is good. There is good progression in learning as a result. Less time is devoted to consideration of how students will learn, and devising the most appropriate activities for effective learning. Students therefore spend too much time in a significant minority of lessons, either listening to the teacher, or watching the teacher manipulate the equipment. This restricts students' ability to use their initiative, and to learn to overcome difficulties for themselves, an essential characteristic for success in examinations. The pace of learning also suffers. For instance, in a Year 9 lesson on digestion, the teacher demonstrated that visking tubing is permeable to glucose, but it was difficult for all students to see clearly exactly what was happening, and learning was only satisfactory. The faculty includes lessons specifically devised to encourage students to think; in Year 7, students learn the difference between variables and values, and also how to plot graphs to show how particular variables depend on one another. This will bring long-term benefits in students' understanding of scientific principles. There is very good liaison between teachers and technicians in the organisation of class practicals. The development of students' literacy skills is inconsistent across the department; key words are displayed in a number of laboratories, but they are not always specifically related to the topic of the lesson. Students are rarely encouraged to pronounce important words to help them to remember their meaning. There is also insufficient encouragement of students to express scientific principles in sentences using their own words. The accurate use of number is developed when using formulae, particularly with higher attaining students. However, when using graphs, common standards are not rigorously applied. Since the last inspection, information and communication technology has not been fully integrated into the work of all classes; teachers' confidence is therefore variable because of a lack of experience. This is only partly explained by the limited access to computer rooms. There are also inconsistencies across the faculty in marking, in the quality and challenge of homework tasks, and in the use of teaching skills to create a sense of enjoyment. When teachers smile, relax, and enjoy the lessons, students frequently do likewise, as in a Year 7 lesson about human reproduction, and a Year 10 revision class about the human digestive system.
132. The leadership and management of the science faculty on balance are satisfactory, though there are a number of aspects of leadership, which are good. In general, teamwork is good, with teachers, technicians and support staff co-operating well for the benefit of students; there is a commitment to the school and its aims. The curriculum is under review in both key stages, with the intention of developing a common format across the school to provide improved support for teachers in the planning of work. The assessment of students' work is good, and student records enable teachers to identify quickly any underachievement. However, there is no system for establishing long-term or short-term targets for individual students in order to provide incentives to improve. The faculty has agreed its development plan; this identifies the priorities needed to bring about improvement in provision. However, there are too many initiatives for the faculty to address at one time, and they are not listed in any order of priority; the plan, therefore, is not a useful working document. This leads to inconsistency across the faculty in the initiatives, which individual teachers are addressing, uncertainty for students about what is required, and no significant improvement in practice. The monitoring of data has increased, and the school produces useful value added information to help identify effective classroom practice. Performance management is established, and teaching has improved, but insufficient time is devoted to discussion about

teaching techniques at faculty meetings. Although the quality of teaching has improved, teachers are failing to share good practice across the faculty, for instance in student management techniques, and in the preparation of learning materials. The use of information and communication technology is also inconsistent, and remains a priority from the last inspection report. Other factors affecting the quality of provision include the vacancy in the faculty for a teacher to provide management support and that much of the accommodation needs a facelift. The quality of resources is only satisfactory and there are occasions when the lack of clarity of overhead projectors, for instance, has a negative impact on students' learning.

133. Since the last inspection, the faculty has made satisfactory progress. Results at GCSE level have improved and are now above average, but at the age of 14 are now in line, rather than above the national figures. In the work of the year groups at present in school, observations indicate that standards are above average up to the age of 14, and in line with national expectations in Years 10 and 11. The consistently good attitude towards their work of students in Years 7 to 9 has yet to be maintained throughout the school in order that standards are above average at the ends of both key stages. There is a commitment to improving standards, but the inconsistencies in practice restrict progress. The comment in the last report that 'there is too little opportunity for students to find things out for themselves' still applies, with a number of lessons dominated by teacher input. Health and safety arrangements are now good.

## ART AND DESIGN

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

### Strengths

- Good leadership and management are securing very good progress by students by the age of 14.
- Above average results in the GCSE examinations as a result of good teaching.
- The quality and range of learning opportunities.

### Areas for improvement

- Planning in lessons for higher attainers and gifted and talented students.
- The standards of boys' attainment in GCSE examinations.

134. In the 2001 GCSE examinations 77 per cent of candidates gained A\* to C passes, with a high proportion gaining A\* and A grades. This is above the national average of 65 per cent. Although boys do not attain as well as girls they tend to do better in art and design than in the other subjects, which they take. In teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2001, the proportion of students reaching Level 5 (82 per cent) was above the national average.

135. Standards are above average by the end of Year 9. Given that students' attainment is below average on entry students make very good progress, and achieve very well. By the end of Year 9 students can develop designs, use information and a range of skills to draft out drawings. Observation skills are good and students can apply colour sensitively. They understand perspective and foreshortening and know how renaissance artists strove to recreate space and depth on a two-dimensional surface through line and tone, light and shade. Working in three dimensions, students produce images of a fair likeness and make and decorate boxes with examples of animal symbolism. Across all years students are given opportunities to use and develop literacy skills, especially specialist art vocabulary. Numeracy terminology is used and skills are developed.

136. Standards of work seen in the current Years 10 and 11 are above average. Students make good progress in meeting the criteria for their chosen themes, and their achievements are good given their attainment at the end of Year 9. Working with increased independence they can generate ideas for compositions, investigate materials and produce a good range of support work in their sketchbooks. They work in two and three dimensions, although boys are generally more reluctant to work in three dimensions, something the department is working to overcome. High attaining students have developed their own style and way of working, showing flair and imagination in their



work. The difference in standards of work between boys and girls is narrower than in the most recent examination results.

137. The overall quality of teaching and learning, satisfactory in the last report, is good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and make good use of art vocabulary and resources. They know their students' needs well and ensure, through good planning that high standards are set for learning and behaviour. Very good use is made of key words, questions and the works of other artists to stimulate and extend students' ideas. Planning includes clear targets and methods for all students to learn but not always to extend and challenge higher attaining students. Very good support is given for students, with special educational needs, by teaching assistants, who are very knowledgeable about art, and the students with whom they work. Displays of students' and teachers' work are frequently referenced to very good effect to set the standard required during lessons. Homework builds on and supports class work. Planning of lessons, especially for older students, shows detailed integration of previous lessons, homework and class-work. For younger students, high standards are set by teaching basic skills, and showing students, not only how to use them but how to achieve quality results. The very good progress students make is carefully monitored and used to support and inform teaching and learning.
138. Students' attitudes to learning are good at both key stages. Teachers work hard to sustain students' interest in their work, especially with a significant minority of boys, who have immature attitudes and lower levels of concentration. Older students have very positive attitudes to their work and take a great deal of pride in presentation. They have good levels of independent learning skills, are very attentive and appreciative of help and information from all staff. When students are shown a better way of doing things, they listen carefully and frequently carry out further investigations to further refine their work. They enjoy learning new skills and using resources especially when the effects are good.
139. Leadership and management in art and design are good, and improvement since the last has inspection has been good. The many changes required to the curriculum have been very well implemented and the use of assessment to inform curriculum planning and to meet students' learning needs, is very good. Very good use is made of subject development planning. The head of department is proactive in accessing and using all support for the subject. The profile of art and design has been successfully raised through the annual exhibition, the 'Spring Traditions Project', for more able students, and a variety of successful cross- curricular links. As a result, students have a very good range of learning opportunities. The issue of boys' attainment is being addressed by the changes to the subject material in some units of work and by the introduction of Warhammer at the very well attended art club. This encourages boys' interests in art especially in three-dimensional making. The department has made a very good impact on raising standards for all students especially those in Years 7 to 9.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- Good teaching overall which is leading to improved examination performance and rising standards.
- The wide range of courses in Years 10 and 11.
- Good standards of practical work in all areas.

### Areas for improvement

- The consistency of marking and of expectations across all subjects within the department.
- The use of information communication technology, particularly control in Years 7 to 9.
- Standardisation in monitoring and recording students' work.

140. Standards of work seen in Year 9 are in line with the national average, and are reflected in teacher assessments for 2001. A minority of students reach higher levels. Students enter the school with a varied level of experience in design technology and standards are mostly below average. They

make good progress throughout the school and their achievements are good. In the 2001 GCSE examinations, results are above the national average overall for A\* to C and A\* to G grades. Electronics, food technology and textiles performed particularly well, especially at the higher grades. In the GNVQ Construction and the Built Environment all students were successful. These results show a good improvement over the 2000 performance and reflect the general improvement seen in current work.

141. Practical outcomes in the work of Year 9 students are usually of a good standard. Students use a wide range of hand and machine tools safely and confidently. Good work is seen in all areas with design folders showing good use of colour, annotation of ideas, sketching and evaluations. Higher attainers produce extended writing in researching a topic and can also produce a range of ideas of good quality when investigating subject matters. All students use information communication technology in their work but this area is underdeveloped. Good work is seen in the euro pizza project, and a packaging project in food technology, good evaluation in a structures project, good drawings in a moisture sensor project in electronics. Where the work is weaker it is due to poor presentational skills, a lack of depth and detail, work which is not labelled correctly, poor sketching or where answers are not in complete sentences. Spelling errors are often not corrected.
142. Standards of work in Year 11 are average overall but vary across different subject specialisms. This is lower than recent GCSE results, but the current Year 11 is not as able as earlier year groups. Standards are however above average in food technology and textiles. The rate of improvement in resistant materials and graphics is below that of other areas where the completion of coursework can present difficulties and thereby affect results. The quality of design folders in these areas are not of a sufficiently high standard of presentation overall. Girls usually perform better than boys and some specialisms are gender orientated. Achievement is good, especially in practical work, given the attainment of these students at the end of Year 9. The better design folders show good use of photographs, commercial material, colour, a range of ideas and information communication technology in presenting work. This was seen in a food technology project comparing mass production methods with home made products, detailed analysis in a textiles project looking at waistcoat designs, good investigation into a hazard warning system in electronics and a good range of logo designs in the clock project.
143. The graphics project investigating an inner-city wildlife area showed a good range of presentational skills. Where the work is weaker it is due to poorer standards of presentation, drawings out of proportion, and not labelled, work not completed and weaker handwriting.
144. In the GNVQ courses students are performing at the expected level and good work is seen in the Construction and Built Environment module on roof structures using technical language to explain how joists are fitted to load bearing walls and in the Engineering course where students are using information communication technology to complement research carried out at a local shopping centre on types of torches available on the market. In the Catering option students had produced good quality outcomes in the making of Christmas cakes.
145. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. In the better lessons learning is increased and good or very good progress made as in a Year 7 lesson where students were using equipment safely and confidently in a tie-dye project, a Year 9 lesson looking at in-flight meals, a Year 10 lesson looking at a production plan to support practical work, and a Year 11 lesson where students engaged purposefully on their coursework in textiles. These lessons had good pace, used effective teaching strategies, made good use of time and resources and had good student management. Satisfactory lessons have many positive features but can be teacher dominated, information not fully understood by students, or where students are off task and noisy when working. All students, including those with special educational needs, make good progress especially in practical work, which is of a good standard across the department. Relationships are usually good. Small groups on the GNVQ courses are suitably challenged in the teaching as seen in a lesson where students were using symbols for components and materials in building construction and in a lesson where students had investigated types of torches and were designing and making a mini-light using simple electronics.

146. Student attitudes are generally good. They work well together and respond positively when suitably challenged. Most are confident to talk about their work using correct technical language. On occasions students can be noisy when working and restless during lengthy talk sessions. Boys in particular respond better to practical activity.
147. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The department is efficiently led and documentation is well prepared. The department has improved its examination performance and there is a good range of courses provided in Years 10 and including GNVQ and non-examination courses. There is a common assessment procedure in Years 7 to 9, but marking is not consistent across the department. Monitoring and recording of the students' progress is not consistent across all subjects within the department. Information and communication technology, although used, is underdeveloped and control technology not fully addressed in Years 7 to 9. The full-time and part-time technicians provide valuable assistance in the department.
148. Improvements since the last inspection has been satisfactory, and most issues raised have now been addressed. However, planning to meet the needs of the full range of students' needs is not fully developed.

## GEOGRAPHY

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

### Strengths

- The thorough preparation of students in Years 10 and 11 for GCSE coursework and final examinations which results in above average standards.
- An increasing number of students opting for geography at GCSE as a result of engaging students' interest and motivation through imaginative projects in Year 9.
- Good leadership and management of the subject is leading to improving standards.

### Areas for improvement

- Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9, need to be more closely linked to aspects of the new curriculum.
- Include aspects of literacy, numeracy and information and communications technology in schemes of work, so that work in geography better supports the development of these skills.
- Improve the consistency of teaching in those areas where it falls below the usual standards of the department.

149. In 2001 standards in teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were average. This is an improvement on standards in 2000 where they were slightly below those nationally. Standards at the end of Year 11 at GCSE in the 2001 examinations are well above the national average. This is a marked improvement on standards in 1999 when results were below average. The improvement for boys is especially marked and in 2001 boys' results were better than those of girls. Students, especially boys, do better in geography than they do in their other subjects and students make good progress and show good achievement through the course.
150. At the end of Year 9, standards in work seen are average, while standards at the end of Year 11 are above average. Students' achievements are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. In Year 7 students know the eight points of the compass and can apply them successfully in activities that help consolidation of directional knowledge. In Year 8 students knowledge of place is good and students are able to identify on a world map outline, the countries from which migrants to Brazil have come. They can also describe accurately, using geographical terms, the vegetation structure of tropical rainforests. By Year 9 students have acquired the skills to use graphs to display information and some are skilled in their use of the computer to enhance work presentation in special 'projects'. However no evidence was seen of students' ability to suggest relevant geographical questions and appropriate sequences of investigation or to reach conclusions that are consistent with the evidence, in line with the expectation at the end of Year 9. These aspects

of enquiry work are currently underdeveloped. In Year 10 and 11 students acquire good knowledge and understanding of geographical topics such as energy and how both more and less economically developed countries are addressing issues of energy efficiency and pollution. Year 11 students show good understanding of the reasons for South Korea's rapid industrialisation and are able to evaluate the resultant costs and benefits for its inhabitants. The subject makes a satisfactory contribution to the development of students' basic skills but as this is currently not planned systematically into schemes of work it is not as effective as it could be.

151. The quality of teaching overall is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Teaching is most effective when planning is thorough, the purpose of the lesson is clear in what students are required to do and students are actively engaged in imaginative and challenging activities. For example in a Year 7 lesson on compass directions students were quickly required to apply their knowledge in a treasure trail exercise across Australia and to consolidate their understanding by writing about it. In a Year 9 lesson, high attaining students designed an imaginary retail park for Horley, were asked to write a letter as a local resident to object about the proposed development. In Year 11, students having learned about rapid industrialisation in Korea were guided through a question and answer session to evaluate its impact and then to write two letters to the country's President, one of praise and one of disapproval. Such activities enable students to acquire appropriate knowledge, to apply it in interesting tasks and as a result to better understand important geographical issues. Aspects of lessons, which do not extend students' learning in the terms of the new curriculum, nor provide consistent support for the development of basic skills, in Years 7 to 9, stem from the occasional use of low-grade exercises, for example colouring-in and one sentence answers to questions from an out-of date textbook. In Years 10 and 11 good subject knowledge and understanding of the examination requirements ensure students' notes for revision are detailed and the design of coursework allows students to perform at appropriate ability levels. As a result of teacher care and concern about their work, students' attitudes and behaviour are good. In occasional lessons where these standards are not met, students' progress is unsatisfactory and students show less interest and enthusiasm for the subject.
152. The quality of subject leadership and management is good. Much has been achieved in two years after a very unsettled period of staffing difficulties. The department is now settled and an ethos of collaborative working is being established to share good practice, with some success. In Years 7 to 9 the new head of department is re-introducing fieldwork and beginning to adopt an enquiry approach for more aspects of work to redress the current imbalance in the curriculum. These will help to address areas of weakness in students' learning. Monitoring of lessons and students' work is in place but is not yet as effective as it could be in dealing with issues of inconsistency.
153. Overall, the subject has made good progress since the last inspection. Standards have been maintained in Years 7 to 9. Standards have been raised and are now well above average at the end of Year 11. Most of the points in the last inspection have either been tackled successfully or are being addressed. The priorities chosen as a focus by the head of department have been appropriate and resulted in improvements in student's learning experiences and standards have been raised as a result in Years 10 and 11. It is now time to evaluate the quality of the current scheme of work for Years 7 to 9 in the light of the changes to the geography Programmes of Study, so that learning objectives and assessment criteria are more clearly linked. The subject's contribution to students' basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communications technology will be improved with more systematic planning of these skills into lessons. The development of a more prescriptive scheme of work for GCSE, which includes what knowledge, understanding and skills students must cover within each topic should help address some inconsistencies in teaching and thus students' learning. The sharing of criteria for any aspect of the evaluation of the department's work might also prove helpful.

## HISTORY

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

Strengths
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- Effective and at times excellent teaching which leads to highly motivated students and good progress.
- Very good leadership and management of the subject which ensures an effective team approach to the subject.

#### Areas for improvement

- The more rigorous assessment of students' understanding and skills in Years 7 to 9.
- The more systematic use of computers to support and enhance learning.

154. GCSE results at A\* to C level in 2001 were 70 per cent which were above the national rate of 61 per cent and are a significant improvement upon the A\* to C pass rate in 2000 of 53.4 per cent and in 1999 of 37.5 per cent. The A\* to G pass rate in 2001 was 100 per cent which was above the national rate of 98 per cent. The pass rate at A\* to C for girls was 40 per cent higher than for boys in 2000 but in 2001 the difference was reduced to 10 per cent.
155. Standards of student work in Year 7 are average. By the end of Year 9 standards are above average overall, although those students the weakest literacy skills do not reach these standards. Students' achievements are good. Students currently in Years 10 and 11 are also reaching above average standards across the ability range and, as with the Year 11 students in 2001, are expected to exceed the targets set for them on the basis of their prior attainment. Students are making good progress and their achievements are good. Students with special educational needs make good progress, although they would benefit further from subject specific targets on their individual educational plans.
156. Students in Year 7 are able to give a satisfactory range of reasons for an event, for example the victory of William of Normandy in 1066 and to use observational skills in the description of evidence such as the Bayeux Tapestry. Students make more rapid progress from the start of Year 8. This is partly because they seem to be more settled socially and so able to concentrate better and partly because the tasks are better matched to their intellectual development and range of literacy skills. By Year 9 the majority of students are able to voice opinions confidently and based upon a good level of subject knowledge, for example regarding the opportunities for poor people to protest about living and working conditions in Victorian Britain. Students in Year 10 are able to relate specific historical evidence to broader ideas in their study of explanations given for ill-health in the middle ages and to apply their knowledge of reasons for change to new periods, for example the new importance of technology and communications in the Renaissance. By Year 11 most students are secure in their use of key factors to explain problems of law enforcement in the nineteenth century American West.
157. Teaching is a significant strength of the department and is good throughout the school, often better in Years 10 and 11. A third of lessons seen was excellent and there was no unsatisfactory teaching. Students are helped to learn by the careful planning of lessons, which are usually well matched to the students' abilities. Teachers maintain a very good pace of learning and manage the students very well. Their subject knowledge is very good and their own enthusiasm for the subject contributes to the enjoyment of the students. Excellent features include planned opportunities to encourage the students to develop reasoned opinions and understanding of the sequence of events studied, as particularly seen in Year 8 work on the Reformation; the explicit analysis of values and attitudes of past societies, for example in a Year 9 lesson on the Victorian workhouse; and preparation of Year 11 students for examination questions by skilfully using their prior knowledge of medieval epidemics in an engaging group work exercise. All lessons seen start by outlining learning objectives, and teachers check that these have been met at the end of the lessons with well focused questions. As a consequence of effective teaching the quality of students' learning is good and very good on GCSE courses. Students are highly motivated and demonstrate committed attitudes. Their learning skills are good although the progress of those students with poor literacy skills is less secure.
158. Leadership and management of the department are very good. Nearly all points for improvement raised at the last inspection have been tackled effectively, and improvement since then has been good. Teachers' subject knowledge at GCSE level is good and they have high expectations of

examination candidates. The change of GCSE syllabus in 1999 has contributed to a better match of topics to students' abilities. Marking and advice as to how to improve is thorough and regular and opportunities are regularly taken in lessons to contribute to the spiritual, social, moral and cultural developments of the students. The department makes a satisfactory contribution to the literacy needs of students, particularly from Year 8, with its emphasis upon the use and correct spelling of subject specific words. Numerical skills are developed satisfactorily in the use of statistics and graphs, for example in the study of urban development in nineteenth century Britain. The head of department has established a very good team working ethos both in this subject and in a wider role as head of the humanities faculty.

159. The department needs to build upon its recent design of tests in Years 7 to 9 and to assess students' understanding and skills more rigorously. The only outstanding issue from the last inspection is the use of information technology where development has been modest.

### INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

#### Strengths

- All students are taught ICT regularly in a specialist room.
- Standards have improved in Years 10 and 11 and there are opportunities for students to reach high levels of attainment in some aspects of the curriculum.
- Students are able to enhance their learning effectively through the use of ICT in several areas of the curriculum, such as modern languages, art, design and technology and religious education.

#### Areas for improvement

- Not all subject areas are using ICT effectively to enhance learning, for instance, science, maths and history.
- The sensing and control aspects of the ICT curriculum are not covered effectively.
- Teachers do not always provide work at different levels for students with different levels of ability, particularly in Years 7 to 9.
- The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is not sufficiently challenging for many students.
- The procedures for the assessment of students' progress are not sufficiently comprehensive or consistent.

160. The school's assessment of the students' attainment at the end of Year 9 in 2001 show the overall standard to be well above the national average, a further improvement on the above average 2000 results.

161. The school's results in the 2001 GNVQ ICT course showed that less than a tenth of the students passed. The school piloted this course and there are, as yet, only limited national figures for comparison. All students entered for the GCSE exam gained a grade in the A\* to C range. This is a big improvement on the 2000 results, when about half of the students gained a grade in this range. In both years, all students passed the examination. However, the percentage of students in the year group taking this examination was very small making national comparisons inappropriate.

162. The inspection shows that standards at the end Year 9 are above national average overall and have been maintained since the last inspection. Some aspects of the students' work have strengthened whilst others remained undeveloped. The students' experiences of ICT when they arrive in the school are very varied so that this represents good achievement. Many students develop a high level of skill using specialised ICT tools, such as a presentation programme. For instance, students learn to sequence pages of information showing aspects of their family, displaying research that they have done, or devising an adventure game. These involve clip-art, animated text and coloured backgrounds. Advanced features such as 'macro' buttons bring in elements of control and most students incorporate appropriate design or genre features, which show that they have an understanding of style or audience. Higher attaining students refine and improve their work effectively, incorporating more complex routes through the information or providing 'hyperlinks' to

the Internet. The students' knowledge and skill in other aspects of the curriculum such the creation and use of databases, and the use of the Internet are average. When questioned students show a sound understanding of modelling using spreadsheets but their understanding of the use of variables in prediction is more limited. Few have used e-mail in lessons. Most students can search the Internet for particular topics but their search strategies are limited and few are able to assess the relative value of different sources of information. Their knowledge of sensing, measurement and control is below average. There is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls.

163. At the end of Year 11 standards are average and the students' achievements are satisfactory. This is an improvement on the previous inspection although it is a combination of strengths and weaknesses. The students' command of the range of software and hardware tools enables them to store and analyse data, or to present information in a variety of ways for different audiences. It is usually sufficient to enhance their learning in subjects such as English and design technology. Higher attainers are able to present a report into drugs abuse, or a newspaper on political issues, which incorporates information from the Internet, clip art and simple tables of data that they have collected. Most students are able to explore a database of information on college courses, sorting and searching to select fields within a particular range such as cost or duration. However, their ability to develop computer models to test hypotheses is below average. Their work in sensing and logging events or devising sequences of instructions to control, say, electrical devices is similarly underdeveloped. The work of the students studying for the GCSE examination is above average at the end of Year 11. Most students can design information systems, which enable a hotel to plan bookings, budgets and customer information. The use an appropriate range of software tools. Higher attainers can compare the relative advantages of different tools for particular applications.
164. Overall, teaching is satisfactory throughout the school, although about half the teaching seen was good or even better. Teaching is better in Years 10 and 11 but there were examples of very good teaching in all years. In the most successful lessons, teachers provide work, which challenges students of different ability, make the aims and tasks very clear and give very good demonstrations that the students can follow. Teachers often provide good models or examples, which help explain procedures. For example, in a very good Year 10 lesson, the teacher had assessed the students' previous progress and provided very clear written instructions using a logical approach to the task. Students responded well, building on previous knowledge and understanding to prepare pages for a 'book' on drug abuse. The regular injections of help and support enabled students to work independently and produce imaginative work employing a range of software tools including a word processor, clip art and Internet browser. This was an open-ended task, which enabled higher attainers to progress quickly. The teacher provided appropriate help for lower attainers and those with special educational needs who made equally good progress. Less successful lessons are those in which insufficient thought is given to helping and supporting the whole range of ability. In a Year 7 class, the teacher had not taken enough account of the learning needs or prior knowledge of the students before embarking on a very challenging database project. Over half the students became confused because they did not understand the demonstration, or had difficulty following the written instructions. Difficulties were compounded by the system of projecting the computer screen and problems with the network, which did not work very well. Support given by the teacher and a classroom technician, and the persistence of the students, were vital in ensuring that, by the end of the lesson most had been able to complete at least part of the task. However, in this case, the lower attaining students did less well. Where support is good, students with special educational needs do well, although teachers rarely plan different work or worksheets for these students. Students are usually well-behaved in lessons, work hard and persevere with difficult tasks. The enthusiasm for learning contributes to the good achievement in Years 7 to 9. The teachers enjoy good relationships with students although in some lessons students showed immature behaviour in settling down to work, especially with inexperienced teachers who had not developed strategies in gaining the attention of students who were sitting at computers.
165. Most aspects of the curriculum are satisfactory, but sensing and control aspects are not adequately covered. The curriculum has been improved since the last inspection and all students have at least one hour's lesson every two weeks. In Years 10 and 11 students follow a Key Skill course to Level 1. This is not a particularly high level course, repeating many elements covered in

Years 7 to 9. At present it is merely enabling students to catch up areas missed earlier. The curriculum should be developed to ensure all students leave school with a qualification, which matches their achievement. On the other hand, in Years 7 to 9, the scheme of work does not take into account students' prior knowledge and understanding, as in the Year 7 lessons where students were given work, which was too difficult. In order to study GCSE information technology, the department chooses students on motivation prior attainment, as the demand for places is high. Currently there is one group in Year 11 and two groups in Year 10. They take an hour's lesson after school each week due to the constraints of the regular timetable. Within the specialist ICT lessons, teachers take good care to ensure students develop skills in literacy, providing clear explanations and spelling of technical terms and opportunities for speaking and listening. Work in spreadsheets and graphic design supports numeracy effectively.

166. The use of ICT in other subjects is variable but has improved since the last inspection. It is used well in design and technology for presentation, research, graphic design and food analysis, in art for researching artists and exploring digital images and in modern foreign languages for exploring shopping, food and holidays in the target languages. ICT is an integral part of the vocational curriculum in Years 10 and 11 such as business studies and is used well. In other subjects, such as geography and English, word processing aids drafting and editing and presenting information in the form of graphs or reports. In mathematics, ICT is under-used: some work on spreadsheets takes place and in Years 10 and 11 some students word process their course work and computers are used for data collection and graphical representation. Opportunities are also missed in history, science and physical education. Students do not use e-mail except at home. Many students have home computers and will complete assignments and homework using ICT.
167. Assessment is unsatisfactory. Students' work is marked at the end of each project when students are given a National Curriculum level but during the lessons in Years 7 to 9, students are not sure how well they are doing. Since the ICT work done in other areas of the curriculum is not assessed, the school's assessment does not take a broad enough picture of individual achievement and is over-estimating attainment levels in Years 7 to 9. In the examination classes, clear criteria are used, assessment is generally accurate and students are more regularly told what they need to do to improve. Reports only show attainment levels in broad curriculum areas and do not set targets for improvement. Although the examination data is analysed the lack of accuracy for Years 7 to 9 means that the use of information to guide curriculum planning is also unsatisfactory.
168. The management of ICT is satisfactory. Co-ordination is currently split between a member of the senior management team who is responsible for ICT across the curriculum and resource development, and the main teacher for ICT, who is responsible for the development of the specialist curriculum. This arrangement is currently under review. Both the curriculum co-ordinator and senior managers observe lessons and this has been important in developing the curriculum and supporting the largely non-specialist staff who teach ICT. However, training for staff across the other subject areas has currently stalled. Since the last inspection, the school has improved access to the computers, introducing new computer rooms and extending the network. However, the demand is such that other subject departments are finding difficulties in timetabling lessons in the computer rooms to fit in with their schedules. Business studies, for example, have their own computer room, which is not easily booked by other subjects. The school is planning to increase the number of computers in the future.
169. Overall, the improvement in the short time since the last inspection is satisfactory and, given the enthusiasm and dedication of the staff and technicians, the department is well placed to develop further.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

### Strengths

- The policy to include all students in language learning and the teamwork of the faculty staff is ensuring good improvement since the last inspection.



- The sustained use of the foreign language for teaching.

Areas for improvement

- The opportunities for students to participate in oral work.
- The use of assessment information to monitor students' progress and set targets.
- Strategies to challenge the highest attaining students.

170. Teacher assessments of students' attainment in 2001 at the end of Year 9 indicated that standards were above average. In the 2001 GCSE examination in German the percentage of students with higher grades A\* to C was just above the national average and in French just below. Almost every student in the year group was entered and gained a grade A\* to G. This level of entry is much higher than the national picture. Students in French made slightly better progress and those in German much better progress than students with similar prior attainment nationally. Over the last two years students have performed as well and often better in German than in their other subjects. In French students have performed less well. Staffing problems in the recent past have contributed to the comparatively lower attainments in French. Since the last inspection there has been a steady improvement in French. In German the upward trend has been better and standards have improved from below national averages to just above. In the 2001 GCSE there was a marked improvement in the performance of boys at A\* to C level.
171. By the end of Year 9, standards of work seen for both boys and girls are above average, and students' achievements are good. In speaking and listening students of all abilities benefit from the teaching in the foreign language. As a result students become accustomed to the intonation and speed of the language. From Year 7 students are able to follow instructions and they answer questions with confidence. Learning is better in those groups where students are more active in speaking, because this reinforces their learning. In Years 8 and 9 the grouping arrangements allow teachers to adapt work to different levels of ability. Students with special educational needs benefit from this. Students known to be lacking in confidence are seen to be active in speaking tasks. Higher attaining students can manipulate phrases to create individual replies. There is less challenge to higher attaining students in written work and the difference in standards is in presentation and accuracy rather than difficulty. For some students of all abilities the presentation of written work is poor. Where there is good progress students contribute to their own learning by good attitudes and a willingness to participate. Where progress is not good students are reluctant to play an active part in lessons.
172. By the end of Year 11, standards of work seen in lessons and scrutiny are average, and students' achievements are satisfactory. There are wide variations between groups, and the impact of staffing problems in recent years is more evident at this key stage. Higher attaining students in both languages are working at the level of higher grade GCSE. Written work is good and shows the benefit of teachers' experience of examination preparation. Written work shows a range of language, re-drafting of coursework and more extended writing. In speaking French students are fluent but pronunciation sometimes shows elementary errors. In German students speak confidently and with good pronunciation. Students have good listening skills and can pick out key information from authentic tape recordings. Students in these groups make a major contribution to their own learning through their mature attitudes and self-motivation. The faculty works hard to make language study valid for all students. One group of students in Year 10 follow a work-related course and have only one lesson a week. They make satisfactory progress because the teacher tailors work to their level and because the alternative course has created a more positive attitude to school. In a lower attaining group in Year 11 the strategy of having two teachers in results in progress in the lesson although long-term attainment levels are low. Where the progress of some lower attaining students is poor it is where students display negative attitudes.
173. Teaching is good. Teachers know the students as individuals and show good understanding of those with special educational needs. For these students teachers adapt tasks to be shorter and use illustrated worksheets to compensate for difficulties with basic literacy. A strength of all the teaching seen is the challenge by teaching almost exclusively in the foreign language. This is a key factor in the improvement since the last inspection. To avoid the use of English teachers make good use of visual materials and the overhead projector. As a result students develop good

listening and speaking skills. Teachers use pair work well but learning would benefit from increasing the opportunities for students to speak more in common classroom situations. In the higher attaining groups in Years 10 and 11, where groups are large, opportunities are missed to challenge the highest attaining students. Teachers plan their lessons well with a clear sequence of varied activities. As a result lessons move at a good pace, students are motivated by the tasks and good learning takes place. Staff manage students well with a positive strategy of support and encouragement for some disaffected and lower attaining students. Teachers are well supported by the work of teaching assistants. This enables lessons to sustain pace and students of different abilities to make progress. Teachers regularly assess students' work and keep good records, but make limited use of National Curriculum levels to set targets for students. In Year 9 the use of computers is a regular feature and both students and staff are stimulated by the use of authentic materials.

174. Leadership and management of the faculty are good, and improvement since the last inspection has been good. The head of French and the other established member of the faculty offer good support and play a key role in the development of new staff. The faculty development plan has appropriate targets to improve teaching and learning but does not allocate enough time to develop these areas. Recent developments in class groupings are motivating more students. The well supported programmes of exchanges and visits motivate students' interest in language learning. This year a member of the faculty has created programmes with foreign Internet sites, which are producing very positive responses from students. The faculty now has a good balance of new and experienced staff who work together very well as a team. They share the same commitment to raising standards and they have shown the capacity to succeed.

## MUSIC

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

### Strengths

- The use of original and contemporary teaching materials, which stimulate and motivate the students.
- Good leadership of the subject, sowing the seeds for better learning and attainment.
- A very good range of extra-curricular opportunities for making music.

### Areas for improvement

- Raising standards in GCSE and at the end of Year 9, by ensuring lesson planning better reinforces learning for lower attainers.
- Effective liaison with computer technicians to ensure students have access to appropriate computer-based learning resources.

175. Due to the small number of GCSE candidates in 2001, no meaningful comparison of the standards achieved in examinations in music at the end of Year 11 is possible. However since 1998 results have been below the national average and below the average of similar schools. In teachers' assessments for students in Year 9 in 2001 the attainment of girls was in line with national expectations, but that of boys was below them.
176. Standards of work seen during the inspection in Year 9 and Year 11 are average. Students in Years 7 to 9 are achieving well, making good progress in the subject, given that music provision in the feeder schools is of mixed quality. In Years 10 and 11 their achievement is satisfactory. Students sing enthusiastically in unison, but with limited vocal technique. They perform, primarily on keyboards, with attention to appropriate technique and use the facilities of the keyboards with increasing skill to learn about structure in music through the disciplines of performance and composition. Year 10 students show considerable feel for combining melody and harmony in their song writing. Students listen well to a range of different musical styles and are able to make evaluative comment on what they hear, often using appropriate musical vocabulary well. However, terminology related directly to staff notation is not well grasped in many instances and spellings of key words are inconsistent. In Year 11 they lack confidence in relating their aural experiences to

theoretical concepts. Students across the school respond well to music of different cultures, as illustrated in Year 7's enthusiastic response to African choral singing, which inspired their own singing to aspire to a higher, more expressive level. When using electronic keyboards in Years 7 to 9, they apply some of the processes of information and communication technology in their music making, but they only use computers adequately as a tool for creating and researching music in Years 10 and 11.

177. The quality of teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. The units of work are well planned and include much original material, well tailored to the experiences and needs of the students. This is highly motivating, contributing to the students' aspirations to succeed in their music making, as well as building a very constructive working environment. Worksheets are annotated with National Curriculum level descriptions, which enable the students to know how much progress they are making within any one performance or composition task. Teachers have good subject knowledge and complement each other well in terms of their extended expertise as instrumentalists and singers. Some very good teaching strategies are used, for example in Year 7 "call and response" singing helped bind group singing together and, at the same time, served to highlight the structure of the songs. Furthermore, teachers' instructions to the students, given as a voice-over to a continued accompaniment played on the keyboard, ensured that the students stayed focused during the breaks in singing. In another instance, verses were transposed to higher keys, extending the students' vocal range. However, the planning of some lessons lacks sufficient rigour to enable all students to benefit. In several practical lessons explanations and clarification to the whole class are given after practical work and without leaving opportunity for low achieving students to consolidate before moving on to the next stage. In GCSE listening paper preparation a lack of variety of methods leads students to be too passive, limiting their ability to develop independent analytical skills. This impacts on other areas of the course, too. The lack of homework in Years 7 to 9 weakens the students' sense of continuity from lesson to lesson, restricts extension work and limits the opportunity to reinforce basic concepts of music literacy, such that students can recall them freely and well. The use of exercise books in Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory, with students not clearly delineating neat and rough work and teachers not monitoring them adequately. Spelling errors go uncorrected. Key words are hardly visible in the classroom displays (which otherwise are very good and include students' work). Students inevitably have difficulty changing to new working habits in Years 10 and 11. Music is a popular subject and in all lessons students work attentively and cooperatively. Students are generous towards each other's achievements, frequently applauding spontaneously when they recognise good work from their peers. Those with special educational needs are well supported by a teaching assistant who is sufficiently musically skilled to provide constructive help in all areas of the subject. The teachers use computers and digital instruments and equipment very effectively in preparing and presenting materials for their lessons and many of the more gifted students benefit from their expertise in this area, although opportunities in class for these students are sometimes overlooked.
178. There is a very good range of extra-curricular music, contributing much to the social and cultural life of the school. The school houses a music centre of Surrey Youth Music & Performing Arts on Saturday mornings and half of the 150 students attending come from the school: many others from feeder primaries. There are no instrumental teachers visiting during the week at present. The music staff and a private teacher lead choirs, a band, a technology group and several steel bands, one of which has recently performed in the Royal Albert Hall, and another of which is a parents' ensemble. The parents, governors and head teacher all actively support the work of the department and plans for new music accommodation are well advanced. A second GCSE group runs after school (albeit on a fraction of the time needed) to provide opportunity for those who have difficulty choosing music in the normal run of the Year 10 options system. Assessment is used effectively to inform teachers of students' progress and to review the content of lessons, but reports to parents do not focus sufficiently on setting students specific targets to which to aspire in the short and medium term. Resources are well used, but students are restricted using the high quality music software available as three out of the five available computers have hard-drive problems, which have remained unresolved for some time.

179. Overall, the subject has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. Boys' behaviour is much better and they now comprise the majority of GCSE students; an effective short-term solution to the accommodation problems has been found prior to moving to a purpose-built suite; teaching is much improved. Standards at GCSE and at age 14 have not improved, many students are still weak retaining musical knowledge and still no formal homework is given to students in Years 7 to 9. This notwithstanding, good, new leadership in the department (in post for less than one year), has done much to set a good foundation for the future by implementing a very good scheme of work and establishing a positive team spirit for the subject within the school and beyond. The number of students in the current Year 10 is double that of the largest GCSE group of previous years. They are well motivated to succeed and there is every indication standards will begin to develop very positively in the coming years, given a period of stable staffing.
180. In order to improve further the school needs to raise standards, at GCSE level especially; review the homework policy to enhance the schemes of work; ensure teaching planning and strategies provide opportunity for lower attainers to reinforce their learning and for higher attainers to be stretched with sufficient extension work; ensure effective support by a computer technician so that students have adequate hardware to run programmes from which their learning would benefit and that streaming audio files which supplement listening in class are accessible from computers in the learning resource centre.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- Leadership and management are good with a clear vision for implementing change.
- Students benefit from a wide range of opportunities in the curriculum and extra curricular activities; participation is high.
- Teaching and learning are good and often very good enabling students to make good progress as they move through the school.
- High expectations are demanded of students by a team of knowledgeable highly qualified specialists.

### Areas for improvement

- To continue to raise standards in GCSE physical education through target setting.
- To develop and use information and communication technology in management and to enhance teaching and learning.
- To review the balance of activities within the curriculum in Years 7 – 9, and ensure all students study two areas of activity in depth in Year 10 and 11.

181. Standards in lessons observed in physical education by the end of Year 9 are above average and match teacher assessments. Students' achievements are good. At the end of Year 11 standards in the core curriculum are also above average, and students continue to achieve well. GCSE results have significantly improved since the last inspection. In 2001 results were average with students achieving 50 percent A\* to C and 100 percent A\* to G.
182. Students achieve well in relation to attainment on entry and make good progress as they move through the school. Students with special educational needs are fully included in the physical education programme and also make good progress. By the end of Year 9 students have a good knowledge and understanding of skills and techniques and apply them into games, gymnastics, dance and health related exercise activities. In games play students demonstrate a range of sending and receiving skills, understand the rules of the game and use the principle of attack and defence with increasing confidence. In gymnastics in Year 7 and 8 students create and perform complex sequences on the floor and apparatus with increasing control and accuracy the higher attainers performing with good body tension and quality of movement. Students respond well to a given stimulus when creating and performing group dances.

183. By the end of Year 11 in the core curriculum students increase their knowledge, understanding and performance skills in a range of activities. In Year 10 trampolining students learn well, performing complex sequences linking moves fluently. A number of more able students perform more difficult routines with quality and consistency with one student performing the more advanced skills of somersaults with confidence. Students following the Junior Sports Leaders Award develop good leadership, management and communication skills.
184. Teaching and learning are good. All teachers are knowledgeable, highly qualified specialists, confident in teaching a range of activities. Students respond well to the high expectations demanded of them. They are well managed and organised and as a result behaviour is good, participation is high and the wearing of sports clothing is excellent. Lessons are well planned and organised to meet the needs of all students. Teachers make good use of questioning to improve students understanding and good use of demonstration improves their observation and performance skills. Praise and encouragement is constantly given developing students confidence and self-esteem.
185. Students enjoy their lessons, are highly motivated and willing to be physically active due to the enthusiasm and the very good role models of the physical education team. Positive relationships are fostered between students and teachers gaining respect. As students move through the school they develop good social and co-operative skills and in competitive play demonstrate fair play and good sporting behaviour. They also become more responsible for preparing their bodies to move, have a good understanding of their own and others safety and used the specialist facilities with due care and attention.
186. Students benefit from a wide range of opportunities in the curriculum and extra curricular activities. A significant amount of time is spent on games in Years 7 to 9, limiting the amount of time spent on gymnastics and dance. All students in Year 7 swim, an essential life skill and health related exercise is taught as a discrete unit of work. Not all students in Year 10 and 11 study two areas of activity in depth. The provision for extra curricular recreational and sporting opportunities is excellent and participation is high. Students have extensive opportunities to represent their school in competitive sport with a number of students selected to play regionally and nationally.
187. Leadership is very good and management is good. The head of department keeps abreast of current issues and initiatives. This is evident in the school receiving Sportsmark in recognition of the physical education and sporting provision in the school. The monitoring and evaluating of teaching and learning is good and well-planned continuing professional development is making an impact on the improved teaching. The department works well together as a team, is committed and gives generously of their time. Procedures for assessment are rigorous and inform curriculum planning, however GCSE students need to be made fully aware of their progress. The outdoor facilities are inadequate. Both the playing fields and the multi play area are poorly drained and often unusable. The provision for information and communication technology for management and teaching and learning is unsatisfactory. The department currently does not have a designated room for the teaching of physical education.
188. Improvements since the last inspection are good. Standards have improved as a result of improved teaching and learning. GCSE results have significantly improved and regular study sessions after school are a success. The introduction of the Junior Sports Leaders Award is a highly successful and popular course. Extra curricular provision continues to be a strength with a significant growth in the number of girls taking part.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- Consistently good teaching which is leading to good progress and above average and improving attainment.
- The leadership and management of the subject are providing a clear sense of purpose.

#### Areas for improvement

- Assessment of the students' progress in Years 7 to 9.
- The monitoring and reviewing of teaching and learning.

189. Since the last inspection, there has been a consistent upward trend in the results for the GCSE short course, and in 2001 results were well above average. Eighty seven per cent of the students achieved a higher level grade compared to a national average of fifty nine per cent. Seventy four per cent obtained an A\*, A or B grade. Students do better in the religious studies examination than in most of their other subjects and there are no significant differences between the attainment of boys and girls.
190. Year 7 enter the school with varied experiences of religious education. They make good progress and by the end of Year 9, standards are above average. Students' achievements are good. They know the basic tenets of Christianity, Judaism, Islam and Hinduism.. Overall, the organisation of lessons is conducive to good learning. Past learning is reviewed and formal introductions focus on key points, which are often highlighted on the black board. Challenging questions test understanding, which is then reaffirmed and extended through a range of interesting activities. These range from considering the relevance of the Ten Commandments for life in modern Britain to students writing their own Psalms. Year 7 used specific software packages to increase their knowledge of Divali and Chanukah. Good teaching of a unit on Philosophy and Ethics, results in Year 9 enhancing their conceptual thinking. Students in top and middle sets can explain what ultimate questions are and ponder on the existence of Hell. They are very well prepared for the Year 10 and 11 syllabus.
191. Standards in work seen in Year 11 are above average, and students are achieving well. However, those Year 11 students who are not taking any accredited course are not fully reaching the expectations outlined in the Local Agreed Syllabus. The one-hour of teaching that they receive once a fortnight gives too little time to cover the syllabus in depth. The school has recognised this problem and all Year 10 students either study for the GCSE examination, full or short course, or take the Certificate of Achievement in Religious Education.
192. Much of the work on life after death was impressive, with students showing a detailed awareness of Christian and Islamic perspectives that had been well taught. At times, the quality of debate was especially noteworthy and all students deepened their understanding. Teachers create a secure environment that allows students to share ideas about, for instance, divorce and marriage. Students benefit from teachers' good subject knowledge and very clear explanations of difficult concepts such as free will. Consequently, they are able to meaningfully discuss the Islam teaching on man's destiny. Year 11 students, who are not doing the short course, made sound progress in a lesson when they considered the causes of conflict. Students with special educational needs achieved well, responding positively to the teacher's detailed knowledge of their strengths and weaknesses. Non examination students make unsatisfactory progress over time and do not sufficiently increase their religious knowledge.
193. Students are mature and attentive. Good teaching helps all to understand difficult concepts thereby motivating them further. They respond positively to the teacher's high expectations for academic standards and behaviour. This is a factor in the good relationships that exists between staff and students.
194. The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school. Lessons begin with the aims of the lessons being shared with the students and usually end with sessions that test the new learning. Generally, teachers' good knowledge of the subject is effectively communicated, with a Year 11 class quickly understanding Islam teaching about sin. Key words are consistently emphasised and revision strategies well organised to focus attention on exam requirements. A wide range of resources is well used with, for example, an insistence on structured note taking when viewing videos. Satisfactory teaching would have been better if there had been a focus on delivering the essential points simply. Marking does not require students to react to comments and does not always give detailed prompts that pinpoint the way forward to higher achievement.

Teachers begin with references to earlier learning in order to bolster students' new knowledge. For example, Islamic views on the role of women, which had been covered last term, set the context for a study of a unit on social harmony. Very well prepared resources, such as a collection of sexist jokes and videos on gender stereotyping, engage the students. A scrutiny of written work for the first eight weeks of the course indicates a good, detailed understanding of the links between religious belief and the media. Very good work on the capacity of television to reinforce or negate Christian teaching on the sanctity of life was seen. Lessons and work throughout the term are well planned to ensure a brisk pace of learning, resulting in good achievement by the majority of students.

195. The recently appointed head of department leads the subject well, combining vision with a high level of commitment and administrative skill. Good strategies, such as mentoring, are in place to support the new and inexperienced teachers who now form half of the department, although additional training is required to fully develop their undoubted potential. The head of department is a very good role model for successful teaching and this is an asset, which that can be shared with the new team. The school is aware that the monitoring of teaching and learning will need to be improved to take account of the requirements of the new specialist team and school priorities. For example, that assessment at the end of Year 9 lacks rigour which makes it difficult to measure students' gains in knowledge and understanding or to set meaningful subject targets for individual students. Major curriculum changes have already occurred and there is a review of past decisions not to require students on the certificate course to do homework.