

INSPECTION REPORT

SMITHILLS SCHOOL

BOLTON

LEA area: BOLTON

Unique reference number: 105260

Headteacher: Mr J Lawson

Reporting inspector: Mr D Cox
10297

Dates of inspection: 26 – 30 November 2001

Inspection number: 199677

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:	Smithills School Smithills Dean Road Bolton
Postcode:	BL1 6JS
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr I Carter
Date of previous inspection:	26 April 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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10297	D Cox	Registered Inspector		The characteristics and effectiveness of the school. The school's results and students' achievements. Teaching and learning Leadership and management. Issues for action.
9086	R Watkins	Lay inspector		Students' attitudes, values and personal development Students' welfare, health and safety Partnership with parents and carers
22691	A Webb	Team inspector	Science	
11933	D Driscoll	Team inspector	Design and technology. Information and communication technology	
22411	A Axon	Team inspector	Mathematics	
2597	C Jackson	Team inspector	Vocational education. Special educational needs	
19596	B Treacy	Team inspector	English. English as an additional language	
20124	J Peach	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
15832	J Vanstone	Team inspector	History	
22590	R Castle	Team inspector	Geography	
4411	T Wright	Team inspector	Art and design	
19905	I Kirby	Team inspector	Music	Quality and range of opportunities for learning
7926	J Bowden	Team inspector	Physical education	
30427	F Shuffle-Botham	Team inspector	Religious education	
14851	G Laws	Team inspector	Special educational needs (Student Support Centre)	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Smithills School is much larger than most other secondary schools, and is a mixed 11 to 16 comprehensive school, situated in Bolton. The school operates on a large single site although the school does share the site with a post-16 college of further education. There are 1553 students on roll, which is similar to when the school was inspected previously. There are more parents wishing to send their children to the school than there are places available. The school takes students from the whole of Bolton but predominantly from 12 primary schools.

The school has a far higher than average proportion of students with English as an additional language (534 students). There are four students at an early stage of language acquisition. The minority ethnic groups are mainly of Indian and Pakistani backgrounds. Whilst the school attracts students from a wide spread of attainment the attainment of students on entry is well below average although students in the current Year 7 entered the school with broadly average levels of attainment. There are 479 students on the special educational needs register which is above average, and significantly higher than that noted in the previous report. There are 56 students with Statements of Special Educational Need, which is above the national average and higher than at the time of the previous inspection.

The overall social-economic circumstance of the students is well below average. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is above the national average at 27 per cent.

There is a local education authority designated Student Support Centre for 12 students at the school for students with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school with some very good features; the school is continuing to improve. The very good leadership and management of the school have been successful in bringing about a commitment to ensuring that students achieve well. The good teaching, combined with the students' good attitudes, ensures that students' levels of attainment are improved significantly whilst they are at the school. The school is providing good value for money.

What the school does well

- Students have good attitudes, behave well and relationships are very good. The harmonious interactions between students drawn from diverse ethnic backgrounds are a particularly notable feature.
- The quality of teaching is good and students achieve well.
- Provision for moral and social development is very good.
- The school provides very good pastoral care and support.
- The leadership and management of the school are very good.

What could be improved

- The achievement of a small number of Year 10 and 11 students, mostly white boys and girls, is unsatisfactory.
- There are aspects of leadership and management in mathematics, art and design, geography, history and religious education that need improving.
- The provision for students' cultural development, whilst satisfactory, needs to take greater account of the diverse range of cultures represented in the school.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good progress since the previous inspection in April 1998. Improvements to the quality of teaching, which was already good at the previous inspection, have ensured that levels of attainment have risen. There has been a significant rise in the proportion of students attaining five or more passes at GCSE grades A* to G. The rate of students' attendance has improved. The progress made by the school is a result of the determination of the headteacher, the governing body and the senior staff to improve even the smallest weaknesses and to promote the school's mission statement

'Creating Our Future – a Quest for Excellence'. The emphasis that the school's management has placed on improving teaching and learning has led to a greater proportion of teaching being very good or excellent. The school's response to the key issues identified has been good although further work is needed to ensure that all middle managers fulfil their responsibilities and that there is a daily act of collective worship.

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			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	E	D	D	A

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

Results in the national tests for 14-year-olds were close to the national average in English and below average in mathematics and science when compared to all schools. In comparison with similar schools results were above average in English and science and average in mathematics. Taking all three subjects together, results were below the national average for all schools and above average when compared with similar schools. The attainment of boys and girls was broadly similar. The trend in the school's results is broadly in line with the national trend. The results of students from white and Indian backgrounds are broadly similar and better than those of students from Pakistani backgrounds.

Results in the 2001 GCSE examinations were just below the national average when compared to all schools and well above average when compared to similar schools. These results represent good levels of achievement for students who joined the school with levels of attainment well below average. There was no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls. However, there was a significant difference in the performance of the different groups represented in the school. Students from Indian and Pakistani backgrounds attained much better results than their white counterparts. Challenging targets for improving the proportion of students obtaining five or more passes at GCSE grades A* to C and A* to G have been set and the school has been successful in meeting these targets.

Standards of literacy and numeracy are average. In the work seen during the inspection, the standards that students attain by the end of Year 9 are above average in art and design; below average in all other subjects with the exception of English, geography and modern foreign languages where standards are average. In the work seen during the inspection, the standards that students attain by the end of Year 11 are well above average in vocational subjects and music; above average in information and communication technology; average in science, art and design, design and technology and history and below average in all other subjects.

There is no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls. However, there is a significant difference in the achievement of the different ethnic groups represented in the school. Whilst most students make good progress, students from Indian and Pakistani backgrounds make very good progress whilst a small number of white students make unsatisfactory progress. The unsatisfactory progress of this small number of white students is because of their disaffection with education and their poor attendance.

Students with special educational needs achieve well. Higher attaining students, including those who are particularly gifted and talented, also make good progress. Students for whom English as an additional language make good progress because of the good quality of teaching that they receive. Students who attend the Student Support Centre make good progress.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
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Attitudes to the school	Students have good attitudes to school and are keen to learn.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is good overall. Most students accept the school's Code of Conduct and respect its rules.
Personal development and relationships	The quality of personal development is good. The harmonious interactions between students drawn from diverse ethnic backgrounds are a particularly notable feature.
Attendance	Students' attendance is satisfactory.

Relationships are very good. The expectations and example of staff regarding attitudes towards others result in a friendly and pleasant community.

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.

Teaching is good at the school and there is a significant proportion of very good and excellent teaching. The consistency of good teaching is a major strength of the school and leads to students acquiring skills, knowledge and understanding at a good rate. There is no significant difference in the quality of teaching between the different years.

In Years 7 to 9, teaching is very good in English and modern foreign languages and good in all other subjects. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is very good in information and communication technology and vocational subjects; good in all other subjects with the exception of art and design, religious education and geography where it is satisfactory.

One significant strength of the teaching is the way that learning support assistants work with teachers to ensure that students with special educational needs are able to take part in lessons and make the same progress as other students.

Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of their subjects. They are good at improving students' reading and writing in individual lessons. There is no whole school approach to the teaching of numeracy but teachers do well. Teachers plan their lessons well. Teachers' expectations are high; teachers expect students to have a high degree of self-discipline and behaviour. They use a good range of teaching methods to motivate and encourage students to do well. In the best lessons teachers enabled students to discover for themselves, using students' own experiences to aid development of understanding. Teachers manage students very well. The students are very clear about what is expected of them and know very well the lines that must not be crossed. Marking can be a little too congratulatory; the result of this is that, while teachers have a good idea of how the students are progressing, the students themselves have only a satisfactory understanding of how well they are doing.

Teaching of students with special educational needs is good and they make good progress. Teachers know their students well and generally provide work that is challenging and at an appropriate level. Teaching in the Student Support Centre is of good quality, with some very good features. The quality of teaching and learning of students for English as an additional language is good. Students benefit from having support from specialist staff.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
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The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. The school's curriculum makes good provision in Years 7 to 9. The curriculum is satisfactory in Years 10 to 11 and the school recognises the need to develop vocational courses to meet the diverse needs of all students fully.
Provision for students with special educational needs	The curricular provision for students with special educational needs is good. The Student Support Centre provides good provision.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	Good. The school provides wide ranging provision for students and is ably supported by specialist staff from the local education authority.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. The provision for students' social and moral development is very good. The provision for students' spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its students	There is very good pastoral support for students coupled with good encouragement for them to work hard and to make progress with learning.

There is a good partnership between home and school, and the contribution that most parents make to their children's learning raise standards of attainment.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher is providing excellent leadership, supported by a very good senior management team and a very good governing body.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. Governors have a comprehensive understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The monitoring of the school's performance is very thorough although greater consistency is needed at middle management level.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Resources are carefully deployed to those areas where they will provide the greatest benefit. The school applied the principles of best value extremely well.

The school has an adequate match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum. There are adequate resources and accommodation.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most parents are positive about the examination results that students achieve. Students have good attitudes. The good teaching. The leadership provided by the headteacher. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents being kept better informed about how their child is progressing. The school working more closely with parents.

The inspection team agrees with parents' positive views. Most students do achieve well because of the good teaching. Students have good attitudes and relationships are very good. The headteacher is providing excellent leadership.

The inspection team found that the annual reports to parents along with other reporting procedures do give parents an accurate picture of the students' learning and targets for further progress. The school does work closely with parents.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

1. The majority of students entered the school with levels of attainment that, overall, were well below average. By the end of Year 9, the standards that students attain are below average and this represents a good level of achievement given their prior levels of attainment. By the end of Year 11, the standards that students attain are broadly average and this represents a good level of achievement for this group of students.
2. Attainment in the National Curriculum tests for 14-year-olds in 2001 was close to the national average in English and below average in mathematics and science when compared to all schools. In comparison with schools with a similar proportion of students eligible for free school meals, results were above average in English and science and average in mathematics. Taking all three subjects together, results were below the national average for all schools and above average when compared with schools with a similar proportion of students eligible for free school meals. The attainment of boys and girls was broadly similar. The trend in the school's results is broadly in line with the national trend. The results of students from white and Indian backgrounds are broadly similar and better than those of students from Pakistani backgrounds. This is because many of the students from Pakistani backgrounds enter the school with language difficulties and many have English as an additional language. Whilst the school provides good provision for these students it does take a number of years for these students to catch up.
3. In the GCSE examinations, the proportion of students obtaining five or more passes at A* to C was below the national average for all schools but well above average in comparison with similar schools. The proportion of students obtaining five or more passes at grades A* to G was close to the national average and well above average in comparison with similar schools. The improvement in the proportions of students attaining five or more passes in both categories was central to the school's improvement plan and a key area for improvement identified by senior managers.
4. Overall, in the 2001 GCSE examinations, results were just below the national average when compared to all schools and well above average when compared to similar schools. There was no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls. However, there was a significant difference in the performance of the different ethnic groups represented in the school. Students from Indian and Pakistani backgrounds attained much better results than their white counterparts. In the GCSE examinations, 100 per cent of students from Indian and Pakistani backgrounds attained at least five or more passes at grades A* to G whilst only 85 per cent of their white counterparts attained similar results. Particular concerns arise with regard to just a small number of Year 10 and 11 students, mostly white boys and girls, who hardly ever come to school. This so restricts their progress that it is unrealistic to enter them in external examinations and they leave school without formal qualifications and therefore are underachieving.
5. Results in the 2001 GCSE examinations were well above the national average in music; above average in art and design, information and communication technology and leisure and tourism; average in science and religious education; below average in English, mathematics, design and technology, history, drama and business and well below average in other subjects. Students' best results compared to their performance in other subjects were in art and design, drama, French, information and communications technology and religious education. Their worst results were in geography.
6. The results represent a good level of achievement given the students' attainment when they joined the school.
7. The headteacher and the governing body have set challenging targets for improvement particularly the proportion of students attaining five or more passes at GCSE grades A* to C and A* to G. The most recent results indicate that the school has been successful in meeting these targets.

8. Standards of literacy are average. Students' skills, with the exception of a small minority, in reading are sufficiently well developed to enable them to have access to the National Curriculum. Students' writing skills are average. Some subjects provide very good opportunities for students to develop their skills in writing, but there are variations in practice from subject to subject. In English, for example, much emphasis is placed upon re-drafting work and this helps students to become self-critical. In history, students are able to write in different styles for different audiences, but there are fewer opportunities for extended writing than might be expected.
9. Standards of numeracy are average. Subjects in the school generally make a sound contribution to developing numeracy skills although a whole school numeracy policy is not yet in place. In science, the level of numeracy is satisfactory. Students use a variety of methods to present data from practical work. Statistical skills are sound. Students carry out research and produce graphical data.
10. In the work seen during the inspection, the standards that students attain by the end of Year 9 are above average in art and design and below average in all other subjects with the exception of English, geography and modern foreign languages where standards are average.
11. In Years 7 to 9, students achieve very well in English and modern foreign languages; well in all other subjects with the exception of information and communication technology and physical education where achievement is unsatisfactory. In information and communication technology, students in Year 9 have only studied the subject for one year and so are not achieving standards that are high enough. This situation has now been rectified; all students in Years 7 to 9 now study the subject. In the lessons seen during the inspection, the students are now making good progress because they are taught well. In physical education, poor quality indoor accommodation, until recently, has limited the range of activities available to all students and has depressed overall standards. The poor quality of indoor accommodation has led to the achievement of students being unsatisfactory. This situation has now been rectified; in the lessons seen during the inspection, the students are now making good progress because they are taught well.
12. In the work seen during the inspection, the standards that students attain by the end of Year 11 are well above average in vocational subjects and music; above average in information and communication technology; average in science, art and design, design and technology and history and below average in all other subjects.
13. In Years 10 and 11, students achieve very well in information and communication technology and vocational subjects; well in all other subjects with the exception of art and design, geography and religious education where achievement is satisfactory and physical education where achievement is unsatisfactory for the same reasons as mentioned previously. This situation has now been rectified; in the lessons seen during the inspection, the students are now making good progress because they are taught well.
14. The rate at which students make progress is usually a result of the quality of teaching that they receive, so that where teaching is good, the standards achieved by students are higher than expected.
15. There is no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls. However, there is a significant difference in the achievement of the different ethnic groups represented in the school. Whilst most students make good progress, students from Indian and Pakistani backgrounds make very good progress whilst a small number of white students make unsatisfactory progress. The unsatisfactory progress of this small number of white students is because of their disaffection with education and their poor attendance.
16. Students with special educational needs achieve well. They make good progress in all years of the school. This is because of the appropriate teaching methods and the students' positive attitudes to learning.

17. Higher attaining students, including those who are particularly gifted and talented, also make good progress as a result of the specific provision that is being made for them, such as taking GCSE in mathematics a year earlier. In music, gifted and talented students make good progress because of the good teaching, and also because of the high quality of instrumental lessons from visiting teachers.
18. Students for whom English as an additional language make good progress because of the good quality of teaching that they receive. Subject teachers, supported well by the local education authority's specialist support staff, are aware of the needs of individuals and provide additional support and encouragement.
19. Students who attend the Student Support Centre make good progress. The emphasis on improving literacy and numeracy skills is always to the fore. This is particularly true in lessons that use information and communication technology extensively. Students enjoy working through the various 'Successmaker' programs, and this is helping them to make progress in literacy and numeracy.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

20. Students' attitudes to learning and their behaviour are good. They show the same good ability to sustain interest in lessons as was apparent at the previous inspection. Their relationships with others are very good. The harmonious interactions between students drawn from diverse ethnic backgrounds are a particularly notable feature. Parents are happy with the good attitudes and the standards of behaviour. Attendance has improved since the previous inspection and is now satisfactory, though it is still just below the national average.
21. In lessons throughout the school students' willingness to learn and their behaviour are good in four out of five lessons. They usually listen carefully to the teacher, try hard to answer questions, and willingly tackle the tasks they are given. Students' response is very good, and when teaching is at its best their eagerness to learn is impressive. For instance in a Year 9 information and communication technology lesson, students were very keen to take an active part. They rose to the teacher's high expectations when answering questions about technical aspects of text layout and when the next task involved handwriting rather than use of computers there were no complaints, they just got down to work straight away, in total silence. Quite often students volunteer to carry on working after the end of the lesson, through their break. Even on the minority of occasions when teaching is more mundane, students usually remain co-operative and willing to learn. For instance when the teacher gave a rather lengthy explanation in a religious education lesson, students listened politely throughout, though increased enthusiasm was apparent as soon as they were allowed to become actively involved in a subsequent task. Occasionally, when the pace of a lesson drops, they get involved in unnecessary chatter. Students with learning difficulties try very hard, showing an obvious desire to improve their skills and, with support from staff, manage to concentrate very well for the whole lesson.
22. Around the site behaviour is good. Students usually move with a sense of purpose between lessons, coping cheerfully during wet weather with the muddy paths between the buildings. However, the distances they have to move mean that there are times when the start of a lesson is delayed because of their late arrival. Occasional lapses from good behaviour arise, because there are a few students who lack self discipline to consistently live up to the school's expectations. The school does much to help them improve but nevertheless incidents of really poor behaviour, resulting in exclusion of the students involved, occur from time to time. The numbers of exclusions, both fixed term and permanent, has increased over the past year and is higher than at the previous inspection, and also higher than the average seen in other schools. This relates at least in part to the thorough application of the school's behaviour policy under the leadership of the new headteacher. The school also suggests that the recent changes from normal routines during the building of the new sports centre may have had short-term effects on the behaviour of some students.

23. Relationships are very good. The expectations and example of staff regarding attitudes towards others result in a friendly and pleasant community. The trust developed between students with special educational needs and staff makes an important contribution to their progress. Students from different ethnic cultures accept each others' varying backgrounds, religious beliefs and mix and work amicably together. They volunteer help for each other when this is part of the lesson. Other students are often supportive and helpful towards those with special needs, especially those with physical disabilities. Respect for others' feelings was readily apparent in a religious education lesson, as Year 10 discussed the benefits of living in a multicultural society. A few individuals are less sympathetic towards others' differences and occasionally generate a degree of friction, sometimes with a racial basis, but prompt and effective action by teachers means that any emerging problems are short-lived. Similarly students and parents feel secure that any bullying that staff find out about is tackled promptly.
24. Students cope well when they are asked to take responsibility, for instance in physical education lessons students on occasion are confident in leading warm-up sessions. Year 8 make a regular contribution to the running of the school through the rota they follow for office duties. A few older students take considerable responsibility for the running of the tuck shop. However, a sense of initiative in contributing to the school and wider community is less apparent; the new student volunteer council is just making a start on developing this aspect. In a similar way initiative in learning, for instance in undertaking research tasks, is satisfactory but has room for further development.
25. Attendance has improved since the previous inspection and is satisfactory, although in the year preceding the inspection it was still slightly below the national average. Attendance in Years 7 to 9 was above 90 per cent, but in Years 10 and 11 it was slightly below. At the time of the inspection the upward trend in attendance was still continuing, with a noticeable increase during the first weeks of the autumn term compared with the same period in the previous year. Many students come to school regularly, never staying away without good reason. Their motivation is aided by the high profile given to attendance levels, with individuals, forms and year groups all encouraged to aim for good attendance. As well as appreciating the awards available, students know that there will be prompt follow-up of any unexplained absence. Nevertheless a small but significant minority of individuals in every age group have unacceptably low and erratic attendance, well below the 90 per cent threshold. There are only a few like this in Year 7 but there are rather more in Years 10 and 11, especially in the lower attaining groups. This was still apparent at the time of the inspection, despite the overall upward trend in attendance. While genuine causes such as medical reasons account for some such absences, for others there is no acceptable reason and disinterest in learning is the root cause. Particular concerns arise with regard to just a small number of Year 10 and 11 students, who hardly ever come to school. This so restricts their progress that it is unrealistic to enter them in external examinations and they leave school without formal qualifications.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

26. The quality of teaching, and the learning that such teaching promotes, is good in Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 and 11. Teaching is at least satisfactory in nearly all lessons seen. Seven out of ten lessons are taught to a standard that is at least good and one lesson in four is taught to a very good or excellent standard. Teaching was less than satisfactory in very few lessons and was never poor. The consistency of good teaching is a major strength of the school and leads to students acquiring skills, knowledge and understanding at a good rate. There is no significant difference in the quality of teaching between the different years.
27. The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection. Teaching was described as good previously. This is still the case but a greater proportion of the teaching is now very good or excellent.
28. In Years 7 to 9, teaching is very good in English and modern foreign languages and good in all other subjects. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is very good in information and communication

technology and vocational subjects; good in all other subjects with the exception of art and design, religious education and geography where it is satisfactory.

29. One significant strength of the teaching is the way that learning support assistants work with teachers to ensure that students with special educational needs are able to take part in lessons and make the same progress as other students. Teachers show an informed awareness of students' needs. Teachers are able to change the focus of the lesson to accommodate students' individual needs and they use support to good effect. This is often the result of effective preparation and consultation. Students with special educational needs develop confidence as their interests are stimulated and their knowledge and understanding is developed alongside their peers.
30. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of their subjects. For example, in science, teachers know their subject well and are confident teaching across all three specialisms and their enthusiasm and commitment raise interest and motivation. Good use is made of teachers' experience in preparing students for examinations and in the best ways for students to score good marks and to show what they know. However, in information and communication technology, the main difference between the teaching in Years 7 to 9 and that in Years 10 and 11 lies with the experience of the teachers, which shows both in their subject knowledge and the methods that they use. The main specialist teachers have an excellent knowledge of the subject that is completely up-to-date and so students learn about innovations. Other teachers have sufficient knowledge of the software but not of the wider aspects of the subject, such as its applications, that would allow them to broaden students' horizons.
31. Teachers are good at improving students' reading and writing in individual lessons. For example, in design and technology, all teachers place a very good emphasis on improving students' literacy skills. Spellings are always corrected when work is marked and teachers often ask students to read aloud and spell difficult words. This has had a marked impact on the accuracy of students' reading, spelling and writing. However, in art and design, literacy skills are generally good and frequently addressed in lessons through the introduction and explanation of new terms or specialist vocabulary. Written work however is often brief, usually factual and related to a particular artist or style.
32. There is no whole school approach to the teaching of numeracy but teachers do well. In geography students' numeracy skills contribute well to their learning, especially skills involved with data handling. Students know basic map skills needed for GCSE and have a good understanding of 6 figure grid references. They use their understanding of scale to measure distance and apply their knowledge of percentages and directed numbers when analysing climate.
33. Teachers plan their lessons well. For example, in English, lessons are very well planned. The prior attainment of students is carefully taken into account and lessons are planned to include a variety of activities and to make use of relevant, up-to-date and imaginative resources. This was seen in a Year 8 lesson, in which lower attaining students were conducting a survey of the various nationalities in the school. Students had access to a particularly good range of materials, including poems, maps and access to the Internet. This led students to be intensely interested in their work and to make rapid progress.
34. Teachers' expectations are high. For example, in physical education teachers expect students to have a high degree of self-discipline and behaviour. This was seen to good effect in a Year 7 gymnastics class when students were very well behaved when using a wide range of equipment. In vocational subjects, teachers demand a high quality of presentation. Students respond accordingly and as a result achieve better examination results than would be expected from their attainment when they joined the school.
35. Teachers use a good range of teaching methods to motivate and encourage students to do well. In the best lessons teachers enabled students to discover for themselves, using students' own experiences to aid development of understanding. For example, in science, a wide variety of revision techniques were seen during the inspection, many of them innovative or unusual. A Year 11 class revising heredity built models of the offspring, which they termed 'monsters', from a

knowledge of the genetic make-up of the imaginary 'monster' parents. The process was light-hearted and good fun, but reinforced and consolidated their previous work in a unique way. However, in art and design, teaching was seen to be less effective when the task was over-prescribed and failed to provide opportunities for exploration and extension, and subsequently work produced was too similar and lacking originality. This was seen often in Year 11 lessons and evident in previous work.

36. Teachers manage students very well. For example, in information and communication technology, teachers in Years 10 and 11 have perfected a particularly alarming glare that stops any misbehaviour in its tracks and is used, for example, as an instant chastisement for just scraping a chair noisily. The students' instant reaction to this approach bears witness to the high expectations that teachers have of their students' behaviour. The students are very clear about what is expected of them and know very well the lines that must not be crossed. In lessons, teachers address racial issues as they arise from the work being undertaken. This was seen in a Year 10 class when students were studying poems from other cultures and they considered and discussed together what it felt like to be a victim of racial discrimination. However, in some religious education lessons, there is insufficient emphasis on the views of the students and opportunities are missed that would enable students to learn from each other.
37. The use of resources is good. For example, in modern foreign languages, teachers use a range of well designed materials, they move swiftly between a variety of activities which means that students are kept busy for the full length of the lesson. Teachers make very good use of external resources. Most students are enthusiastic about learning languages and they take part in trips and visits to Belgium and Germany. There are also other events such as the European Conference day when students in Year 9 had to buy ingredients in order to make food to sell, and the visit from a French footballer whom students had to interview in French, which have had a particularly beneficial effect on their spoken work.
38. The quality of marking is satisfactory. In vocational subjects all students benefit from thorough, evaluative marking of their work which clearly shows students where they are going wrong and what they need to improve their writing and extend their knowledge. In other subjects, marking can be a little too congratulatory or rely heavily on ticks with no explanations. The result of this is that, while teachers have a good idea of how the students are progressing, the students themselves have only a satisfactory understanding of how well they are doing.
39. Homework is used well across the school to support and extend students' learning.
40. Teaching of students with special educational needs is good and they make good progress. Teachers know their students well and generally provide work that is challenging and at an appropriate level. Teachers plan well to meet the needs of these students within mainstream lessons.
41. Teaching in the Student Support Centre is of good quality, with some very good features. Teachers are highly organised and continually emphasise to students the need to meet their daily targets with regard to behaviour and attitudes. All staff involved with these students are totally conversant with students' individual targets.
42. The quality of teaching and learning of students for whom English as an additional language is good. Assessment information is well used to determine the level of support students need, and whether this should be on a one-to-one basis or within lessons. Attention is also given as to the rate at which students should start attending mainstream lessons, so that their linguistic and social confidence can increase together. In lessons observed, support teachers and assistants build well upon what students already know linguistically in supporting them. Teachers also encourage students to participate in the lesson by interacting with other students and using their initiative. Subject teachers are aware of the needs of individuals and provide additional support and encouragement. This was seen, for example, in a Year 8 information and communication technology lesson, when the teacher explained to a student the unfamiliar terms he would encounter when designing the front cover of a magazine. Students benefit from having support from

a specialist staff which can speak a number of languages, particularly from the Indian sub-continent, and between them have a relatively wide range of expertise in the subjects of the National Curriculum.

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

43. The curriculum is providing a satisfactory quality and range of learning opportunities.
44. The curriculum is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. In Years 7 to 9 the curriculum is broad and balanced and all subjects of the National Curriculum are provided together with drama and religious education. In Years 10 and 11 students follow a common core curriculum including religious education and this is supplemented by a choice of options. A number of new courses have been introduced. The school recognises the need to develop vocational courses to meet the diverse needs of all students fully, particularly for the small number of students who have become disaffected with education and whose attendance is poor.
45. Curriculum provision for students with special educational needs is good. The school has a strong commitment to promoting an inclusive education and works hard to ensure equality of access and opportunity for all students. The school's curricular and pastoral structures are designed to ensure equality of opportunity. Literacy and numeracy recovery programmes are in place in Year 7 so students can be helped to gain full access to the curriculum. The school promotes effective inclusion of students with special educational needs in lessons and other aspects of school life.
46. The arrangements for the teaching of literacy skills are good. Teachers have received training in how they might all the more effectively teach literacy within their own subjects and are actively doing so. Even so, there is inconsistency in practice. The recently appointed co-ordinator recognises this and is developing strategies to ensure best practice is shared across the whole curriculum. The arrangements for the teaching of numeracy skills are satisfactory. There is, as yet, no overall strategy for improving numeracy but the situation is still satisfactory as several subjects already develop these skills in their everyday lessons.
47. The curriculum experienced by students for whom English as an additional language is very good. In lessons they receive well-targeted support. The needs of students who are from different ethnic backgrounds are carefully monitored and effective support is provided in class. Specialist teachers from the local education authority also offer the following to aid inclusion: a homework club; home visits to parents of newly arrived students; a translation service on parents' evening and travel packs for students who are absent for extended visits.
48. The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities. There is very good provision for sports and the school's brass band is recognised within the local, national and international music arenas. Many subjects provide additional clubs to support students with their studies and this includes literacy schools during the school holidays. All physical education staff give freely of their time to provide extra-curricular sporting activities and approximately two thirds of students regularly participate.
49. Personal and social education is good. The curriculum is very well planned to include all the required aspects of health education, sex education and drugs awareness, as well as personal and communication skills. It is currently being enhanced further through the good attention given to updating it, so that while matching students' needs it also keeps step with new expectations and requirements. Good attention is given to evaluating the various modules by means of feedback from students and staff. Teaching of the programme is good.
50. Careers' education is very good. It systematically builds students' knowledge and skills through their time at the school, by means of modules within the personal and social education curriculum and also through the relevant themes for the annual conferences held for different year groups. Integrated very effectively into the careers' programme is a two-week work experience placement for Year 10 students that nearly all of them opt to attend. Liaison with the careers' service ensures

that students have access to this outside advice at appropriate points, starting with when they choose their subject options.

51. The school has good links with the local community. Strong links with a wide range of employers and organisations underpin the Year 10 work experience placements. Similarly local business and industry make an essential contribution to the Year 9 European-industry conference which, with the help of their specialist personnel, is conducted in French and German. The school also makes good use of work placements to widen the experience of teachers. A variety of links, calculated to benefit staff and students as well as the local community, are currently expanding between the recently opened sports centre and a wide range of local organisations. In subject areas the development of links are less consistent, for instance history makes good use of visits while in religious education visits and visitors are underused, except for GCSE groups.
52. Good efforts are made to liaise with the many primary schools from which students transfer, especially with the main ones from which most students come. For instance Year 6 students are able to benefit from attending the Year 8 environment conference. In addition staff and students benefit from curricular links that have been developed. For instance during the introduction of the literacy and numeracy strategies in Years 7 to 9, English and mathematics staff have all been able to observe literacy and numeracy sessions in a primary school. Suitable links are in place with local providers of further education, to aid students in continuing their studies. In addition students from a neighbouring college join students in the very successful brass band performances.
53. The curriculum is now of a better standard than that noted in the previous inspection. The weaknesses in design and technology, religious education and information and communication technology, which were key issues in the previous report have been dealt with successfully.
54. The overall provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is good.
55. Provision for the spiritual development of students is satisfactory. The school has developed a series of 'Thought for the week' that provides an opportunity to start the day with reflection. When teachers have prepared for its delivery in advance, students benefit from the opportunity. Assemblies take place for all students once a week. As such they do not fulfil the requirements for a daily act of worship. The quality of the assembly seen during the inspection was high however, and students benefited from the opportunity to reflect on the concept of true value. Muslim students are supported in their beliefs by the provision of a room for prayer on Fridays, and the school recognises and respects the significant feast days of the faiths of students at the school. In religious education lessons students in Year 8 consider the concept of beliefs and have the opportunity to reflect on their own beliefs and values. Students in Year 9 consider the effect of belief on the lives of believers such as Mother Theresa and Martin Luther King. Some departments do encourage students to reflect on the world around them and their effect on the people they meet. In English, students are encouraged to explore the effect of selfishness on the individual and how they can become embittered as a result. In physical education students are encouraged to develop a sense of achievement that supports their recognition of themselves as individuals, whilst being part of a whole group. In general however, opportunities are missed and although there is evidence of some planning, provision in lessons is not evident.
56. Provision for the moral development of students is very good. The school has a clear code of conduct that is well understood by all. Teachers generally have high expectations of behaviour and are good role models themselves. Students are clearly expected to be polite and helpful to visitors and they rise to these expectations. A good example was the response of students in Year 7 to a visit by the librarian for a class interview. Students consider what makes for good manners in a Year 9 English class, and in physical education students are encouraged to develop the concept of 'fair play'. Contemporary moral issues are discussed in many subjects, for example in design and technology students consider the question of the exploitation of the world's products, and in geography and science, environmental issues are discussed. The subject of prejudice and discrimination is considered in several subjects, and in English and religious education students are encouraged to empathise with those who suffer from it. The personal and social education and personal development courses take a clear moral lead encouraging students to respect themselves

and others. Students receive valuable information about the dangers of drug abuse, and are encouraged to reflect on the values that they wish to develop. Students consider their legal rights and responsibilities and are introduced to the legal system that supports their society.

57. Very good provision is made for the social development of students. The newly formed 'Volunteer Council' is gathering a bank of volunteers and all students will be encouraged to take on some voluntary work that will support their personal development. Students are offered responsibility as prefects, librarians, receptionists and school shop managers. They rise to these responsibilities well. The variety of sporting clubs benefit from the new sports centre and increased opportunity to participate in inter-school sporting fixtures. Through personal and social education students are encouraged to develop good social attitudes and to gain confidence in their ability to cope in a strange situation. Students who require additional support to develop good social skills benefit from attending anger management groups. Students are well prepared for the world of work through the annual conferences, and in Year 11 they have the opportunity to develop their own communication and presentational skills that will enable them to interact confidently with others. Many subjects use group work and as a result students generally relate well to each other, supporting each other's efforts.
58. Provision for the cultural development of students is satisfactory. Students benefit from the variety of cultures represented in the school population, and generally they respect the traditions of other cultures. In history students had the opportunity to investigate the culture of England in the past through their visits to Roman Chester. In music they explore a range of music from the western European cultures. The school's music groups provide opportunities for students to participate in a range of activities and the school's brass band has been a valuable link with other communities. The exchange visit with a Dutch band has led to further links, and this is to be developed. Students benefit from opportunities to visit Belgium, France, Germany and Austria. The 'European Conference Day' run by the modern foreign languages department provides opportunities for students in Year 9 to spend a day immersed in French language and culture, and students are encouraged to develop pen friends. In science the work of scientists from other cultures is identified, in food technology students experiment with spices from different cultures and Indian and Chinese art forms the basis for work in textiles. Opportunities to celebrate and explore the cultures represented in the school's population however, are not extensive. Visits to theatres, galleries and concert halls to experience live performance of the arts are infrequent and there are limited opportunities for students to learn about the music and art of multi-cultural Britain.
59. Since the previous inspection satisfactory progress has been made with this area of the school's provision.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

60. There is very good pastoral support for students coupled with good encouragement for them to work hard and to make progress with learning. Very good procedures are in place to promote good behaviour and to monitor attendance. There are also good arrangements for assessing and recording students' academic achievements, with satisfactory use of this information to plan for their further progress with learning. The overall quality of care, already good at the previous inspection, is now even better and assessment procedures have also improved.
61. The good induction programme includes good pastoral liaison with primary schools and helps Year 7 students to cope happily with the move to their new school. Teachers care for students of all ages very effectively, taking account of any individual needs for support. There is much encouragement for students to work hard. For instance they greatly value the merits and certificates that they are awarded for good work and good efforts, even though some feel that they are easier to gain in some lessons than in others. They know that teachers want them to succeed and will readily help them if they have difficulties with their work. Prompted by the insistence of teachers, students make good use of their homework diaries, appreciating the new layout and helpful contents. Teachers help them to take responsibility for their learning, for instance through the new mentoring programme, which allows time for them to talk with their tutor and agree targets for improvement in key areas, including attitudes and attendance as well as progress with learning.

62. Staff keep up good links with a range of relevant outside support agencies that they call on when individuals have particular needs for support or counselling, for instance a group receive support regarding smoking addiction and in their turn are learning to help other students. Proper liaison is in place with the local authority about the educational and pastoral needs of 'looked after' students. The Student Support Centre provides good care and support to students with a range of educational and behavioural needs, so that they make good progress. Similar effective support is given to students who arrive speaking little English. The school's very good attention to the diverse needs of different individuals or groups of students also includes taking careful account of the religious needs of Muslim students. There is sensitive provision, across the range of school activities, to meet these needs.
63. Management of behaviour remains very effective, as at the time of the previous inspection. Staff make sure students understand clearly how they should behave. They generally use the well structured system of sanctions very effectively if any misbehaviour sets in. Students are confident that when incidents of bullying or harassment occasionally arise staff deal with them very effectively as soon as they are reported. Occasionally a student's behaviour becomes poor and when this happens short-term exclusion plays an appropriate part in the sanctions system. The school perseveres with good efforts to support individuals with poor behaviour, so as to help them improve. Permanent exclusion is only used for the most serious breakdowns in behaviour. There are appropriate individual plans in place for those students who have particular behavioural difficulties and the Student Support Centre makes a very good contribution to the support extended to them. Very good use is made of computerised records to track trends in individual behaviour and to help staff respond appropriately to any problems.
64. Procedures to monitor and promote attendance are very good. Attendance has a high profile around the school, for instance students know that their year groups have targets to work towards. Staff remind students of how time away from school is likely to reduce their attainment and so limit their prospects for employment. The computerised registration system is operated very effectively to check on attendance both at the start of school and also at lessons during the day. Students know that any truancy will be found out. Pastoral staff receive prompt information about those who are missing and give good attention to any absence that causes concern. All heads of year meet regularly with the education social worker about concerns that they have been unable to resolve and she follows these up, for instance by making home visits. A few students in Years 10 and 11 who have shown a marked disinterest in education benefit from arrangements for an alternative curriculum to boost their motivation and attendance. However there are others whose attendance drops somewhat during their final years in school and there is room to explore ways of increasing their motivation through the curriculum offered to them.
65. Provision for other aspects of students' wellbeing is good, for instance if they become sick or injured in school they receive good care and attention. Good guidance about child protection procedures is in place for staff to follow when any possible issues arise. Health and safety procedures are very thorough, and calculated to provide a safe environment and safe conduct of learning activities. For instance, there was careful attention to the safety of both adults and students during the emergency roof repairs that were in progress during the inspection.
66. The monitoring of students' academic performance and personal development is good. The school has an agreed policy for assessment and monitoring attainment that, whilst recently introduced, is widely adopted by subject and pastoral leaders. Central to the process is the common use of point scoring linked to National Curriculum levels. This is effective in providing coherence across the school in the production of assessment data and meaningful analysis to support planning in subjects. In many cases, for example English, science, modern foreign languages and history, teachers have well established assessment and recording procedures to inform teaching and learning. Senior management is clear about the need to further promote and embed the assessment policy and is taking appropriate steps necessary to develop teachers' understanding and disseminate best practice. The development in assessment practice has successfully addressed the criticism made in the last report and progress in this area since then has been good.

67. The analysis of attainment data and other performance indicators provided to all staff is comprehensive and enables teachers and pastoral leaders to negotiate appropriate targets for improvement with students. The performance information available has not yet however resulted in a more varied or fully appropriate curriculum for the range of students in the school. Individual Education Plans for students with special educational needs are good and in some cases contain useful subject-specific information about teaching and learning provision. The use of Individual Education Plans to identify the subject-specific targets for these students is however not widespread and requires increased focus in subject departments. The assessment of students with statements of special need is good.
68. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection. Pastoral support is now very good as opposed to good. Significant progress has been made with the procedures for the assessment of students which was a key issue noted in the previous report.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

69. As at the time of the previous inspection the school is well thought of by parents, with more now seeking a place for their child than can be accommodated. Those expressing a view are very appreciative of the work of the school, especially of the good teaching and expectations that enable students to make good progress. They are happy that the school is open and welcoming and that staff readily help with any queries or problems.
70. There continues to be a good flow of information to parents. There are helpful booklets and meetings for them when their children first join the school, to explain about expectations and school routines. In addition, there are good ongoing efforts to encourage their involvement. Students' homework diaries give parents the chance to monitor the homework they do, because teachers ensure that these are used consistently to record the work that is given. Publications such as the prospectus and governors' annual report give a good range of well presented information and the lively newsletters are well designed to inform parents about the school's work and to encourage their interest and involvement. Meetings are held at intervals to inform parents about various areas of the curriculum. They are also consulted about developments, for instance about revisions of the behaviour and anti-bullying policies, though not many choose to respond. Staff take careful account of parents' cultural and religious values, to ensure that Muslim parents for instance can feel happy with the provision made for their children across the range of school activities.
71. Reporting to parents about students' work is good. As well as a mid-year report with a satisfactory amount of information from subject teachers, parents receive regular copies of progress grades and an end of year summary. There is room for more consistency between subject areas in the mid-year reports, as some give better information than others about what has been learnt and about targets for future progress. Parents have the opportunity to discuss further detail about how their child is doing at the annual consultation meetings, but the number who attend such occasions is disappointingly low. Staff are considering changes in the timing of these meetings, in an attempt to boost the number of parents who come. The school ensures that staff are on hand on these occasions and at other times to act as translators for those parents from Indian and Pakistani backgrounds who require this. There is a very informative occasional news sheet about the work of the Student Support Centre. Very good efforts are made to work in partnership with parents of students who have a statement of special educational need and to involve them in planning for further stages in their learning. However, there is as yet no formal mechanism for parents to be informed if their child is at stage 2 on the Code of Practice register.
72. There has been an enthusiastic Parents' Association, which organises fund raising and social events for parents and students as well as giving practical help at school events, but this is currently under review. Parents do come in good numbers to give support if their children are involved in any concerts or performances. However many are content to be mostly passive partners in their child's education. A few parents, actually undermine the school's efforts because they give

low priority to education and let their children stay away from school without any acceptable reason.

73. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection. Staff have continued to develop this aspect of school life.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

74. The quality of leadership and management of the school is very good overall. In the relatively short time since the previous inspection report, very good leadership and management has resulted in good progress being made. The headteacher is providing excellent leadership and management. The headteacher is providing very clear educational direction for the school. He is determined to build on the strengths identified in the previous report and eliminate any weaknesses. There is a real sense of commitment to creating an environment within which every one of the students feels valued, respected and able to succeed. Central to the school's work is a commitment to continuous improvement and to ensuring that all students achieve success. The result of this approach can be seen in the improvements in examination results, students' attendance, the quality of teaching and the positive attitudes of students.
75. The headteacher has the confidence of the staff and is fully supported by a very good senior management team. There is a shared commitment to improvement and a very good capacity to succeed. The school is being steered successfully through a period of change. The role of the senior management team has been redesigned in order to create discrete leadership areas for the school's strategic development and also to create a robust programme of school improvement. This fundamental change of focus has created an effective self-review team, each of whom now takes line management responsibility for subject areas. This realignment of roles and responsibilities is working exceedingly well and has resulted in very good monitoring procedures being established although these are as yet not applied consistently at middle management level.
76. The new school mission statement is 'Creating Our Future – a Quest for Excellence' and embodies much that is happening in the school.
77. Since the previous inspection, many new systems have been introduced which are having a positive impact on the work of the school. There are very good, effective systems in place, which ensure that the large school campus operates smoothly and efficiently.
78. The leadership and management provided by many middle managers are satisfactory. Heads of year provide good support and care for students. The special educational needs co-ordinator is providing good management and leadership of this aspect. However, there is a wide variation in the quality of leadership and management at this level from excellent through to broadly satisfactory. For example, as a result of the outstanding leadership and management of information and communication technology, standards have risen considerably as the quality of teaching has improved, GCSE results have improved from below average to above average. In science, all staff share the commitment to gain the best possible result for each student and there is a strong team spirit; new members of staff are well supported, both formally and informally by their colleagues. However, in mathematics, art and design, geography, history and religious education there are aspects of leadership and management which are of concern. Whilst routine aspects, of a day-to-day nature, are generally managed well, the educational direction for the further development of the subjects is insufficiently clear, monitoring systems are not consistent and school policies are not always applied consistently. In mathematics, there is some monitoring and good support for new teachers by their colleagues but there is no overall programme in place for monitoring the learning of students. In geography, many of the new systems and policies that have been developed have yet to be applied consistently.
79. The governors have a very good understanding of the school's work and they have identified many of the strengths and weaknesses noted in this report. The governing body fulfils its statutory duties well although the statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship for all students is

not fulfilled. The new committee structures are effective in supporting both short-term and long-term planning, and scrutinising the work of the school and the standards being attained.

80. A new system and cycle of school improvement planning has been introduced and this has resulted in a school improvement plan that is of very good quality, focuses on raising achievement and sets a clear agenda for improvement. All areas of the plan are linked to raising standards and the school's quest for excellence. The headteacher and senior management team produced much of this plan. Subject development plans are linked to the school improvement plan. The school's priorities are very appropriate and many of the issues noted in this report are highlighted in the school improvement plan.
81. The school applies the principles of best value exceedingly well. The headteacher, senior management team and the governors have set very challenging targets for improvement particularly for the proportions of students obtaining five or more passes at GCSE grades A* to C and A* to G. The most recent results indicate that the school has been successful in meeting these targets. The school compares its performance with similar attaining schools in the authority and nationally. External bureaucracy does not unduly affect the school.
82. The school makes very good use of new technology. The system of registering students' attendance electronically is proving effective in monitoring patterns of students' attendance and enables heads of year to focus on the small minority of students whose attendance is of concern.
83. The school has received specific grants that have been used exceedingly well. For example, the new lottery-funded sports facilities are outstanding and are helping to forge closer links with the community. Also, these facilities are now helping staff to raise students' standards of physical education.
84. The financial planning in the school is very good. The school has clearly defined systems for tendering and ordering. The last Auditor's report highlighted a few areas for improvement and the school has responded positively to the report's recommendations. The school receives a basic budget that is above the national average. A tight rein is kept on spending by the administrative staff and the senior management team. Through careful management of the budget, the school has a small surplus budget. The school is providing good value for money.
85. The match of teachers and support staff to the needs of the curriculum is satisfactory. There is a good mix, of teachers with many years of experience, and of teachers both new to teaching and new to the school. There are adequate numbers of learning support assistants to provide for students with special educational needs; they are very well qualified and give very good support to both students and teachers. There are adequate numbers of technical support staff who provide good support for the work of teachers. The administrative staff ensures that the school operates very efficiently on a day-to-day basis. The work and commitment of all these support services is highly valued and contributes importantly to the effectiveness of the school.
86. The school has made good progress, since the previous inspection, in establishing procedures for performance management. The main focus of professional development is on teaching and learning and there is a requirement that teachers attend courses that are closely matched to the school's priorities as identified in the school improvement plan. Teachers who attend courses out of school are required to provide feedback to colleagues, and school-based in-service training provides opportunities for observing good practice. These arrangements make a good contribution to the effectiveness of staff.
87. There is a good induction programme for teachers new to the school and newly qualified teachers, in particular, speak very highly of the comprehensive nature of the topics covered and of the very good quality of the support they receive from both senior staff and within their subject areas.
88. The quality and range of accommodation is satisfactory to meet the needs of the curriculum. The most notable improvement since the last inspection has been the opening of a lottery funded sports centre that is run and managed by the school, this includes a large modern sports hall and

four new floodlit netball courts. Room sizes for the number of students is a problem. In science, for example, most laboratories are small with inadequate preparation areas. In geography and modern foreign languages, the small size of rooms often limits the range of activities that can be organised and in art the use of non-specialist rooms limits the range and type of activity that can be taught.

89. The adequacy of learning resources is satisfactory. There has been a significant financial investment in the overall level of resources to support the curriculum since the previous inspection. All subject areas show satisfactory or better standards of resources in order to support the curriculum. There are difficulties with access to information communication technology in English, science, art, geography and history, which constrains the investigative elements of the curriculum.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

90. To raise further the standards of work and the quality of education provided, the governors and senior management team should:

*Improve the achievement of a small number of Year 10 and 11 students, mostly white boys and girls, who have shown a marked disinterest in education and who hardly ever come to school by exploring ways of increasing their motivation through the curriculum offered to them (para 4, 15, 21, 25, 44, 64, 72, 117 and 139).

*Improve the quality of leadership provided in mathematics, art and design, geography, history and religious education by:

- ensuring there is strong leadership of all these departments and that a clear vision for the future work of each department is firmly established (para 38, 78, 113, 133, 148, 155 and 194);
- ensuring that there is a systematic approach to monitoring of departments by middle managers and that policies are applied consistently across the school (para 38, 78, 113, 133, 148, 155 and 194).

*Improve the provision for students' cultural development by:

- ensuring all departments plan and provide opportunities for students to explore a wide range of cultures and not just those of western-European (para 58);
- providing more opportunities for students to celebrate the diverse range of cultures represented in the school (para 58).

*Indicates that this is already noted in school's improvement plan.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	207
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students	65

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	10	42	92	58	3	0	0
Percentage	5	20	45	28	2	0	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	1553
Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals	417

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	479
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	56

English as an additional language	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	534

Student mobility in the last school year	No of students
Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	35
Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	39

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.1
National comparative data	7.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	2.1
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage (Year 9)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001	160	131	291

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	99	99	97
	Girls	95	70	65
	Total	194	169	162
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	67 (52)	58 (61)	56 (53)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	18 (17)	27 (35)	28 (22)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	44 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	77	107	84
	Girls	72	82	63
	Total	149	189	147
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	51 (62)	65 (61)	51 (45)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	16 (23)	29 (35)	20 (22)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	357	195	162	357

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	77	176	183
	Girls	66	149	154
	Total	143	325	337
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	School	40 (37)	91 (89)	94 (92)
	National	47.2 (47.4)	88.9 (90.6)	94.6 (95.6)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per student	School	35.6 (33)
	National	38.1 (38.4)

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those students who achieved all those they studied	School	10 (n/a)	80 (n/a)
	National		N/a

Ethnic background of students

	No of students
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	3
Black – other	2
Indian	244
Pakistani	167
Bangladeshi	4
Chinese	1
White	1029
Any other minority ethnic group	102

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	9	0
Pakistani	2	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	69	5
Other minority ethnic groups	0	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)	94.1
Number of students per qualified teacher	16.5

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	19
Total aggregate hours worked per week	421

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	71
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 2	N/a
Key Stage 3	26.5

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	4315951
Total expenditure	4246952
Expenditure per student	2647
Balance brought forward from previous year	20507
Balance carried forward to next year	89500

Key Stage 4	22.4
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	31
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	34

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	2
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	4
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1553
Number of questionnaires returned	101

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	45	50	4	0	1
My child is making good progress in school.	39	55	3	0	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	31	57	4	1	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	38	50	10	1	1
The teaching is good.	37	52	5	1	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	31	46	15	1	8
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	47	42	7	3	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	60	35	1	0	4
The school works closely with parents.	27	53	10	1	9
The school is well led and managed.	35	53	4	0	8
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	34	57	5	0	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	56	36	4	1	3

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' achievement is good, from the time they enter the school to when they leave it.
- In Years 7 to 9, teaching, learning and students' achievements are very good.
- Students have a good attitude towards learning.
- Good use is made of assessment data in determining what and how students will be taught.
- Leadership and management are good.

Areas for improvement

- Further raising students' achievement in Years 10 and 11.
- Ensuring that the quality of teaching becomes more consistent.
- Using information and communication technology more extensively in teaching and learning.

91. Results in the 2001 National Curriculum tests for 14-year-olds were close to the national average for all schools and were above average for schools taking students from similar backgrounds. Teacher assessments placed students below the level they achieved in tests. There was no significant difference between the performance of girls and boys. Results in English were better than those obtained in mathematics and science. Results have fluctuated from year to year since the previous inspection and there is no clear trend.
92. Results in the 2001 GCSE examinations were below the national average in English and in English literature results were well below. As the department enters approximately a tenth more of the Year 11 for English literature than is the average nationally, results obtained are all the more creditable. The performance of girls is better than that of boys. Results obtained by students have been consistent during recent years. Students' results in both subjects were not significantly different from those they attained in most other subjects in the school.
93. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that examination results accurately reflect the standards being currently achieved in the school. The standards attained by students by the end of Year 9 are average and this represents a very good level of achievement given their levels of attainment on entry to the school. By the end of Year 11, the standards attained are below average. This represents a good level of achievement given that this cohort of students had very low levels of attainment on entry to the school. Part of the reason for the difference between the different years is that teaching strategies in Years 7 to 9 are more effective than they are in Years 10 and 11. Additionally, in Years 10 and 11 there is a minority of students who do not complete coursework and who have poor attendance records and this adversely affects their achievement. Students with special educational needs and those for whom English as an additional language make progress at the same rate as other students.
94. Students' skills in speaking and listening are a relative strength at all levels in the school. Students behave in a particularly co-operative manner in lessons, being willing to carefully and respectfully listen to each other and to their teachers. They feel confident and enjoy contributing to discussions. Whilst lower attainers express themselves briefly and in a restricted way, higher and middle attaining students can speak at some length and can elaborate their thinking in response to questions. This was seen in a Year 8 lesson when students had a lively discussion on how advertisers were able to use Tiger Woods to promote their product. Most students have a sound vocabulary. Higher attainers can use technical terms effectively, as was seen in a Year 9 lesson when students described two contrasting poems, 'The Rainforest' and 'The Fish are all Sick'. In Years 10 and 11 students work well in paired discussions, being able to assemble ideas quickly and within time limits set by the teacher.

95. By the end of Year 9 students read novels, plays, poems and other material that is suitable for their age. Higher attainers read aloud with good expression and pace, middle attainers read with fluency but limited expression and lower attainers are hesitant and are often dependent upon their teachers to understand what they are reading. Only a limited number of students read widely and can name favourite authors. Higher attainers in Years 8 and 9 understand the idea of writing being for a particular audience. In two Year 8 classes, for example, students were able to explain how advertisers used language persuasively and why particular slogans were more successful than others. By the end of Year 11 students go on to read more complex literature. Students often show a good understanding of the motives of characters in plays and appreciate how the themes and ideas presented in plays might have a relevance to themselves, as was seen when a Year 11 class was seen studying 'Blood Brothers' by Willy Russell. In a higher attaining Year 10 class, students were able to explain the use Fiona Farrell makes of contrast and repetition in her poem 'Charlotte O'Neil's Song'. However, very few students are able to analyse and evaluate literature to the extent that might be expected.
96. By the end of Year 9 students are able to write in a variety of styles, including narratives, descriptions, letters and reports. A particular feature of the students' approach is that they understand the importance of redrafting their work to improve its accuracy. In a class of middle attaining Year 9 students, for example, some students were on the third draft of their stories and were seen diligently discussing with a partner how their work could be improved still further. By the end of Year 11 students go on to produce essays on demanding topics, such as comparing poems written at different times in history. Some of the best extended writing seen was on autobiographical topics. Inaccuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar mars the work of middle and lower attaining students.
97. Students' use of information and communications technology is satisfactory overall. Students draft and redraft their work using the word processing software.
98. Teaching and learning are very good in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Examples of excellent and very good teaching were also seen. None of the teaching seen was unsatisfactory. When teaching is most effective, a number of features are in evidence. Teachers possess good subject knowledge and a particularly good knowledge of the requirements of the courses they are teaching. This is seen in most of the marking of students' written work. The grading is mostly accurate. Students' strengths and weaknesses are analysed and they are given clear guidance on what they need to do if they are to improve. This results in students' having a good understanding of their own learning and being willing to make a good creative and imaginative effort to improve their standards. Lessons are very well planned. The prior attainment of students is carefully taken into account and lessons are planned to include a variety of activities and to make use of relevant, up-to-date and imaginative resources. This was seen in a Year 8 lesson, in which lower attaining students were conducting a survey of the various nationalities in the school. Students had access to a particularly good range of materials, including poems, maps and access to the Internet. This led students to be intensely interested in their work and to make rapid progress. In many lessons, teachers display considerable skill in the use of questioning, to ensure students are following the lesson and to maintain a brisk pace. In a Year 9 lesson, for example, students began by considering the different ways of saying "say" and went on to examine how the appropriate choice of verbs could be used to enrich communication. Support teachers and assistants are used effectively to provide students with the help they need. Teachers pay good attention to teaching basic skills in literacy. Relationships between students and teachers are good and this provides a good environment for learning.
99. When teaching is less effective, teachers do not sufficiently take into account students' prior attainment and consequently students are not sufficiently challenged. When lessons lack variety and the pace is slow, students' interest wanes and their effort declines.
100. The quality of leadership and management of the department is good. Assessment is being effectively used to guide the work of the department. Newly qualified teachers are being well supported. The head of department is a most effective teacher and so provides a very good role model. To improve standards further, consideration might be given to ensuring that the quality of

teaching becomes more consistent and to improving students' achievement in Years 10 and 11 so that it matches what is now being achieved in Years 7 to 9.

101. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Standards at GCSE level have been maintained. Standards achieved by the end of Year 9 have fluctuated since the previous inspection but are now well established as being in line with national average. Teaching has improved overall but remains inconsistent in quality. The use of assessment data has improved substantially. Schemes of work are more effective. Resources have improved to enable the school to meet the requirements of the literacy strategy.

Literacy across the school

102. Standards of literacy are average. The strategies employed to teach literacy are good. Teachers have received training in how they might all the more effectively teach literacy within their own subjects and are actively doing so. Even so, there is inconsistency in practice. The recently appointed co-ordinator recognises this and is developing strategies to ensure best practice is shared across the whole curriculum.
103. Students' skills in reading are sufficiently well developed to enable them to have access to the National Curriculum, except for a small minority. In English, history, religious education and design and technology students are given opportunities to read aloud, and teachers pay attention to the quality of their expression and pronunciation. In design and technology and information and communication technology students are expected to read to deepen their understanding. Students conduct research in both subjects, using recommended texts and the Internet. In music and geography students learn key words but opportunities for research and extended reading are limited. In modern foreign languages there are some opportunities for students to read extended texts but they do not do so regularly. There is, however, consistently good attention paid to pronunciation.
104. Students' writing skills are average. Some subjects provide very good opportunities for students to develop their skills in writing, but there are variations in practice from subject to subject. In English, for example, much emphasis is placed upon re-drafting work and this helps students to become self-critical. In information and communications technology students are expected to take notes during the lesson and use these to produce their own accounts. In modern foreign languages students produce good, structured writing at lower levels and at higher levels they produce very good extended writing, which involves using a range of tenses and some complex language. In history, students are able to write in different styles for different audiences, but there are fewer opportunities for extended writing than might be expected. In religious education, limited opportunities are provided for writing in different genres, but students do have the chance to write extensively on such topics as the life of Martin Luther King. In design and technology there are fewer opportunities for extended writing than might be expected, with only limited emphasis on analysis and evaluation. Overall, there is inconsistency as to the extent to which teachers correct errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Good teaching is leading to students achieving well.
- Teachers plan their lessons well and use effective teaching methods.
- The good attitudes of the students and their behaviour in lessons lead to good learning.

Areas for improvement

- There is a need for more rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning and of monitoring students' attainment.
- There is a need to develop a department handbook.
- There is a need to develop a whole school numeracy policy.

105. Results in the 2001 National Curriculum tests for 14-year-olds were below the national average for all schools. When compared to schools taking students from similar backgrounds, results were broadly average. When compared to all schools the results in mathematics were below those in English and similar to science. However, when compared with schools taking students from similar backgrounds, results in mathematics were below both those in English and science. The results have improved steadily since the previous inspection. Based on the figures for the last five years the trend in results was greater than the national trend.
106. Results in the 2001 GCSE examinations were below the national average. Boys and girls attain equally well. The results in 2001 were in line with those of the previous year, but the proportion of students entered for GCSE increased. Since the previous inspection, there has been an improving trend greater than the national trend. Students' results in mathematics were not significantly different from those they attained in most other subjects in the school.
107. In the work seen during the inspection, the standards students attain by the end of Year 9 are below average. This represents a good level of achievement for all students, whose levels of attainment were well below average in numeracy when they joined the school. Students with special educational needs and the students with English as an additional language also achieve well. The school has developed strategies to improve attainment and there has been an improvement in teaching and attainment in work seen. The school is developing the National Numeracy Strategy in planning lessons and this has had a positive effect on attainment. High attaining students demonstrate a sound understanding of simultaneous equation. They solve them both graphically and by elimination. However, the middle attaining students find it difficult to order decimals that are written to two decimal places. Low attaining students can recognise the pattern in a simple linear sequence of numbers and can describe and continue the pattern. They do not progress to discovering the general rule for finding the n^{th} term of the sequence. Middle attaining students understand that the sum of the angles of a triangle is 180° and use this concept to solve angle problems. Higher attainers progress to using Pythagoras theorem to calculate sides in a right angled triangle. When analysing data, the low attaining students can produce line graphs and bar charts from frequency tables.
108. In the work seen during the inspection, the standards that students attain by the end of Year 11 are below average. This represents a good level of achievement given that this cohort of students had very low levels of attainment on entry to the school. Students with special educational needs make good progress. A proportion of the 2001 GCSE higher/intermediate attainers did not achieve well; this was due to poor attendance by a small minority and this impacted on progress when making comparison across the whole cohort. The higher attaining students who are currently in Years 10 and 11 are achieving well. A significant number of students in Year 11 took GCSE a year early and the majority are now working with enthusiasm and attainment is improving. When investigating the 'Bugs' problem, higher attaining students use information and communication technology effectively to calculate and present results. They produce graphs of the numbers of bugs so that comparisons can be made. They apply the skills they have learnt earlier in their mathematics to discover rules for distributions. Middle attaining students can construct graphs of quadratic functions but demonstrate difficulty when the values are negative. These students collect and record data using appropriate class intervals, they construct frequency graphs and can interpret them. The low attaining students have a good understanding of line symmetry and can calculate the areas of rectangles, progressing to calculating volumes of cuboids.
109. Overall standards of presentation are good in mathematics and spellings are generally correct. Students set their work out clearly and are developing good skills in structuring answers. They confidently and coherently answer questions and contribute well in class discussions. The rest of the class listen to each other attentively. When given the opportunity they work well together in pairs and in groups. They discuss their work with each other usefully and ask each other searching questions such as "what would happen if the figure was negative" when discussing GCSE questions. There are no significant differences between the attitudes and achievements of differing groups of students.

110. Students with special educational needs and those students for whom English as an additional language make progress broadly in line with the rest of the students. They receive a very good level of support from learning support assistants who work well with their teachers so that students are integrated well in the lessons, stay on task and have help in understanding difficult concepts. Teachers encourage students with special educational needs to participate fully in lessons and they involve them well.
111. The quality of teaching and learning is good in all years. Teaching is never less than satisfactory and there are examples of very good and excellent teaching. The consistently good teaching and learning leads to good achievement overall and is a key factor in raising standards. Learning is good because of the students' concentration and attention in the majority of lessons and the good quality of questioning and interventions. In the better lessons, teachers ask questions like "How did you do that?" This encourages students to explain what they are doing and contributes well to the intellectual effort they make. This was evident in a lesson where higher attainers were carrying out an investigation involving tables in a restaurant. The teacher asked students to explain what they were going to do. This allows them to formalise their methods and they are able to extend the problem. Teachers structure questions so that students have to think about applying skills they have learnt previously, and that the questions are at an appropriate level for the individual students. Teachers plan their lessons well. There are clear learning objectives and effective structures to lessons so that students retain interest and motivation. Resources are planned and used effectively to enhance teaching, particularly the use of individual white boards where the teacher is able to assess if all students have understood mental numeracy skills and can apply them. In a minority of lessons, there is good use of overhead projectors in demonstrations. The majority of lessons progress at a brisk pace leading to a brisk pace of learning. In a statistics lesson low attaining students quickly learn how to calculate the range of sets of discrete data and then they use the range and the mean to compare sets of data. In a minority of lessons the pace is slower, and then students tend to stray off task and waste time by chatting.
112. The management of students is generally good in all years and students respond accordingly. There is a positive atmosphere for learning in those classrooms, behaviour is good and students work well with each other. There are generally very good relationships in the classrooms both between students and students and teachers. Evidence of praise and support are very effective in raising confidence. This leads to an atmosphere of respect and a good understanding of the needs of students. Consequently students want to learn and this is an important contribution to raising standards. When working in pairs and groups, students are encouraged to engage in discussions and ask each other questions so they really understand their work. When students are given the opportunity to demonstrate to other students, they explain answers clearly and this contributes well their learning, consolidating their understanding. Students listen attentively to their teachers and respond well to questions. However, in a minority of lessons students are not always fully concentrating when working on individual tasks and this impedes the overall learning for these students. The good quality of teaching enables students with a wide range of needs to learn effectively. Teachers' explanations are clear and students are able to start their work quickly and consolidate new learning. Teachers work well with teaching assistants to ensure that students with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make the best progress. This is in line with the rest of the year group. Homework is set regularly and supports the work students do in class very well. Teachers plan homework well so that it consolidates and extends learning. It prepares students well for their next lesson.
113. The management of mathematics is satisfactory but there are concerns about the leadership. The teachers and the senior management team work well together to ensure that the overall management of mathematics in the school is satisfactory. The monitoring and evaluation of the performance in mathematics within the department is unsatisfactory. This was a weakness at the last inspection and has not improved. There is some monitoring and good support for new teachers by their colleagues but there is no overall programme in place for monitoring the learning of students. The teachers work hard to improve the attainment of students and they share a common commitment to raising achievement. They visit the primary schools and there is good liaison with their feeder schools. There are generally good relationships between teachers in the department

and effective support for teachers amongst themselves. However, the results of tests and examinations are not analysed by group, gender or ethnicity within the department. This would monitor the progress and attainment of groups of students and their learning. There is no mathematics handbook, which would inform and guide teachers better, in the day-to-day running of the department. Although schemes of work are sound and follow national guidelines, assessment opportunities are not planned and there is insufficient evidence of how information and communication technology and other resources are organised in the development of mathematics.

114. Progress since the last inspection has been good because the teachers and the senior management team have worked together to ensure areas for improvement have been identified and dealt with appropriately. The results for 14-year-olds and the GCSE results have improved since the previous inspection. There has been an improvement in teaching. Teaching is good, it is never less than satisfactory and there are examples of very good and excellent teaching.

Numeracy across the school

115. Standards of numeracy are average. Subjects in the school generally make a sound contribution to developing numeracy skills although a whole school numeracy policy is not yet in place. In science, the level of numeracy is satisfactory. Students use a variety of methods to present data from practical work. Geography contributes well to numeracy skills. Students know basic map skills needed for GCSE and have a good understanding of 6 figure grid references. They use their understanding of scale to measure distance and apply their knowledge of percentages and directed numbers when analysing climate. In design and technology, students carry out quite complex calculations of dimensions of hidden details. Students' measuring skills are varied. They generally read scales without intermediate markings very accurately. However, in a Year 10 lesson, students demonstrated poor practical skills. They could not measure accurately or read scales. Statistical skills are sound. Students carry out research and produce graphical data, but these are not analysed in detail. In information and communication technology, there is good use of numeracy for research for example when analysing car sales. In religious education, students prepare a bar chart to display information. There was little evidence that history, English, modern foreign languages or music contribute to the development of students' competence and skills in using and understanding number.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- The good teaching is leading to students achieving well.
- Teachers have good knowledge, commitment and enthusiasm.
- There are good relationships between staff and students, which helps learning.
- Good assessment procedures are in place and good use is made of the resulting data.
- The quality of technician support is good.

Areas for improvement

- The nine original laboratories require refurbishment.
- Review the number of students in some of the classes.
- Reconsideration of the timetable to avoid groups being split between two teachers and classes taught in non-science areas.

116. Results in the 2001 National Curriculum tests for 14-year-olds were below the national average for all schools. When compared to schools taking students from similar backgrounds, results were above average. The trend of results over the last three years is one of steady improvement. Results in science for all schools is below that of English but similar to mathematics.

117. Results in the 2001 GCSE results were close to the national average. In 2001, boys did better than girls both in higher grades and overall, but in the previous year, girls performed better, and results

change from year to year with no fixed pattern. Students' results in science were not significantly different from those they attained in most other subjects in the school.

118. In the work seen during the inspection, the standards that students attain by the end of Year 9 are below average. This represents a good level of achievement given their levels of attainment on entry to the school. Written work, from Year 7 onwards, is well presented, with clear diagrams, which often show considerable artistic ability, and neat handwriting. In Year 7, practical work is begun tentatively with unfamiliar apparatus, but confidence soon grows and competence improves also. By Year 8, students experiment safely and purposefully and are accustomed to being responsible for their practical work from planning what they are to do, to clearing away afterwards. Their scientific vocabulary widens and students increasingly use correct terms, frequently correcting themselves and each other in a good-humoured way. They practise the various sections of work needed for investigations for GCSE, and by Year 9 are ready to attempt complete investigations. A Year 9 class was seen making a creditable first attempt at investigating the effect of exercise on heart rate and body temperature, predicting, planning, experimenting and recording the results correctly in order to be able to justify their conclusions and evaluate their results in the following lesson. Any topic that catches the imagination or holds a personal interest raises performance above what might otherwise be expected, and a Year 8 group illustrated this while watching on an oscilloscope, the effects of changing frequency and loudness of sounds. They became highly involved and motivated and enjoyed relating the work to musical instruments and sounds with which they were familiar in everyday life.
119. The work of students in Years 10 and 11 was only seen in revision lessons as both were approaching GCSE modular examinations or 'mock' examinations within days of the inspection. In these lessons, achievement was not as high in many classes as might have been expected from the GCSE results of previous years. However, the evidence of attendance at the Easter schools, and of previous examination and test results confirms the department's view that each year sees a big improvement in achievement when after-school classes, carefully planned revision based on the 'mock' exam results, and parental encouragement all combine to give a boost to performance which is not apparent until the examination results are received. A wide variety of revision techniques were seen during the inspection, many of them innovative or unusual. A Year 11 class revising heredity built models of the offspring, which they termed 'monsters', from a knowledge of the genetic make-up of the imaginary 'monster' parents. The process was light-hearted and good fun, but reinforced and consolidated their previous work in a unique way. Emphasis is given also to the use of revision sites available on the Internet and students experience these in some lessons and are encouraged to use them out of school hours also. During Years 10 and 11, written work continues to be of a good standard with improving diagrams and graphical work. No assessed practical work was seen being done in lessons, but scrutiny of the sample of scripts sent to the examining board for moderation showed that students had built on their Year 9 experiences and were planning, observing and evaluating sensibly and carefully. Some of the submissions showed impressive levels of information and communication technology skills in the way the work was presented.
120. Students with special educational needs, and those for whom English as an additional language match their classmates in oral and practical work. When additional support is provided, their written work is also of a comparable standard, but sufficient extra help is not available for all lessons, and without it, students' written work often falls in standard. Nevertheless, these students make satisfactory progress, and are frequently seen being helped over minor difficulties by their classmates.
121. The majority of students are attentive, well-mannered and interested in their science. They have good relationships with their teachers and are confident in asking or answering questions and in discussing their ideas. They come to lessons expecting to enjoy science and are enthusiastic about practical work. Co-operation is good and students share apparatus and data willingly. Working groups are often mixed boy and girl, and students of all backgrounds are totally integrated. Students from different ethnic backgrounds made interesting contributions to a lesson on food and diet and enjoyed telling their classmates of their own cultural traditions. They were equally interested in the answers to their questions about the traditions of other nationalities.

122. The quality of teaching is good in all years. There were no unsatisfactory lessons and two thirds of those seen were judged to be good or very good. Teachers know their subject well and are confident teaching across all three specialisms and their enthusiasm and commitment raise interest and motivation. Good use is made of teachers' experience in preparing students for examinations and in the best ways for students to score good marks and to show what they know. Lessons are well planned, move at an appropriate pace and contain plenty of practical work and computer-based activities. Staff know their students well and can give support whenever it is needed. This support could not be given so effectively were it not for the good relationships that exist. These good relationships also mean that students willingly try to meet the teachers' expectations and challenges, and result in firm class control being effected with a 'light touch'. Disruptive behaviour is rare. Staff know the likely offenders and pre-empt attempts to disturb the work of the class at an early stage. The result of these factors is a positive encouraging and friendly atmosphere in which students can learn and work confidently. Assessment is regular and the resulting data are used well in planning and in target setting for individuals. The recent introduction of a GNVQ course for students for whom GCSE is not an appropriate examination, is progressing well. Students appreciate the vocational and applied aspects of the course, enjoy their learning and are making steady progress.
123. The department is well led and managed. All staff share the commitment to gain the best possible result for each student and there is a strong team spirit. New members of staff are well supported, both formally and informally by their colleagues. Important members of the team are the technical staff who, despite limitations of storage and working space, provide a first-class service of unobtrusive deployment and retrieval of apparatus as well as maintaining equipment to a high standard. Timetabling difficulties have resulted in eight groups having two teachers each instead of the unified approach provided to all other groups by a single teacher. Some 12 percent of lessons are also taught outside science areas and both factors have an adverse effect on continuity and what can be attempted in lessons. The department has two modern laboratories and nine still in the original state, and these eleven laboratories are used by twelve full time teachers and two part-time staff who also teach in other departments. Despite considerable efforts to improve the environment with bright and cheerful displays of posters and students' work, the original laboratories do not provide an encouraging atmosphere. Designed for 24 students, they now frequently have up to 30 students, resulting in insufficient working space and restricted movement. In some of the laboratories the layout requires students working with their backs to the teacher who cannot see what they are doing. To maintain the good standard of safe practical work that is presently maintained by sensible behaviour and constant vigilance, until such time as the laboratories can be refurbished, group sizes should be reviewed. Safety would also be improved by the provision of a fume cupboard in the first-floor chemistry preparation room in the Upper School building. This would obviate the need for technicians to carry bulk chemicals to the floor below in order to prepare quantities for class use, and to return them later, during lessons when students might be encountered moving unexpectedly around the school.
124. Since the last inspection, results at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 have risen, the standard of teaching has improved, the new GNVQ course has been established and schemes of work are under continuous revision. Improvement has therefore been very good. The department continues to maintain a forward-looking, supportive and encouraging environment in which students can learn well and enjoy the process.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9 is leading to students achieving well.
- Students' very good attitudes help to support their learning.
- Students attain above average GCSE examination results.

Areas for improvement

- Provision for use of information and communications technology in lessons.
- Curriculum planning to ensure access and continuity for all students.
- Use of day-to-day assessment.
- Quality of schemes of work to provide expressive and experimental work.

125. Results in the 2001 GCSE examinations were above the national average. Results were higher in 2000 and, in that year were well above the national average. Students have consistently performed better in art and design than in their other subjects over recent years. Differences in the performance of boys and girls vary year by year but generally girls out-perform boys and boys seldom achieve the highest grades.

126. In work seen during the inspection, the standards students attain by the end of Year 9 are above average. This represents a good level of achievement for these students, whose levels of attainment were average when they joined the school. There is no significant variation between gender, ability or ethnic groups. By the end of Year 11, the standards that students attain are average and this represents a satisfactory level of achievement. However, by the end of Year 11, the achievement of boys has declined and the lack of specific provision for gifted and talented students means they have too few opportunities to extend their thinking and ideas through experimentation.

127. By the end of Year 9, students have developed good practical skills in a range of media, and their use of colour and understanding of colour theory is particularly well developed. They develop this competence from Year 7 by frequently practising colour-mixing and recording the effects of light and shade. For example opportunities provided in the 'Illuminated Manuscripts' and 'Letterforms' projects ensure students re-visit and build on their knowledge and skills. However, opportunities to work from direct observation are limited and recording and analytical skills remain under-developed. The focus in Years 7 to 9 on practical skills outweighs the limited opportunities in lessons for the development of ideas. As a result, experimental work that explores the qualities of media and materials and allows for an element of 'risk', is not sufficiently evident. This has an impact on the preparation of students for Years 10 and 11 generally, but may in part account for the gap in performance between boys and girls. The range of media used is good and craft skills in three-dimensional work and printmaking are at least sound. Information and communication skills however are not well developed and require improved access in lessons. Few opportunities are provided for students to use information and communication technology to widen the scope of their work. The understanding of the methods and styles of other artists is variable in quality. Some good work however, reflecting an understanding of style and cultural influences, was seen in Year 8. In this instance the 'letter-forms' project was linked very effectively to the work of the artist Jasper Johns and students' knowledge of his work was impressive. Schemes of work too often only provide reference to Western European art or the art of ancient cultures and are not reflective of the diversity of contemporary cultural influences relevant to students.

128. Work seen in Years 10 and 11 demonstrated a satisfactory range of experiences including printmaking, batik, mixed media, painting, graphics and three-dimensional and many students build successfully on the practical skills gained in Years 7 to 9. However students' experience of working from observation is seldom central to the development of their ideas. Subsequently too much work is dependent on secondary sources and is lacking the unique quality of individual exploration and analysis. For example Year 11 students working on their 'mock exam' use

photographs of drawings by professional artists to copy. Whilst this provides students with a sense of achievement it is seldom underpinned with real challenge or learning. The lack of opportunity for original thought, risk-taking and depth of study is in part made up for in the generally good control of media and application of colour. For example the paintings and prints that emerge from 'studies' based on photographs or other second-hand images, are invariably well executed and show high levels of finish. In addition, most students have a sound understanding of the process through which their projects develop. Although highly prescriptive, the simple process provides a secure framework for the lower attaining students whose practical work is often more advanced than expected. There is a danger however that this limited approach will not fit all students for the next stage of education. Consideration should therefore be given to the learning styles and needs of different groups (gender, ethnicity etc.) to improve achievement at this stage.

129. Literacy skills are generally good and frequently addressed in lessons through the introduction and explanation of new terms or specialist vocabulary. Written work however is often brief, usually factual and related to a particular artist or style. Numeracy skills and knowledge are satisfactory and opportunities exist in some projects, that deal with scale and proportion, to develop and apply skills.
130. The quality of teaching and learning is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. The best teaching is the result of well-pitched tasks that challenge all students in the group. For example in some Year 9 lessons the teacher provided structured yet demanding work based on medieval illuminated manuscripts. Students have very good attitudes and behave well in lessons. They are keen to please and are very polite to each other, often offering good constructive criticism. The teacher's knowledge and skills were effectively used to demonstrate technique; and the varied method, whole group, individual tuition and frequent questioning, constantly supported and challenged all students. Expectation of students' capability was high, and the pace and quality of learning good. Similarly in a Year 10 lesson where detailed planning ensured the task was presented in a structured, stage-by-stage manner, students made good progress. Teaching is often supported with good resources. Classrooms have informative displays that help students understand and learn about influences in art and design. The display of students' work is used effectively to exemplify key learning outcomes. The quality of learning is also enhanced by the display and discussion of learning objectives that takes place at the beginning of most lessons.
131. Teaching was seen to be less effective when the task was over-prescribed and failed to provide opportunities for exploration and extension, and subsequently work produced was too similar and lacking originality. This was seen often in Year 11 lessons and evident in previous work. Teachers should more frequently question the extent of their expectations and ask whether projects provide sufficient opportunities for students to explore the qualities of objects, materials and media. In the majority of lessons however teaching promotes at least satisfactory rates of learning. The tasks may not always provide appropriate challenge to all students, but teachers' methods usually address the range of abilities within groups and ensure that students progress appropriately. Teachers use their knowledge of the subject to enhance learning through demonstrations and the interaction with individuals. Whilst feedback to students is usually good and provides encouragement, discussion about how work relates to assessment objectives is rare. Significant exception occurs in some Year 7 to 9 lessons where the teacher, in discussion with students, translates the displayed lesson objectives into marking criteria. This promotes students' understanding of how to improve. In most cases however assessment is not sufficiently integrated into teaching and therefore students are largely unaware of their strengths and weaknesses in relation to the criteria by which their work is to be judged.
132. The learning opportunities provided through the 'taught curriculum' offer a sound range of media and experiences in line with the National Curriculum in Years 7 to 9 and the course offered for GCSE. However, planning is not sufficiently coherent to ensure equality of access to the National Curriculum and a secure balance of experiences. There is a need to make explicit plans for the delivery of the curriculum and to refine the course content in Years 10 and 11, thus ensuring coverage, continuity and progression for all students. A review of the timetabling of lessons in Years 10 and 11 is necessary to provide more appropriate blocks of time. The 'single' lessons currently available is restrictive to both students and teachers and does not allow for the depth and

extent of work expected. Consideration should also be given to the balance of opportunities for expressive, explorative and experimental work available to all students, but especially the higher attaining students and boys in particular.

133. Whilst routine aspects, of a day-to-day nature, are well managed, the educational direction for the further development of the subject is insufficiently clear. The ethos maintained by the head of department is supportive to staff and students alike. There is a focus on success for students and the importance of well-organised teaching and learning. Subject documentation to support teaching and learning however requires review and development. In particular the planning for the course in Years 7 to 9 needs to indicate how the key strands of the curriculum, recording, investigating/research, use of different media and techniques and evaluation of students' own and others work is delivered through projects. Schemes of work are out-dated in some content and the layout and should be reviewed to bring them in line with the revised National Curriculum. In addition the assessment procedures require further definition and clarity of criteria for teachers and students. Plans to develop the subject should include these changes in order to deliver sustainable development and to build on the success already achieved.
134. Accommodation for the subject is satisfactory with the exception of some lessons in Years 7 to 9 that are taught in non-specialist rooms. This has an impact on the range and nature of the activities available to students and restricts access the breadth of experience available to others.
135. Improvement since the last inspection has, on balance, been good. The quality of teaching has been maintained and standards in Years 10 and 11 have improved.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Students' practical skills are above average by the end of Year 11, with some quite superb project work that shows a real flair for design.
- The teaching is good; teachers give students plenty of opportunities to use information and communication technology and improve their literacy skills well.

Areas for improvement

- Students do not have enough opportunities to produce longer pieces of writing or to explain themselves in class.

136. Results in the 2001 GCSE examinations were below the national average. Results improved on those from the previous year and all students now study the subject to GCSE, which was not the case at the time of the previous inspection. Students from Indian and Pakistani backgrounds did better at GCSE than most white students because their attendance and attitudes were better. Students' results in design and technology were not significantly different from those they attained in most other subjects in the school. Boys and girls attained equally well.
137. The students currently in Year 9 joined the school with levels of attainment that were well below average. The students in Year 9 are now attaining standards that are below average and this represents a good level of achievement. There is little difference between the standards attained by boys and girls in Year 9 or students from different ethnic backgrounds. However, students who are learning English as an additional language make better progress than others do because their language skills are developed quickly in the early years at the school and this allows them to catch up with others who have not had the same difficulties.
138. By the end of Year 9, students' practical skills are above average. Students weigh and measure accurately, even when the scale does not have clear intermediate markings so that for example they can weigh 50 grams of butter even when the scales are only marked every 200 grams. This also demonstrates their good attention to detail, which they carry over to their project work. Graphical skills are average, with the highest attainers paying close attention to detail when

drawing for designs while lower attainers fail to use rulers or annotate properly. Written work is often presented well and spelling is accurate. However, the weakness in students' attainment lies in the short responses that they make when writing, which are also noticeable in their spoken answers to questions in class. The written and spoken answers display a lack of understanding of the topics being covered. For example, students could guess that a particular bread contained sun-dried tomatoes and olives, but had no understanding of how this related to the country of origin.

139. By Year 11 standards are broadly average and students are achieving well, although students from Indian backgrounds are doing better than their white counterparts. Students from Indian backgrounds tend to put more effort into their homework, spending time on presentation and producing work that shows a greater depth of understanding. The average standards are better than those suggested by last year's examination results and reflect the continuation in the trend of rising standards. Practical skills are above average and some of the work on the graphics, food and systems and control courses is of a very high quality. The food technology GCSE work, for example, such as the pitta bread, kebabs and a stunningly thin fillet of fish dish would grace the table of a top restaurant. Some of the packaging for toys, for example, demonstrates a real flair for design and a great attention to detail that meet the needs of the audience of children particularly well by using beautifully produced animal designs in bright colours. Much of the research that is carried out is also of a good quality, but the analysis of the results of the research does not go into sufficient detail to provide a well argued case for developing a design into a product. Overall, the standards of the coursework are above average and it is usually very well presented because the students make excellent use of computers in their work. However, the weakness in attainment lies in students' ability to explain themselves in writing. For example, their evaluations state what worked well and how a product could be improved, but rarely do students go beyond brief sentences. They even have difficulty explaining themselves verbally when given significant prompting by the teacher, so students do not perform as well in written examinations as they do in coursework. The students who were not entered for the examination last year were predominantly white students with very poor records of attendance.
140. The quality of teaching and learning is good in all years. Teachers plan their lessons very well; resources are always easily accessible and are used to provide good examples for students. In a systems and control lesson, for example, the teacher used examples of commercial electronic devices and the work of successful GCSE candidates both to demonstrate the differences between form and function, but also to impress on students the standards that they should aim for. As a result, students' aspirations were raised and their understanding was increased. Lessons usually have a brisk start that gets students straight into their work. In a textiles lesson for example the teacher had planned an activity that students could start as soon as they entered the room and did not waste time while waiting for others to arrive. All teachers place a very good emphasis on improving students' literacy skills. Spellings are always corrected when marking work and teachers often ask students to read aloud and spell difficult words. This has had a marked impact on the accuracy of students' reading, spelling and writing. Not enough is being done, however, to get students' to explain themselves properly. When questioning students in class, for example, teachers only require one-word answers and in written work only expect short sentences so that students are not developing the skills that they will need to answer examination questions that require a degree of reasoning or argument.
141. All teachers have good expectations of accuracy, both in terms of practical work and presentation. Information and communication technology is used very well to help lower attaining students to overcome their problems with handwriting and allow them to present their work in an impressively neat way. The same high expectations are evident in the way that teachers expect their students to behave. In almost all lessons, the attitudes of the students were very good; they concentrated on their practical work and were prepared to go out of their way to help one another. When students were writing, they often did so in complete silence. In one lesson, however, the students were intent on causing problems through loud and unruly behaviour. The teacher was having none of it; she used the school's discipline systems exceptionally well to bring the class under control and made sure all were behaving before continuing.

142. Very good progress has been made since the previous inspection. The head of faculty has left and the post is currently vacant. Nevertheless, the quality of teaching has improved and students who were underachieving at the time of the last inspection are now making good progress. Standards have shown a consistent improvement. The curriculum has seen substantial improvements; all students now study the subject in Years 10 and 11 and the new option system in Year 9 effectively means that students are starting their GCSE course a year early. The department has been managed well in the absence of a head of faculty and the quality of monitoring both by the school's senior managers and the teachers in the department, is of a high standard.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Specialist geography teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of the subject; they use this well to enhance learning.
- Teachers of geography show enthusiasm for the subject and work well together as a team.
- Good teacher/student relationships, inclusion of students and the positive student attitudes enhance learning.
- Areas for improvement
- There is a need to review, amend and update the geography curriculum to include more practical work both within and outside the school, including greater access to computers for investigative work.
- Greater involvement by students in their learning is needed in order to enhance their standards especially in Years 10 and 11.
- The marking and monitoring of students' work needs to be more consistent within the team of geography staff.

143. Results in the 2001 GCSE examinations were well below the national average, however, results have improved over the last three years. Students' results in geography are not as good as those they achieve in most other subjects in the school. Boys and girls do equally well.

144. In work seen during the inspection, the standards students attain by the end of Year 9 are average; their achievements in relation to standards at entry are good. Year 7 students start from a low level on entry with limited geographical skills. Most students, including those students with learning difficulties and those for whom English as an additional language, successfully master the basic skills of map work, scale and direction in relation to their immediate local vicinity. A low attaining set successfully demonstrated understanding of scale as they mapped a supermarket car park. Students draw on examples to show how villages and towns are initially established. High attaining students successfully explain the respective advantages and disadvantages of different locations of settlements. Year 8 students develop the skills of geographical observation successfully comparing and contrasting pictures of farming in the 1940's with the present day scene. All students in Year 7 and Year 8, including students with special educational needs and those from ethnic backgrounds make good progress. Year 9 students continue to build upon and refine these basic geographical skills of presentation and mapping related to scale, direction and symbols. The majority of Year 9 students know and understand the difference between climate and weather. They successfully plot data for temperature and rainfall graphs; higher attaining students successfully compare similarities and contrast the differences between Bolton and Singapore making a good analysis of the data. With an emphasis on key words and the correct use of terminology, the subject successfully supports the development of students' literacy skills. Students' exercise books across the range show a good understanding of conservation, including the moral issues of conservation and sustainability.

145. Standards in work seen at the end of Year 11 are below average. This represents a satisfactory level of achievement given that this cohort of students had very low levels of attainment on entry to the school. Both literacy and numeracy skills successfully support the students' work in geography. Teachers give good attention to the teaching of literacy. Students make good use of

technical words and generally use them in their correct context; this extends their vocabulary. Concepts and the linking of physical, human and economic geography are developing slowly for the majority of students in Year 10. They show sound knowledge of how river basins have developed; they demonstrate secure knowledge of the process of river erosion. High attaining students show good understanding of how the different river features were formed. The majority of students demonstrate an understanding of the water cycle; high attaining students understand some of the basics of flood management. Scrutiny of students' books shows a lot of copying of work especially by lower attaining students; discussions with students about their work often show some lack of understanding and interpretation. In Year 11 students study the process of glaciation; most students successfully identify features like corries and truncated spurs from an aerial photograph; high attaining students show a good understanding of the process of weathering, plucking and abrasion. Students compare and contrast a range of National Parks; they identify leisure pursuits undertaken in the forests, moors and mountainous areas. Student often fail to link the impact of human activity, For example, an oil terminal sited on an estuary also requires good road and rail access to areas of high population. All students, including those with special educational needs and those from minority ethnic groups are well-integrated into lessons. This is a strong aspect of the subject. Students receive good support by teachers and learning support assistants.

146. The quality of teaching and learning is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Overall, specialist teachers show good knowledge of geography; they apply their knowledge well in order to promote the students' learning. This is well demonstrated in a Year 9 lesson on weather and climate and in a Year 10 lesson on volcanoes and tectonics. Non-specialist teachers working with Years 7, 8 and 9 have adequate knowledge of the subject; however, their limited knowledge can constrain students' learning. This is well demonstrated in a Year 8 lesson as students compare subsistence farming in Kenya and commercial farming in California. Overall planning is satisfactory; however, there is an insufficient range of materials and tasks in order to meet the needs of all students. Learning is encouraged by the teachers' high expectations of both students' work and behaviour. Good probing questions stimulate students' thinking across the ability ranges. For example, in a Year 9 low attaining set good questioning enabled consolidation of climate comparisons.
147. Year 8 students successfully explore an Internet farming site for information. This motivates them well and extends the investigative element of the subject. Students respond well and give oral responses of high quality, which shows good development of their geographical understanding. However, students written responses in Year 10 and 11 are not as good. In most lessons there is a good emphasis on literacy through the use of key technical words; work in exercise books shows attention to spelling and punctuation. Numeracy skills support students' learning in aspects of climate and population, which enables analysis of simple data. Teachers are sufficiently flexible in their teaching to meet the needs of students with special educational needs and those for whom English as an additional language; the support that teachers give is good. Although there are a very small number of occasions where students misbehave, teachers' high expectations of students' behaviour quickly overcome such problems. Overall, attitudes, behaviour and relationships are good and this further promotes students' learning.
148. Whilst routine aspects, of a day-to-day nature, are well managed, the educational direction for the further development of the subject is insufficiently clear. The consequence of staff changes has meant that additional staff, many with a limited background have been deployed to teach geography in Years 7, 8 and 9; all these staff have major teaching commitments other than geography. Monitoring of students' work is insufficiently developed. Marking of students' work is regular but there is inconsistency within the team of geography teachers. Fieldwork away from school and on site is under-developed; students need more first hand experiences in order to be involved more directly in their learning. Assessment procedures are now established; however, assessment data now needs to be used better to inform curriculum planning. Computers are successfully used in different curriculum topics; however, there is insufficient access, which constrains the investigative elements of geography and presentation of work.

149. The progress made since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. Examination results still remain below average; however, since 1999 examination results have improved. The new acting head of department has identified some areas for development of the subject but has had insufficient time to implement them.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good and leads to students achieving well.
- Students, including those with special educational needs, make good progress as a result of the knowledge that teachers, and learning support staff, have of their needs.

Areas for improvement

- Leadership does not provide a sufficiently clear educational direction for the further development of the subject.
- Teaching strategies for improving students' literacy skills are not made explicit enough, in the subject handbook, to ensure that all teachers use them consistently.
- Not enough focused use is made of information and communication technology to develop further students' knowledge and historical skills.

150. Results in the 2001 GCSE examinations were below the national average. These results were lower than the 2000 results, but were consistent with the results attained in recent years. Boys and girls achieved equally well. Students' results in history were not significantly different from those they attained in most other subjects in the school.
151. In work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment at the end of Year 9 are below average. This represents a good level of achievement for these students, whose levels of attainment were well below average when they joined the school. Students gain a good knowledge of the events and people featuring in the topics that they study and, regardless of their prior attainment, show their understanding of them well when making oral contributions in class. For instance, whilst higher attaining students in one set showed their awareness that neither the King nor Parliament could be solely blamed for the outbreak of the English Civil War, lower attaining students in another set showed good understanding of the nature and use of propaganda by governments before and during World War I. The written work of lower attaining students, however, shows the difficulty they have in interpreting and selecting relevant information from historical sources to answer questions in convincing depth. Thus, answers to questions about the indigenous tribes of North America are often brief and lacking in detail. Higher attaining students, on the other hand, analyse source information and use the information well to account for the movement of nomadic tribes to North America before the ending of the Ice Age flooded the land connecting different continents. Standards of presentation are generally good across all attainment groups but weaknesses in grammar are apparent, particularly in the work of students of lower attainment.
152. The standards of attainment of those students who choose to continue with the study of history to the age of 16 are average and this represents a good level of achievement. The responses of students in class, and in short written answers to questions based upon sources of historical information, reflect not only their continuing acquisition of good knowledge and understanding, but also their developing skills in evaluating such sources. For instance, students in one class understood that valid opinions about the policies of Elizabeth I could only be formed by recognition that contemporary accounts of her behaviour were coloured by the views and motives of the writers. That good level of awareness is evident in the written work of students of a wide range of attainment when it is short answers based on sources that are required, as in the importance of the 'four humours' to the development of medicine in ancient Greece. Extended and more complex pieces of writing show that students of higher attainment have greater success in using their existing knowledge to structure and enhance the answers they give, so that their explanations of Elizabeth's policies contain sufficient information and detail to make their arguments convincing.

153. The quality of teaching and learning is good in all years. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of the subject and manage students well, having high expectations of their behaviour and work. Teachers make effective use of time and resources in lessons, and of homework, to further students' learning. The pace of lessons is properly brisk and makes appropriate demands upon students of all levels of attainment. Good use is made of teacher-produced resources that are well matched to the needs of students of differing attainment and there is some use of strategies to improve students' literary skills, such as emphasis upon key words. Teachers plan lessons effectively and inform students of lesson objectives, making the purpose of learning clear. Hence, students in a Year 8 lesson on Charles I and Parliament improved their awareness of how to view the same event from two different points of view; similarly, students in a Year 11 class preparing for mock GCSE examinations gained greater insight into what is required to achieve high marks in their answers.
154. Students of all levels of attainment make good progress. Those students with special educational needs benefit from teachers who use materials that are well-matched to their needs, and from experienced, caring and good quality learning support staff who work alongside them in lessons. Teachers' assessments of students' work are accurate and they use information about prior attainment to monitor individual progress. Appropriate targets, that are in line with the school's policy, are set for students' future performance, and this has been supplemented recently by some aspects of student self-assessment. There is room for improvement, however, in the consistency with which teachers, in their marking of written work, identify grammatical and spelling errors. There are good examples of marking that point out to students why they have achieved the grade awarded, and how to gain better marks in future. Again, however, such good practice is not sufficiently consistent across the subject, and more needs to be done to embed specific literacy improvement strategies into the subject's schemes of work.
155. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. Whilst routine aspects, of a day-to-day nature, are well managed, the educational direction for the further development of the subject is insufficiently clear. More explicit schemes of work are needed to make clear to teachers, especially those new to the school, what is expected of them. The documents should aim to develop further the quality of education provided by specifying how to ensure that students experience a full range of teaching and learning strategies, receive detailed information on a systematic basis from teachers' marking, and benefit from the wider use of strategies to develop their literacy skills. Improvements are needed in the way that teachers direct students towards the use of information and communication technology to develop more consistently the knowledge and research skills that they acquire.
156. The subject has made satisfactory progress since the previous inspection. The quality of teaching has improved from satisfactory overall to good, and the standard of GCSE examination results has been maintained. Deficiencies in the provision of information and communication technology experience for all students, however, remain.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Students achieve very well in Years 10 and 11 and standards on the GCSE course are above average.
- The teaching in Years 10 and 11 is very good and a great deal of work is completed in every lesson.
- There has been excellent improvement as a result of the outstanding leadership and management of the subject.

Areas for improvement

- Students need more opportunities to use information and communication technology in some subjects and have their work assessed in them.

157. Results in the GCSE examinations in 2001 were above the national average. Students gained better results than they did in most of their other subjects. The great majority of students studying the subject to GCSE were of Indian and Pakistani background. There was no significant difference in the results attained by boys and girls.
158. In the work seen during the inspection, standards at the end of Year 9 are below average and this represents an unsatisfactory level of achievement. Students in Year 9 have only studied the subject for one year and so are not achieving standards that are high enough. This situation has now been rectified; all students in Years 7 to 9 now study the subject. In the lessons seen during the inspection, the students are now making good progress because they are taught well. Both boys and girls improve at the same rate, regardless of whether they are higher or lower attainers or their ethnic background. Students' knowledge and understanding of different software applications are below average. They have a sound knowledge of the main types of software and how to use them. When word processing, for example, students can enter text and change the way that it looks and the layout of a page but are not yet using features such as search and replace or highlighting. The students' knowledge of how to adopt a systems approach to a given task is, however, above average. Students are able to break a given task down into stages and accurately identify aspects such as required inputs and outputs.
159. Standards at the end of Year 11 are above average and this represents a very good level of achievement given students' below average standards on starting the course. Standards of coursework are particularly high and much of the work is very detailed. Students have a good knowledge of technical terms such as 'edit', 'blocking' and 'validation' and use them appropriately when describing their work. Practical skills are broadly average with students able to use an appropriate range of software tools. All are able to produce a web page and can use colour to bring the page alive, while higher attainers go on to use hyperlinks to other pages. The great strength in attainment is the students' ability to analyse and solve problems using information and communication technology and this is a significant factor in allowing them to gain the higher grades at GCSE.
160. The way that information and communication technology is used to enhance other subjects is satisfactory. Design and technology and science are leaders in this respect. In design and technology, for example, the students use computers as an integral part of their designing, including analysing data and producing circuit diagrams. Much of the presentation of coursework is enhanced considerably and this helps to overcome the difficulties of students with poor handwriting. The science department plays a full role in teaching students how to measure variables such as velocity and acceleration and computers are used frequently and regularly in lessons. In other subjects, such as geography and history, too little use is made of computers to improve standards or enhance teaching. The students' work is not assessed well enough, in subjects other than information and communication technology, to provide an accurate picture of students' achievements.
161. The quality of teaching and learning is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Teachers place great emphasis on the teaching of literacy skills. Reading aloud is common in lessons and leads to students both improving their reading and becoming confident enough to volunteer to read aloud. Students are also expected to write in lessons, so that their handwriting improves. In one lesson, for example, students had to take their own notes and write them up in their exercise books. They showed no disappointment at not using the computers for this aspect and appreciated that such an approach would make revision easier as well as allowing them to practise their writing. The management of students is good in Years 7 to 9 and excellent in Years 10 and 11. The teachers in Years 10 and 11 have perfected a particularly alarming glare that stops any misbehaviour in its tracks and is used, for example, as an instant chastisement for just scraping a chair noisily. The students' instant reaction to this approach bears witness to the high expectations that teachers have of their students' behaviour. The students are very clear about what is expected of them and know very well the lines that must not be crossed. The same high expectations are evident in the amount of work that students on the GCSE courses are expected to complete in a single lesson. In one lesson, for example, the teacher split the students into groups and each group had to analyse a type of software and report back to the rest of the group.

In this way the students all received the benefit of learning about all of the types rather than just the one that they were analysing.

162. The main difference between the teaching in Years 7 to 9 and that in Years 10 and 11 lies with the experience of the teachers, which shows both in their subject knowledge and the methods that they use. The main specialist teachers have an excellent knowledge of the subject that is completely up-to-date and so students learn about the newest innovations. Other teachers have sufficient knowledge of the software but not of the wider aspects of the subject, such as its applications, that would allow them to broaden students' horizons. The experienced subject teachers also adapt their methods to meet the circumstances of a particular lesson. In a lesson where there were not enough computers for every student to use one individually, for example, the teacher told the students to work in pairs despite each student having different work to do. This meant that one student in each pair had nothing to do while their partner worked. The experienced teachers, on the other hand, either told the pairs to combine their work into one design or split the group into two and gave them different tasks to carry out. Homework is used well to make the best use of the teachers' time and the resources that are available. Students are expected, for example, to carry out research and work on computers in their own time rather than using lesson time when the teacher would not be needed.
163. Excellent progress has been made since the previous inspection as a result of the outstanding leadership and management of the subject. Standards have risen considerably throughout the school as the quality of teaching has improved. The GCSE results have improved from below average to above average. Students in Years 10 and 11 were underachieving at the time of the previous inspection and they are now making very good progress. The improvement in resources means that the school is now able to meet its statutory requirements to teach the subject to all students. The head of department leads by her excellent example. The monitoring of teaching is of high quality and undertaken very frequently. The priorities for development are entirely appropriate and are supported by excellent planning to implement them. The new resources are used very heavily and the school is getting the best possible benefits from their deployment.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Students achieve well as a result of good teaching and preparation for the speaking examination in particular.
- Speaking skills are well developed using effective materials and well-chosen activities.
- Students enjoy the lessons, which often have a quick pace and lively, interesting activities.

Areas for improvement

- A few boys have poor attitudes to learning languages.
- There is not enough opportunity for students to read extensively.

164. All students study either German or French from Year 7 and one group of students studies both languages in Year 9. A small proportion continues with two languages in Years 10 and 11.
165. Results in the 2001 GCSE examinations were well below the national average in both German and French but students are achieving well given their poor literacy skills when they join the school. Results have declined slightly over the past three years for French, for German results have fluctuated, being better in 2000 than in 1999 or 2001. In both languages students are still doing significantly better in languages than they are in other subjects they take in the school. More than twice the national percentage of students was entered for German than was nationally the case; the number of students entered for French was similar to national figures. More students achieved the highest grades in both languages than would be expected nationally and a significant proportion of these were boys. Although girls did better than boys overall, the gap was significantly less than would be expected nationally. Almost all students were entered for the GCSE; the proportion achieving grades A* to G was below the national average and was well below for boys

which reflects the absence from the examination of a small group of students. Of those who were actually present almost all achieved a pass.

166. In the work seen during the inspection, the standards students attain by the end of Year 9 are average in both languages. This represents very good achievement; students have positive attitudes and quickly make very good progress with the very good teaching that they receive. By the end of Year 9 students make particular progress in their speaking skills in both languages and they understand a range of topics such as describing their families, talking about the area that they live in and buying food at a restaurant. Students are able to hold short conversations with good pronunciation and understand at least two tenses. Students also find it easy to listen to tapes and understand the teacher because they are made to pay attention in class. Higher attainers make especially good progress in speaking and in writing. They are often asked to work at a high level, giving extended answers to open ended questions. For example, they can describe where they live in great detail, giving opinions about it with accuracy and good pronunciation. Students with special educational needs make very good progress in speaking too because they are given a great deal of practice and are carefully supported with helpful phrases provided for them to use. The support given to middle attaining students to organise their writing or to cope with reading tasks is not as well developed. Most writing is short but accurate and very well presented. Students from ethnic minority backgrounds and those for whom English is not their first language are doing very well, partly because of their good attitudes, they listen carefully and do homework diligently.
167. In the work seen during the inspection, the standards students attain by the end of Year 11 are below average in both German and French. This represents a good level of achievement given that this cohort of students had very low levels of attainment on entry to the school. Students cover a range of topics such as describing their surroundings and their school. Many higher attaining students in Year 11 in both German and French can write very accurately at length, using some complex language to express their opinions and varying the tenses appropriately. Some particularly good written work was seen from a Year 11 class in French describing their family and home life. Students of middle ability do not have well-developed reading and writing skills, partly because the teaching does not focus as often on these areas. Speaking skills are good for all groups of students except a small minority of white boys who have negative attitudes and poor behaviour. Students from ethnic minority backgrounds, who are often among the high attainers, are doing well and the performance of boys with an Indian and Pakistani background is particularly impressive. Most students with special educational needs make good progress but those with behavioural problems, who are often the white boys, find it difficult to concentrate and do not make good progress. All students make less progress in reading longer texts because they are not often asked to do so.
168. The quality of the teaching and learning is very good in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11 in both languages. There are no significant differences between the teaching of French and German because staff share ideas and all staff teach both languages. There is much consistency in the teaching across the department, all teachers use similar methods and have a wide range of techniques to make students practise language, which often involve students taking part in games and lively activities which they enjoy. One of the key strengths of the teaching is the pace of the lessons and the expectation that students will achieve well. For example in a Year 8 German lesson students were taught some new words and were expected not just to give a one word answer but to put these immediately into a phrase or sentence. Teachers use a range of well designed materials, they move swiftly between a variety of activities which means that students are kept busy for the full length of the lesson.
169. Most students are enthusiastic about learning languages and they take part in trips and visits to Belgium and Germany. There are also other events such as the European Conference day when students in Year 9 had to buy ingredients in order to make food to sell, and the visit from a French footballer whom students had to interview in French, which have had a particularly beneficial effect on their spoken work. Another strength of the teaching is that instructions are clear; students know exactly what they have to do. Most teachers use French or German for the majority of the lesson, although this is less consistent across the department. When it is used frequently it gives

students a good model to follow and leads to good pronunciation by students. In some lessons where there is a lot of English used, students have significantly weaker pronunciation and less well developed listening skills. All students are encouraged to keep their work neatly and to record grammar and vocabulary notes carefully which they often refer to when doing homework or revision, although they do not have a text book to take home to help with this. Homework is consistently set using booklets, which have been prepared in advance. In Years 10 and 11 all students are very well prepared for the demands of the GCSE, especially for the speaking examination. An example of this was seen in a Year 11 lesson when students were preparing to talk about their school and were given plenty of opportunity to work from a model answer, which had been prepared by the teacher. Students also respond well to doing coursework, which leads to some good writing.

170. In the very few lessons where learning was less successful a few disruptive students did not listen carefully to the teacher and relationships with the teacher were strained. Several students are persistently absent and do not take the examination. Opportunities for students to read materials such as magazines, books or articles are rare and resources for this are scarce. Students are heavily dependent on the teacher to help them with words they do not understand; they do not use dictionaries regularly as there are very few of them. Teachers of students in middle attaining sets are working hard to make the work appropriately challenging and interesting but there is still insufficient emphasis on reading and writing, especially in Years 10 and 11, and consequently students' skills in this are less well developed. In some lessons the variety of activities is restricted because teachers have to teach in classrooms, which are very cramped. Marking in books is satisfactory but does not always suggest how the work could have been improved. Students are given much more helpful feedback about their performance during tasks in lessons, particularly to improve their pronunciation. Teachers of students in middle attaining sets are working hard to make the work appropriately challenging and interesting but there is still insufficient emphasis on reading and writing and students consequently remain weak in this area. Currently some information and communication technology is used in lesson time for tasks such as setting out a menu with ideas being taken from authentic menus on the Internet but this is an area for further development.
171. The department is well led and managed. Results are analysed and targets are set to raise the achievement of all classes. There has been a drive to raise the motivation of students by; for example, running trips to Belgium and Germany, which have already contributed to improved attitudes. All staff are committed to working hard to improve still further and there are plans to increase the opportunities for students to read more extensively as soon as resources are available.
172. The department has made satisfactory progress since the previous inspection. Teaching remains good so students learn well and students are still achieving well and they continue to do well in speaking the language.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- The good teaching leads to students achieving well.
- Students enjoy lessons; they work well together and show respect to each other and to teachers.
- The quality of the extra-curricular activities offered is very good.
- Students benefit from a good range of peripatetic instrumental lessons.

Areas for development

- There are insufficient opportunities for students to celebrate the music of the diverse, multi-cultural dimension of the school and community.

173. Results in the 2001 GCSE examinations were well above the national average. The small numbers of students who go on to study music at GCSE achieve well. Results have been maintained at a high level since the previous inspection. Boys and girls achieve equally well.

174. In the work seen during the inspection, the standards that students attain by the end of Year 9 are below average and this represents a good level of achievement given their prior attainment. Students have good attitudes to their work; they enjoy the practical aspects of the subject, taking pride in what they do. Special educational needs students achieve well because teachers are clear about what these students should do during music projects. Higher attaining students achieve well because teachers identify extra things that these students can do. Students sing enthusiastically but many lack a full range of technique and tone control. In keyboard work they play rhythmically but do not always use an appropriate technique, often performing with just one or two fingers, this means some hesitation and an inability to perform more difficult pieces or to combine both hands fluently. Compositions for the majority of students are basic. Information and communication technology is used by students as a research and written presentation tool and to support musical performances and composition. There is regular satisfactory development of students' literacy skills; students describe heard music and thoughtfully reflect on what they have been doing. Written work is checked regularly by teachers for quality of content.
175. By the end of Year 11, students perform to a well above average standard, with some students having considerable accomplishments on more than one instrument. This represents a good level of achievement. Many students displayed impressive levels of musical accomplishment. Students conducted a full band rehearsal. Such opportunities for responsibility have a positive impact on their levels of maturity and overall musicianship. Their high standards of performance help them to write their own convincing music that shows a sense of clear shape and structure. Written coursework is also completed to a high standard. They have a very good knowledge of the history of music and this is also reflected in their musical knowledge. Students benefit from peripatetic instrumental tuition and the high standard of extra-curricular bands.
176. Those students with special educational needs also make good progress because work is closely matched to their needs. Students from different ethnic backgrounds and those for whom English as an additional language make similar progress to other students.
177. The quality of teaching, and subsequently of students' learning is good in all years. In some lessons, the quality of teaching is very good with very good levels of challenge that students rise to with enthusiasm. Teachers have very high levels of personal musical skill and communicate their own high standards in a most animated and engaging way. As a result, students are eager to learn and show no sign of self-consciousness. The planning of lessons is detailed and thorough. This gives a sense of solid structure to lessons with students very clear about what is expected by the end of lessons. The teachers' very good management of students creates a rewarding learning atmosphere and trusting relationships. Teachers always stimulate students' curiosity and correct occasional over excitedness in a sensitive way that doesn't interfere with the students natural effervescence and enthusiasm. Resources are well used to keep the pace of learning good. Assessments are used well to give students a clear idea of how they can improve and teachers take full note of the results to improve their own teaching. The quality of instrumental teaching is high and fully supports the efforts of the other teachers to improve standards.
178. Whilst a small minority of students are involved in the world-class brass band there are insufficient curricular opportunities for students to celebrate the music of their own cultures. The leadership and management of the subject are good. There is clear planning for future developments and a focus on continually improving standards. The subject has made good progress since the previous inspection. The good quality of teaching has been maintained and standards have improved.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Good teaching and students' positive attitudes contribute to a purposeful learning atmosphere and good achievement in lessons by all groups of students.
- Very strong extra-curricular provision enhances students' learning experiences and has a positive impact on their personal development.
- The excellent range of accommodation means a very good range of games and activities are taught.
- Areas for development
- There are not always enough opportunities for students to be involved in evaluation and non-participants are not always as involved, as they should, be in lessons.
- The achievement of students is not as it should be because of the poor quality indoor accommodation in the past.

179. Physical education was not offered as a GCSE course for examination in 2001.

180. In the work seen during the inspection, the standards that students attain by the end of Years 9 and 11 are below average. Poor quality indoor accommodation, until recently, has limited the range of activities available to all students and has depressed overall standards. The poor quality of indoor accommodation has led to the achievement of students being unsatisfactory. However, in swimming, standards improve greatly by the age of 14, in this respect students' achievement is good.

181. By the end of Year 9, the standards that students attain are below average. In basketball, for example, most boys are still only developing their basic skills and techniques and a significant number are still not ready to participate in full games. However, a small number of more talented boys have a good level of individual and teamwork skills as seen in a friendly basketball fixture with a local school. In gymnastics, the quality of girls' pair work balances is fairly basic and is not of high quality. Their sequence work is developing but starting and finishing positions need more attention in order to improve the overall quality of their work. No outdoor games were observed and, because of reasons beyond the control of the department, it was not possible to observe any swimming lessons.

182. By the end of Year 11, the standards that students attain are below average. In association football, most boys have secure individual skills, for example, ball control and passing, but their teamwork skills and use of accurate passing in small-sided games is underdeveloped. The more talented students are not using their good individual skills effectively. In badminton and table tennis, few girls can keep a rally going well, their range of shots is narrow and they have little knowledge and understanding of the importance of the use of footwork. The standards of a small number of girls observed in netball is broadly average, they apply the footwork rule competently including the correct usage when passing on the move.

183. Across all years students have a secure grasp of the principles and procedures of warm-up and many, for example, suggest appropriate stretches, know the muscle groups being used and lead parts of their own warm-up when asked to do so. The department's use of a fully equipped fitness suite is also helpful in this respect. Students with special educational needs and those for whom English as an additional language receive good support that helps them to integrate well and to make good progress. Physically talented students achieve well in lessons and are provided with further opportunities through taking part in school teams.

184. The GCSE course in physical education is an optional subject taken by some Year 10 pupils for the first time this year. GCSE physical education has been introduced and is being taken by some Year 10 students. A scrutiny of a sample of their work and observation of a theory lesson shows they are achieving well and developing their knowledge and understanding of the syllabus

requirements for anatomy and physiology. In a very good practical lesson their theory work was being very effectively consolidated through well organised basketball drills and exercises to look at, for example, flexion and extension of muscle groups in practice.

185. The quality of teaching is good in all years and results in effective learning for all students, as a result of which good progress is now being made by all. Students are therefore 'catching-up', particularly in Years 7 to 9, and standards of attainment are beginning to improve. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed and the overall quality has improved since the last inspection. All lessons start promptly and efficiently; this results in students being involved quickly. Teachers have high expectations in terms of discipline and behaviour and in the ability of students to work to their best. They manage their classes very well. Students' response to this is good, which helps to promote a positive learning atmosphere in lessons and enables all to make good progress. For example, they work well as pairs and small groups and show clear respect for the capabilities of one another. In Year 7 gymnastics lessons, for example, girls worked well together as pairs to develop their work on locomotion and boys worked well together when developing their rolls. However, in the boys' lesson there were insufficient opportunities for them to be involved in pair work coaching or in evaluation of one another, this would have deepened their knowledge and understanding further and helped them refine and develop further their own techniques. In a Year 10 GCSE theory lesson, students' all-round interest and the enthusiasm of the teacher enlivened the learning atmosphere and enabled all to improve their knowledge and understanding of different body shapes in relation to specific sporting activities. In all lessons, clear instructions, together with effective breakdown and demonstration of skills, ensures students are aware of what is expected of them and what they have to do to make good progress.
186. A variety of structured activities in lessons help ensure students stay motivated. In a Year 7 girls' badminton lesson the teacher successfully developed students' confidence through a good sequence of activities when looking at different service techniques. In the very best practice, very effective use is made of key words and terminology by displaying these on the wall in the sports hall. The teacher then referred to these throughout the lesson. On the whole, there is effective use of questioning by teachers, this not only enables them to gauge what students know and understand but also enhances students' speaking and listening skills. Students are made aware of their capabilities because teachers circulate well and offer praise, encouragement and constructive criticism. Non-participants are not always as fully involved as they should be, for example, they are not always made part of the group for demonstrations or involved in coaching and evaluative activities. Sometimes, at the end of lessons, there is a tendency for the teacher to provide all the evaluation rather than to also ask students for their responses as to what they feel they have achieved. The quality and consistency of the marking students' theory work is good, students are therefore being made aware of what they need to do to improve their knowledge and understanding.
187. The curriculum has been extended in Year 10 with a GCSE physical education course and a junior sports leaders' award course. The department has very good links with the local community that contribute well to students' learning, for example, the active sports programme and sports centre activities. A very good range of extra-curricular provision broadens students' learning experiences, these involve recreational as well as inter-school competitive fixtures. As a result of the continued enthusiasm of teachers, some from other departments, individuals have achieved representative honours at local, county and regional level in a variety of activities. Though not in school-based activities, two individuals have recently achieved national representative honours. Undoubtedly the greatest impact on the work of the department has been the recent opening of a lottery-funded sports hall. This, along with the swimming pool and a range of outdoor facilities, means the department can now offer a very good range of activities throughout the year that meet fully the requirements of the National Curriculum. Improvement overall since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Leadership and management are good and the department now has the capacity to move forward and improve the quality of provision further.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Specialist teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of the subject and support the development of students' understanding.
- High expectations of students create a secure working atmosphere.
- The new GCSE course provides good opportunities for students to develop their own beliefs and values.

Areas for improvement

- More independent and active learning opportunities to enable students to research and explore.
- Whilst routine aspects, of a day-to-day nature, are well managed, the educational direction for the further development of the subject is insufficiently clear.
- Bring assessment in line with the school assessment policy.
- Continue to develop the schemes of work for the GCSE course to identify assessment opportunities and to include greater student participation.
- Greater use of people and places of worship in order to enrich students' experiences and understanding.

188. Results for the full course GCSE in 2001 were close to the national average. Students do well in religious education in relation to most other subjects. Results have been rising steadily for the last three years for both boys and girls, the proportion of students achieving the highest grades is also rising.

189. In work seen during the inspection, standards students attain by the end of Year 9 are below average. This represents good achievement given their levels of attainment on entry to the school. Most students are acquiring a good body of knowledge about the faiths studied. Many students benefit from their own experiences of religion and can relate them to new concepts studied. The monotheistic concept of God is an example. Students are aware of the links between Islam, Judaism and Christianity, and recognise their common heritage. They consider the concept of belief and investigate the arguments for and against the existence of a supreme deity. Higher attaining students can identify scientific and religious arguments, however the lack of extended writing limits the opportunities for them to develop their ideas independently. Work sheet questions become more thoughtful as they progress in order to enable students to move towards more independent understanding. However, much work is left unfinished so often, lower attaining students do not reach the more reflective questions. Attractive projects are undertaken that demonstrate good use of information and communication technology for research and presentation, for example their work on the life of Mother Theresa of Calcutta. Students identify the work of individuals that reflects their beliefs, and their acquisition of information is good. The analysis of facts to demonstrate understanding is underdeveloped. Lower attaining students found it difficult to relate the concept of pacifism, that they had considered the previous lesson to the work of Martin Luther King.

190. All students in Years 10 and 11 follow the course designed for GCSE entry. In work seen during the inspection the standards students attain by the end of Year 11 are below average. This represents a satisfactory level of achievement. They consider contemporary moral issues such as abortion and euthanasia, and higher attaining students can relate religious teaching to these moral dilemmas. Lower attaining students make short responses linked to their prior opinion rather than reflecting on the effects of religious teaching. They are aware of the problems involved and demonstrate understanding that people may hold different views, although they generally fail to evaluate them. Students explore the benefits of living in a multi-racial society and empathise with the feelings of refugees in a well-designed unit on 'Social Harmony'. They have a clear understanding of the effects of different types of discrimination, although they do not explore why people become prejudiced, or what can be done to change peoples' views. Students are well prepared for the examinations and understand the need to put forward different viewpoints. Higher attaining students also come to their own judgements that are supported with reason and evidence. Students use information and communication technology confidently for research and to present their work. Statistics are used to obtain a more accurate picture of issues, for example the range of faiths in Britain, or the changing attitudes towards marriage.

191. There is no significant difference in the progress of boys and girls or by students from different ethnic backgrounds. Achievement of lower attaining students is limited by lack of continuity caused through absence or unfinished work. The level of achievement in Years 7 to 9 is good because students generally work with interest and are keen to respond to questions in class. A very good example was seen in a Year 7 class where the enthusiasm, involvement and focus of students studying the work of the prophets enabled them to make very good progress. In a Year 9 class students were encouraged to develop their responses by further questioning and as a result raised their level of attainment. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. A higher rate of progress is reached when students become actively involved and as a result become more interested. Where students are simply completing tasks that require little original thought they become passive receivers of information and achievement is reduced.
192. The quality of teaching and learning is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Specialists, whose secure knowledge supports the development of students understanding, teach most lessons. Lessons have clear objectives and the use of brainstorming at the start of several lessons enabled students to become quickly involved and to build upon earlier learning. Teachers have high expectations of behaviour and in some lessons the good rapport between teachers and students encouraged their participation. In the best lessons students were encouraged to develop their responses by the teacher clearly listening to what was said and valuing it. Where questions were simply used to check knowledge and teachers did not use further questions to encourage students to develop their ideas, achievement is limited and students cease to offer contributions. In many lessons students are encouraged to reflect on differing views and to form their own opinions. On some occasions there is insufficient emphasis on the views of the students and opportunities are missed that would enable students to learn from each other. Where lessons focus on the delivery of information rather than students' own investigation and discovery, their understanding becomes narrow and understanding is reduced. Day-to-day marking is encouraging, but there is insufficient information for a student to identify ways to improve or expectation that work should be completed. Religious education provides good opportunities in Years 7 to 9 for students to improve their literacy skills, and opportunities are taken for students to read. Students have limited opportunities to write in different ways, however a good example is a diary entry for a volunteer departing to work in Africa.
193. Whilst routine aspects, of a day-to-day nature, are well managed, the educational direction for the further development of the subject is insufficiently clear. The teachers and the senior management team work well together to ensure that the overall management of religious education in the school is satisfactory. The departments' handbook contains an inclusive range of policies that reflect the school aims, although not all these policies are actively in place. Non-specialist teachers are delivering some lessons and the department recognises the need to provide greater support for them. The scheme of work for Years 7 to 9 has been updated, and new modules have been designed to support the teaching of GCSE to all students in Years 10 and 11. These have yet to be refined and assessment opportunities, and the contribution of the department to the delivery of citizenship, have not yet been clearly identified in them. Assessment is not yet compatible with the whole school policy for assessment. The department makes a good contribution to the moral, social and cultural development of the students however opportunities for spiritual development are underdeveloped. Students have very little opportunity for first hand experience of places of worship of different cultures, or to speak with people with a variety outside experiences.
194. Improvement since the last inspection is good. GCSE results for the option group have risen and the Agreed Syllabus has been implemented. All students in Years 10 and 11 now receive their statutory entitlement and as a result all students have the opportunity to gain a GCSE accreditation. The new schemes of work are part of the personal development provision and relevant topics are delivered that will enable students to relate the knowledge gained in Years 7 to 9 to contemporary moral issues.

VOCATIONAL COURSES

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is very good and leads to students achieving very well.
- GCSE results in leisure and tourism were above the national average.
- The GCSE business studies course includes many spiritual, moral, ethical, social and cultural dimensions of business activity.

Areas for development

- Continue to explore the full range of new vocational courses and build upon existing very good vocational practice

195. Students following courses in business studies GCSE and leisure and tourism GNVQ achieve very well in relation to their prior attainment. The 2001 leisure and tourism results were above the national average, and the business results were below average, but in both instances students far exceeded their expected grades based upon their attainment on entry to the school. Boys and girls do equally well.
196. In the work seen during the inspection, the standards attained by students the end of Year 11 are well above average and this represents a very good level of achievement. There is no significant difference in the results of boy and girls. Students are making very good progress in understanding the central ideas and concepts of each vocational area. Examples of this, are when students in Year 10 use business terms such as free market economy, planned and mixed economies with fluency and ease and are well able to apply all business terminology in appropriate situations. Students correctly identify such government receipts as income tax, corporation tax, VAT, not only defining each of these accurately, but also displaying clear knowledge and understanding of the percentage rates of each. Year 11 leisure and tourism students likewise used such key terms as product, price, place and promotion with ease; and lessons observed had realistic and appropriate vocational links. External links have been correctly identified that provide vocational relevance for both staff and students alike and also provides valuable work placements and visiting speakers.
197. The quality of teaching is very good. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and this leads to confident teaching and the respect of students. Their thorough subject knowledge always underpins discussion and lends clarity to the explanations provided. As a result of this, students work very well indeed. Lesson objectives are clearly outlined at the beginning of each lesson and students know what they are meant to do and then work very effectively. Subject content is accurate and is well planned and generally presented clearly. Working methods are generally suitable to the task and enable the students to make very good and rapid progress. Students are generally managed very well indeed and their individual learning needs are fully recognised. Students following both courses are normally challenged and inspired to achieve at the very highest levels. All students do benefit from thorough, evaluative marking of their work which clearly shows students where they are going wrong and what they need to do to improve their writing and extend their knowledge. On both courses there is an appropriate emphasis on developing opportunities for independent study. Teachers make very good use of information and communication technology in their lessons. Projects and tasks allow students to make effective use of the Internet to research topics. Students enhance their work using spreadsheets and databases.
198. The GCSE business studies course includes many spiritual, moral, ethical, social and cultural dimensions of business activity. Ethics are considered in marketing, objectives and human resources. Moral, social, ethical and cultural dimensions are covered when looking at international trade and again through marketing and how multinationals and their shareholders use profits. Part of the programme of study for citizenship is also taught in this subject. The business course offers knowledge, skills and understanding of citizenship.
199. The subjects are well led and managed. The school has established a successful leisure and tourism course that students enjoy and which is proving to be successful. It is now seeking, next year, to explore the full range of new vocational courses and build upon existing very good vocational practice. The business studies department has clear policies, stating the rationale,

purpose and guidelines, of the teaching of literacy and the department's aims for inclusion. This area of the curriculum has made good progress since the previous inspection.

STUDENT SUPPORT CENTRE

Overall, the quality of provision in the Student Support Centre is **good**.

Strengths

- The good teaching leads to students achieving well and positive relationships.
- There is a flexible approach to admission, grouping and curricular provision.
- Strong teamwork involving teachers, the reintegration support worker and teaching assistants helps to support students' learning.

Areas for development

- Continue to refine teaching group arrangements to ensure that continuity in learning is assured.
- Improve the development plan by including monitoring, evaluation and costing arrangements for each objective.

200. The centre has been open for five years and has recently moved into a refurbished base. Students who are admitted to the centre are achieving well and making good progress towards the targets established for them. Although many of them have demonstrated difficult behaviour patterns in school, the centre is committed to improving academic performance as well as social skills. Some students are admitted to the centre because they have medical or attendance problems. They are being successfully reintegrated into the school.

201. Before being admitted to the centre, students' ability in reading and spelling is fully assessed and social skills are analysed. Individual targets are then set. The students themselves, and their parents, are involved in this process, and all parties know exactly what the targets are. All students work systematically towards their own goals with effective direction provided by their teachers and support staff. Design, research and evaluation skills are developing well. The critical skills needed in literacy and numeracy show marked improvements. The greatest gains are being made in the use of information and communication technology. These students are becoming proficient in a range of information and communication technology skills, including use of the Internet. This is helping to promote significant levels of independent research. Use of the library is also developing students' initiative, and they are able to undertake tasks without supervision.

202. Social skills are improving. Many of the students have short attention spans and are prone to outbursts when they become bored or frustrated. Their behaviour deteriorates when they feel vulnerable, as when required to speak in a foreign language. However, they usually work conscientiously and treat their teachers, teaching assistants and classmates with respect.

203. Teaching in the centre is of good quality, with some very good features. Teachers are highly organised and continually emphasise to students the need to meet their daily targets with regard to behaviour and attitudes. All staff involved with these students are totally conversant with students' individual targets. Questioning techniques are sensitive and require students to think for themselves. For example, the teacher was persuasively persistent when challenging students to discuss ideas for designing a nameplate in design and technology. Planning is of a high order. In a very good geography lesson the teacher systematically introduced students to different types of farming, such as arable and dairy. Teachers place great emphasis on key vocabulary in all subjects, and by the end of a French lesson, all students could say whether they liked or disliked particular activities.

204. The emphasis on improving literacy and numeracy skills is always to the fore. This is particularly true in lessons that use information and communication technology extensively. Students enjoy working through the various 'Successmaker' programs, and this is helping them to make progress in literacy and numeracy. In a very good English lesson, the teacher skilfully planned an investigation into multi-cultural elements of the area, extending this to a study of countries represented in the school community. Students responded enthusiastically to the challenge using

information and communication technology very effectively to broaden the range of their individual project.

205. The involvement of teaching assistants is crucial. They provide an invaluable source of energy and expertise to support students within the centre. They are fundamentally involved in all aspects of planning and teaching. The reintegration support worker has a key role in ensuring that students receive all necessary back-up when they return to normal classes. She generates effective links with parents in addition to the substantial administrative support required by the centre.
206. There is a strong emphasis on flexibility, and this serves the needs of students well. However, continuity is sometimes affected, since the composition of groups can fluctuate as students enter the centre and others return to mainstream classes. The final link in the curriculum chain in Years 7 to 9 will soon be added when arrangements for the teaching of physical education and music are finalised. There are appropriate plans to develop work placements and vocational courses in Years 10 and 11. Projects within the centre contribute significantly to the social and cultural development of the students.
207. Parents are involved at all stages and this partnership helps to sustain the success of the centre. There are regular meetings and communications. The 'Centre Forward' publication is a particularly impressive document.
208. Leadership of the centre is good. The co-ordinators ensure that other middle managers in the school are fully involved and informed about developments. An assistant headteacher and the director of learning support maintain a benevolent overview. They contribute well to the teamwork that underpins all the good work that goes on. The joint co-ordinators work co-operatively and lead the centre effectively.
209. The development plan is wide-ranging, but does not include strategies for the monitoring or evaluation of each objective. In addition, there are no projected costs. Good links have been established with outside agencies and resources are eminently suitable. The projected improvements to the new area would further enhance the provision, which is a testament to the school's positive approach to inclusion and equal opportunity.