

INSPECTION REPORT

TODMORDEN HIGH SCHOOL

Todmorden

LEA area: Calderdale

Unique reference number: 107564

Headteacher: Mr. E.W. Collins

Reporting inspector: Mr Anthony Shield
3569

Dates of inspection: 4 – 7 February 2002

Inspection number: 209052

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

© Crown copyright 2002

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

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 – 18 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Ewood Lane
Todmorden
Lancs

Postcode: OL14 7DG

Telephone number: 01706 813558

Fax number: 01706 814821

Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr G. Ashworth

Date of previous inspection: November 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
3569	Anthony Shield	<i>Registered inspector</i>		What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievements. How well are pupils' taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
14066	Gillian Hoggard	<i>Lay inspector</i>		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
4486	Michael Weller	<i>Team inspector</i>	English; Special educational Needs; English as an additional Language.	
12885	John Hunt	<i>Team inspector</i>	Mathematics.	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
2919	Phillip Armitage	<i>Team inspector</i>	Science.	
15940	Neil Godfrey	<i>Team inspector</i>	Art and Design.	
1578	Maureen Sinclair	<i>Team inspector</i>	Information and Communication Technology.	
8501	Paul Hartwright	<i>Team inspector</i>	Information and Communication Technology – sixth form.	
23552	Ian Whitehouse	<i>Team inspector</i>	Geography.	
10275	John Cosgrove	<i>Team inspector</i>	History.	
317	June Davies	<i>Team inspector</i>	French.	
31850	David Nevens	<i>Team inspector</i>	Music.	
27381	Patrick Smith	<i>Team inspector</i>	Physical education.	
30899	Ken Bowden	<i>Team inspector</i>	Design and technology.	
15485	Roger Butler	<i>Team Inspector</i>	Religious education; Equal opportunities.	

The inspection contractor was:

*Westminster Education Consultants
Old Garden House
The Lanterns
Bridge Lane
London
SW11 3AD*

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

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

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	1
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	10
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?	16
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?	20
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	24
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?	28
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	29
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	34
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	36
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4	42
PART E: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM	67

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Todmorden High School is a mixed community comprehensive school for pupils aged 11 to 19, situated in Todmorden. It draws its pupils from the immediate locality, which is well below average in socio-economic terms. At around twenty-five per cent, the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average. There are 894 pupils on roll, with slightly more girls than boys in most years. Attainment on entry overall is below average, and a number of high attaining pupils from the area attend grammar schools in Halifax. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs is above average, with two hundred and twenty-five pupils on the register of special educational needs, mostly for learning difficulties and emotional and behavioural problems. Thirty-one of these have Statements of Special Educational Need; this is also above average. The majority of pupils are of white UK heritage, with substantial minorities of Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils. Although 68 pupils have English as an additional language, only one of these is at an early stage of acquisition. Although the school was fully staffed at the time of the inspection, in common with many schools, it does have difficulty recruiting suitable specialist staff in some subjects.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school provides a sound education for its pupils and is increasingly effective. Standards are below average in Year 9 but pupils who complete GCSE courses achieve standards that are at or above the national average in most subjects. Given the pupils' attainment on entry to the school, this represents at least satisfactory and often good achievement. In the sixth form, standards are now close to the national average and students are achieving well. Teaching overall is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, and good in Years 10, 11 and the sixth form. Leadership and management of the school are providing it with a good sense of purpose. The school offers satisfactory value for money.

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

- The headteacher and his senior staff provide a clear sense of direction and purpose.
- Hardworking staff show a strong commitment to the progress of individual pupils and school improvement overall.
- Good progress made by most pupils who complete GCSE and sixth form courses, because of effective teaching in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form.
- The curriculum in both Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form is tailored effectively to meet the needs of individuals.
- Standards in art and drama reflect skilled teaching and high Levels of commitment on the part of both teachers and pupils.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- The achievements of the lowest attaining pupils, particularly in Years 10 and 11.
- Some unsatisfactory behaviour affects both the overall ethos of the school and progress in some lessons.
- The rigour with which some school policies are implemented to secure more consistently high expectations.
- Standards of writing which are preventing good progress in some subjects.
- The quality of the accommodation, which does not always encourage and inspire.
- The provision for information and communication technology (ICT) and religious education (RE).

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Improvement since the last inspection in December 1998 has been satisfactory but mixed. There has been little improvement overall in performance in national tests at the end of Year 9 or GCSE results since the last inspection. However after a poor year in 1999, there have been signs of a sustained improvement in test and examination performance. In the sixth form, results at A Level and GNVQ have improved. The quality of teaching and attendance have improved. Most key issues from the previous inspection have been satisfactorily addressed, although the quality of the learning environment and standards of behaviour remain issues for improvement.

STANDARDS

The table below shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 11 and sixth form students at the end of Year 13 based on average point scores in GCSE and A Level/AS Level examinations.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	E	D	E	D
A Level/ AS/VCE/Advanced GNVQ	D	E	C	

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

In 2001, the school's results in tests taken at the end of Year 9 were below average in English and science and well below average in mathematics. In comparison with similar schools, these results were above average in English and science, and average in mathematics. Given pupils' below average attainment on entry, this represents at least satisfactory achievement. Results improved in 2001, and have been improving for each of the last three years. The school's GCSE performance, in which 37.5 per cent of pupils gained five or more A* to C grades in 2001, was below the national average, but above the average for similar schools. However, the proportion of pupils achieving five or more A* to G grades fell and this has resulted in the well below average points score, because a number of pupils left with no GCSE accreditation. For those pupils who complete the course, results in a number of subjects match or even exceed national levels. Results in English, mathematics and science were close to the national average, and those in art, French, geography and design

technology were above average. Results in history and physical education (PE) were below average. Targets set for 2001 were largely met, and those set for 2002 and 2003 are challenging. Inspectors judge these targets to be realistic and achievable.

In the sixth form, the average A and AS Level points score in 2001 was below average, but close to the average when vocational qualifications are included. Most students make good progress through their A-Level courses given their attainment at GCSE. The number of candidates in individual subjects is often too small for valid statistical comparisons to be made, but in English literature, art and design and technology, the percentage achieving an A or B grade exceeded the national average.

In work seen during the inspection, standards are below average at the end of Years 9, but closer to the average in most subjects in Year 11. Although there are pupils who underachieve, most pupils' achievements are at least satisfactory, often good. Only in ICT and RE are pupils' achievements unsatisfactory. In individual subjects, standards in Year 9 are below average in English, mathematics and science and well below average in RE. However in all other subjects standards are average. In Year 11, standards are above average in design technology, geography, art, music and drama, average in English, mathematics, science, history, and French, and below average elsewhere. In the sixth form, students in the current Year 13 are reaching above average standards in English, technology, geography, French, and art. In mathematics, chemistry and ICT they are average. In most subjects, students are achieving well, given their attainment on entry to the course.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Satisfactory. Most pupils are keen to learn and they work hard to achieve their best. A minority of pupils is less committed.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Unsatisfactory. Although most pupils behave responsibly and sensibly in lessons and around the school, a minority behave with less thoughtfulness and concern for others.
Personal development and relationships	Satisfactory. Many teachers have established trusting and productive relationships with pupils, and many senior pupils and sixth formers act with maturity and responsibly.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Overall figures are average

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good elsewhere, including the sixth form. Teaching has improved since the time of the previous inspection. Two out of three lessons were judged to be good or better, and one in four was very good or excellent. However some unsatisfactory teaching remains. Teaching in English and mathematics in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory and in Years 10 and 11 it is good. Teaching in science is satisfactory throughout. The teaching of literacy is satisfactory in English, but there are inconsistencies across other subjects. The teaching of numeracy is satisfactory,

particularly within mathematics. Teaching is consistently good in design technology, history, geography, French, art, PE and drama. In both art and drama it is very good in Years 10 and 11. Teaching is unsatisfactory in RE. In the sixth form, teaching is good in English, mathematics, chemistry, technology, ICT, and on the health and social care course; it very good in geography, French and art. Teachers' skilled classroom management and their confident subject knowledge and understanding characterise much of the good teaching. Planning is usually effective in meeting the needs of all pupils, but not consistently so. The use of homework in Years 7 to 9 is not always planned to consolidate learning. The quality of learning matches the quality of teaching, helped by pupils' usually positive attitudes in lessons. Pupils' knowledge of their own progress is not as satisfactory as other aspects of their learning, but improves in Years 10 and 11.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The school gives careful consideration to providing courses in Years 10 and 11, which are suited to the needs of individual pupils.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Support is well managed and individual education plans well designed and matched to needs.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Although there are few pupils at an early stage of language acquisition, support is effective in enabling them to access the curriculum
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Pupils have good opportunities to develop social and cultural awareness. The school's moral framework is clear, although not consistently implemented. Cultural development is promoted through a good range of opportunities in art, music and drama. Opportunities for promoting spiritual awareness are satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school is concerned for the welfare and care of individual pupils, and overall support and guidance through the year teams and tutors are effective. Pupils' progress is monitored carefully, and the school is beginning to use assessment data effectively to set targets.

The school works hard to involve parents and to work in partnership to ensure that all children achieve their potential. Statutory requirements in relation to information and communication technology and religious education are not fully met, and the school does not fulfil the requirements for a daily act of collective worship.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. Clear leadership by the headteacher is securing school improvement. Management at other levels is improving, although management systems have not secured consistent implementation of all school policies.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are committed, well informed and confident in their ability both to shape the school's direction and to question the senior management. Most statutory requirements are met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. A realistic audit of the school's work has enabled senior staff to develop a strategic plan for improvement. Targets are measurable, challenging and achievable.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The school seeks to apply best value wherever possible, and resources are mostly used satisfactorily. Educational priorities are considered when the budget is being planned.

There are enough specialist teachers to meet the needs of the curriculum, but the school suffers from difficulties in recruiting staff in some subjects. While the accommodation is adequate, much of it is in a poor state of repair. Learning resources are satisfactory in most subjects.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That the school is improving. • That their child likes school. • That their child is making good progress • That the school expects their child to work hard and achieve his or her best. • The provision for extra-curricular activities and the drama and musical productions in particular. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The poor behaviour of some pupils at the school. • More consistent setting of homework and effective use of the pupils' journals. • Information about how well their child is getting on. • Closer links with parents.

Inspectors agree with most of the comments parents make about the school. However, they judge the quality of the annual report on pupils' progress to be very good.

ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM TODMORDEN HIGH SCHOOL

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

There are 108 students in the sixth, 43 boys and 65 girls. Of these 72 are in Year 12 and 36 in Year 13. This is smaller than most sixth forms in the country. The number of students recruited into the sixth form has been maintained at about this level for some years. Most are of white UK heritage, although a small number are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The school offers a range of AS, A Level and GNVQ courses, appropriate to the students' needs. In 2001 around two out of three students from Year 11 continued in education, although some seek to continue their education elsewhere. The minimum entry requirements of at least four GCSE passes at grade C for two-year courses and four passes at A* to G for one-year courses are not always strictly adhered to, and the school seeks to tailor courses to individual needs. With sometimes only modest GCSE results, many students embark on one-year programmes leading to AS Level or vocational qualifications. Others are committed to two-year programmes leading to A Levels.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

For those students who choose to stay on into the sixth form, the school provides an effective education. Standards at AS and A Level, and in GNVQ courses, are improving and are now close to the national average. Given the students' attainment at GCSE on entry onto sixth form courses, most achieve well. Good and very good teaching leads to good progress in a number of subjects including English, mathematics, chemistry, technology, information and communication technology (ICT), geography, French, art, health and social care. The sixth form is effectively led and managed by two experienced teachers, and the school is constantly looking to improve its range of courses and the quality of provision. The monitoring of teaching and sharing of good practice are less rigorously carried out at sixth form level than elsewhere in the school. Currently the sixth form is not cost effective and is subsidised from other areas of the school. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

Strengths

- Students achieve well and particularly in English, technology, geography, French and art.
- Teaching is good and students respond well to the challenge and rigour of the teaching.
- Students have a mature and responsible attitude to their learning, and value their opportunity to make a contribution to the life of the whole school.
- The school provides strong and sensitive support and guidance to individual students

What could be improved

- The numbers of students studying some subjects, in order to provide more cost effective learning and greater opportunities for students to support each other in their learning

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

The table below shows overall judgements about the provision in the subjects and courses that were inspected in the sixth form. Judgements are based mainly on the quality of teaching and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects in the sixth form were inspected.

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Satisfactory. A Level pass rates are good though no students achieve the highest grade. AS level and GCSE results are far more variable and sometimes poor. A Level students make good progress. Teaching is good and students have very good attitudes to their work.
Chemistry	Satisfactory. Good teaching enables students to make good progress through the course, and results are improving. Students have very positive attitudes to the subject
Design and Technology	Good. Standards in both product design and textiles are above average. Teaching is good throughout and the students respond with interest and commitment.
ICT	Good. In GNVQ courses, students are achieving well as a consequence of good teaching and positive attitudes from the students.
Health and Social Care	Good. At both intermediate and advanced levels, students are achieving well as a result of challenging and well-planned teaching.
Art and Design	Very good. Results are above national averages and the majority of students exceeded their predicted grades. Excellent teaching gives the students confidence and fosters new knowledge, good development of skills and a greater understanding of their own ability.
Geography	Good. Students achieve well and either match or exceed their target grades as a result of very good teaching and good provision for fieldwork.
English	Good. Results have fluctuated but students' achievements are consistently good given their attainment at GCSE. Teaching is very good and students are encouraged to be independent learners.
French	Very Good. Results for 2001 are well above national averages. Teachers have a very fluent command of the language and standards of teaching are consistently high. Study support for students is very strong and students are enthusiastic, hardworking and firmly committed to their learning.

In other subjects, work was sampled. Teaching was good in lessons observed in history, government and politics and media studies.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Students are strongly and sensitively supported, at an individual level, throughout their time in the sixth form. Opportunities for contributing to the life of the whole school effectively encourage students' personal development. Realistic targets are set for each student and are regularly monitored.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	The leadership and management of the sixth form are effective and the school has established clear aims for teaching and learning. There has been a smooth transition this term to a new sixth form management structure, which has already had a positive impact on some key planning issues. The requirements for religious education in the sixth form are not met.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good teaching, which challenges them to do their best and supports them when they have difficulties. • The range of courses available, which enables them to follow a programme suited to their talents and abilities. • The sensitive and supportive academic and pastoral guidance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of accommodation and general decorative state of the building. • The lack of resources in some subjects, particularly technology, and the poor sports facilities.

Inspectors agree with the students' views. Students warmly endorsed the school. They enjoy being part of the sixth form and would advise other students to join the sixth form in the school.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Overall standards of attainment on entry to the school in Year 7, as measured by national tests taken by pupils at the end their primary schools, are below average. However, attainment is improving and the current Year 7 is closer to the average than other years in the school. The school admits relatively few pupils with very high prior attainment because it loses some high attaining pupils each year to grammar schools in Halifax. Pupils' verbal skills are lower than their non-verbal and quantitative skills. Cognitive ability tests, which the school administers to its Year 7 pupils on entry, confirm high proportions of below average pupils, particularly in verbal tests. In most years the average school score is significantly less than the national average of 100. Attainment on entry has been improving, and the current Years 7 and 8 are more able than Years 9, 10 and 11. In all years, the percentage of pupils with special educational needs is above average. This is partly because of the local education authority's social inclusion policy, which means that most pupils with special educational needs are educated in mainstream schools.

2. At the end of Year 9 in 2001, the overall average points score of pupils in national tests was below the average for all schools nationally. Results in English and science were below average, and those in mathematics were well below average. When compared with schools with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, English and science results were above average, while mathematics results were average. There was no significant difference in performance between boys and girls. Performance in tests in each subject has been consistent over the last five years, with only small variations above and below last year's figures. As a result, the trend has been below the improving national trend, although results have been improving year on year over the last three years.

3. At the end of Year 11 in 2001, 37 per cent of pupils gained five or more A* to C grades. This was below the national average but above the average for similar schools. The performance of higher attaining pupils has been improving over the last three years and results are higher than at the time of the last inspection, when only 33 per cent of the pupils achieved five or more grades at A* to C. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more A* to G grades was well below average, and fell in 2001. The proportion achieving one or more A* to G grades (88 per cent) was very low in comparison with schools nationally, and within the lowest five per cent of schools nationally. In 2001, eighteen Year 11 pupils left the school with no pass grades at GCSE. It is the performance of these pupils in particular which pulled down the overall average points score at GCSE, which was well below the national average and below the average for similar schools. Over the last few years, GCSE results have remained well below average, and there has been no discernible improving trend. Indeed, performance since the last inspection has declined from an average points score of 31.5 in 1998 to 29.9 in 2001. Raising attainment, a key issue at the time of the last inspection, remains a key priority for school improvement.

4. For those pupils who complete the GCSE course, performance in a number of subjects matches or even exceeds national averages. Results in English, mathematics and science were close to the national average, and those in art, French, geography and design technology were above average. Results in history and physical education (PE) were below average.

5. Over the last three years, both boys' and girls' results have been well below the average for boys and girls nationally. When compared with their attainment at the end of Year 9, both boys and girls in 2001 made well below average progress. However, higher attaining pupils did better and most of them met their targets. Underachievement is more common amongst lower attaining pupils.

6. GCSE targets set in 2001 were met in relation to both the average points score and the percentage reaching five or more grades A* to C. However, the target for the percentage reaching one or more grades A* to G was not met. The school has set ambitious but achievable targets for 2002 and 2003 which would see a marked improvement in performance at GCSE. The school's procedures for target setting are based on a realistic analysis of assessment data. Inspectors agree with the school that the challenging targets set for 2002 and 2003 are achievable, given the improvements the school is now making. The curricular changes the school has made in Years 10 and 11 to provide more relevant courses, and to ensure that all pupils gain some accreditation for their work, are likely to lead to significant gains in GCSE performance by lower attaining pupils in particular.

7. The school admits a number of pupils midway through Year 10 or Year 11, when the GCSE course is already underway. In most, though not all cases, these pupils have a detrimental impact on the school's overall GCSE results. It is evident that the progress of pupils who are on roll throughout the GCSE course in Years 10 and 11 is generally much better.

8. Underachievement in GCSE examinations is the consequence of a number of factors. Of these, poor literacy skills are perhaps the most significant. The pupils' ability to put down their thoughts on paper; their ability to organise their notes and use them effectively for revision, and their ability to reason and analyse, are all limited. The school's lack of consistency in implementing effective strategies to reinforce basic literacy skills is contributing to underachievement. In addition, many pupils have poor recall skills. Knowledge acquired and used in one lesson is often forgotten by the next. Poor attendance adversely affects the progress of a number of pupils, and in 2001, a number of pupils failed to complete coursework. In addition many pupils lack confidence in their learning and in their ability to achieve. The school has recognised this and, through its 'sharing success' ethos and its rewards culture, has begun to address issues of poor self-esteem.

9. In work seen during the inspection in Year 9, standards overall are below average and in line with recent test results. Most pupils' achievements, however, are satisfactory given their prior attainment on entry, and most pupils make satisfactory progress through Years 7 to 9. In work seen in Year 11, standards are close to the average overall; in a number of subjects they are above average. Pupils are making good progress through their GCSE courses and their achievements are good. These judgements are higher than recent GCSE results might suggest. This is partly because the current Year 11 is a more able group than previous years, and also because of improving standards of teaching and learning, and the development of more relevant courses, particularly for lower attaining pupils. However, satisfactory learning in lessons does not consistently lead to satisfactory progress over time, and the school must do more to consolidate learning and ensure that GCSE performance in particular reflects the pupils' achievements.

10. Pupils with special educational needs who receive additional classroom support, and those who attend special lessons, make satisfactory progress overall in their learning. When pupils with special educational needs are given additional help in lessons by learning support assistants or support teachers, they make good progress regardless of their identified learning difficulties. Those pupils in Years 7 to 11 who attend special lessons to improve their reading and spelling skills also make very good progress in literacy. Records of

progress for those following individual literacy and numeracy programmes show that most, although not all, pupils make up to one year's progress in six months. There are a number of examples of pupils starting with statements who no longer require them. For example, one Year 9 pupil has had a statement for three years for literacy. At her last review it was recorded that her self-confidence is now much better; that she achieves at an appropriate level for her age, and that the objectives of the statement have been met. Most pupils identified with special educational needs have learning difficulties. A few have emotional and behavioural difficulties, with associated personal support plans. Progress for these pupils is more uneven.

11. There is one pupil in school at the initial stage of learning English as an additional language (EAL). He receives some one-to-one support in lessons and in a small withdrawal class and is making good progress. Pupils with EAL who are still encountering some learning difficulties receive the same support as pupils with special educational needs, often, but not always, with the EAL teacher. They generally make good progress. The school very effectively tracks their progress and evaluates their examination success. Their learning is less effective where the teacher has not planned for specific support.

12. The progress made by pupils from ethnic minorities is better than that made by other pupils. In 2001, one hundred per cent of pupils from ethnic minorities achieved at least five A* to G grades. They make consistently good progress, and twelve out of thirteen pupils exceeded their targets. Pupils of higher attainment generally make at least satisfactory and more usually good progress. There are, however, some missed opportunities in lessons, particular when work is not planned specifically to meet their needs, or to ensure that they are consistently stretched. Gifted and talented pupils are identified, although the programmes arranged for them within different faculties have not as yet made a significant impact on their progress. The progress of lower attaining pupils is less consistent. However, increasingly, their progress is matching that of other pupils. Although some individuals, particularly those with emotional and behavioural difficulties, underachieve, the school's inclusive approach and strategies to involve them more actively in their learning are beginning to have an impact. There are no significant differences overall in the achievements of boys and girls, although within mathematics and French some differences can be found.

13. In work seen in English during the inspection, standards were below average at the end of Year 9 and average in Year 11. Given their attainment on entry, when most pupils have below average results in national tests at the end of their primary schools, and often low reading ages, pupils' achievements are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Although most pupils read with fluency and understanding, and standards of speaking and listening are at least satisfactory, and good in Years 10 and 11, writing continues to hamper the progress of some pupils. Errors in grammar, spelling and punctuation are common, and pupils in Years 7 and 8 do not write convincingly at length.

14. As in English, in work seen in mathematics, standards, were below average at the end of Year 9 and average in Year 11. Pupils' achievements are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, given the below average standards of mathematics they have on entry in Year 7. During Years 10 and 11, pupils achieve well. Standards of numeracy overall are satisfactory. Pupils' skills and confidence in using and applying number are improving, largely as the consequence of an increased emphasis on mental strategies in mathematics lessons.

15. Standards in science are below average in Year 9 and average in Year 11. Pupils are making satisfactory progress throughout. In other subjects, standards in Year 9 are average except in information and communication technology (ICT) where they are below average and in religious education (RE) where they are well below average. However, given the pupils' attainment on entry in Year 7, they achieve at least satisfactorily, except in ICT and RE where there is underachievement. In design technology, geography, art and drama, pupils' achievements are good as a result of particularly effective teaching. Standards in Year 11 remain below average in ICT and well below average in RE, but are above average in design technology, geography, art, music and drama. In history and French, standards are average. In physical education (PE), standards are average, but performance in the theoretical aspects of the GCSE examination brings standards down below average. Pupils' achievements are at least satisfactory through Years 10 and 11, except in ICT and RE, where they are unsatisfactory. In design technology, geography, French, music, and drama, pupils achieve well and in art they achieve very well.

Sixth form

16. Results in A Level, AS Level, AVCE, and advanced GNVQ examinations in 2001 were close to the national average, and have been steadily improving over the last three years. The average points score for those students entered for two or more A/AS Levels was 12.7, and the average points score including advanced vocational examination results was 14.1.

17. Numbers entered in individual subjects were small and comparisons should be treated with caution. However, in 2001 results in design and technology were well above average; those in biology, government and politics, and sports studies were below average; those in English language, general studies and history were well below average. Although numbers were too small to be significant, the percentage achieving an A or B grade in English literature and art exceeded the national average, and in media studies, ICT, geography, and English language, the percentage was close to the national average. Most subjects achieved a 100 per cent pass rate, and the overall pass rate of 90 per cent is around the national pass rate of 89.8 per cent. Students achieved higher grades in English literature, design and technology, ICT, media studies, geography, mathematics and physics than in other subjects which they took. They achieved less well in chemistry, history, biology, government and politics, sports studies and art.

18. At AS Level, students in French, English language, sports studies and art exceeded the national percentage achieving an A or B grade. In psychology, design and technology, English literature, and geography, results were close to the national average for A or B grades. The overall pass rate of 81 per cent was close to the national average of 86.6 per cent.

19. The pass rate for students entered for Intermediate GNVQ qualifications in health and social care in 2001 was 86 per cent and above the national average.

20. Analysis of the students' results at A Level indicates that, given their attainment at GCSE, most make good progress through the course, although a small number underachieve. Much of the teaching observed in the sixth form was of a good quality and offered challenge to the students on the courses. Although entry requirements for a two-year course into the sixth form are at least four GCSE subjects at a grade C or better, and for a one-year course, four subjects at A* to G, this is not strictly adhered to. The school's inclusive policy means that students sometimes embark on a mixed range of academic and vocational courses. Retention rates through most courses are satisfactory.

21. Standards in work seen during the inspection in English, design technology, geography, French, and art were above average. In mathematics, chemistry, ICT and health and social care, they were close to national expectations for this stage in the course. The number of students on each course remains small, however, and judgements on standards depend unduly on the work of a few individual students. However, inspectors judge standards to be improving, and given their attainment at GCSE, students' achievements and progress through these courses, are good in most subjects and very good in art. In chemistry, students' achievements are satisfactory. There is no significant difference in performance between boys and girls, and students from ethnic minority groups achieve at least as well as others.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

22. Pupils' attitudes to school and learning are satisfactory overall, but vary considerably. While most are keen to learn and work hard, a few pupils in all years are negative towards school. Most pupils enjoy coming to school and meeting their friends, but a few need considerable encouragement to maintain good attendance, particularly in Years 10 and 11. In general, extra-curricular activities such as sport and musical productions are well supported.

23. In lessons most pupils show interest in what they are learning. In practical subjects in particular, pupils demonstrate commitment and high levels of motivation. In a Year 9 food technology lesson, for example, pupils worked with concentration and interest in preparing a dish suitable for a teenage girl. The project generated considerable enthusiasm and this was reflected in the excited way in which pupils approached the work. In a Year 8 art lesson in which pupils were looking at impressionist landscapes, pupils showed interest, volunteered to help the teacher with equipment and materials, and took obvious pride in discussing their work and sharing their achievements. In many instances, pupils work together productively, and good relationships with the teachers ensure a positive atmosphere for learning. A Year 11 basketball lesson showed boys and girls working well together with a sense of fair play.

24. However, a minority of pupils display unco-operative and sometimes disrespectful attitudes in class. Many of these have statements for educational and behavioural difficulties, and exhibit very challenging behaviour on occasions. This can interfere with the progress of all members of the class. In one Year 9 mathematics lesson on the mode, mean and range, unsatisfactory attitudes and some poor behaviour meant pupils made little progress. In this instance, the teacher's management of the pupils was ineffective. In around one lesson in ten seen in Years 7 to 9, unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour hindered learning. However, both attitudes and behaviour improve as the pupils move through the school, and the instances of unsatisfactory attitudes were fewer in Years 10 and 11.

25. The standard of behaviour witnessed during the inspection varied widely. Behaviour was judged to be good in around one half of lessons observed in Years 7 to 11, and examples of thoughtful and sensitive behaviour were observed around the school at lunch and break times. However, on balance inspectors judge behaviour to be unsatisfactory, confirming the opinion of parents, forty per cent of whom consider behaviour to be in need of improvement. In lessons, unsatisfactory behaviour is usually associated with a small minority of pupils, but on occasions, a larger number fails to listen to the teacher's directions. The best behaviour is seen when teachers have high expectations of the work and behaviour to be achieved, and when behaviour is consistently managed through the lesson.

26. Around the school, most pupils behave responsibly and respect each other and the property of the school. However, a small minority of pupils are immature and behave with less consideration for others, particularly at lunchtime. Inadequate supervision means that

poor behaviour in the lunch queue, smoking in the toilets and the dropping of litter frequently pass unchallenged. While no bullying was observed during the inspection, some pupils suggested that some incidents go unreported to staff. Clearly some pupils do not always respect the feelings and values of others. However, many pupils stress that they like and enjoy school, and it is the behaviour of a minority that causes the problems. The school's social inclusion policy means that a number of pupils with challenging behaviour are admitted, and the school sometimes has difficulty reconciling this policy with the need to set high expectations and firm boundaries. The newly established in-school behavioural unit will enable the school to manage this more effectively. There were 89 fixed exclusions and one permanent exclusion in the last year.

27. Relationships in the school are satisfactory. Many teachers get on very well with pupils, but for some relationships are less secure. Pupils from ethnic minorities are well integrated, and relationships amongst different groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs, are good. Many pupils are keen to take responsibility. They display initiative and behave responsibly when they are given the opportunity in a structured way, and are keen to represent their tutor group on the school council. Older pupils act sensibly and responsibly as mentors to younger pupils, and some Year 11 pupils operate a peer mediation scheme to solve petty disputes. Some responsible attitudes were demonstrated by senior pupils involved in the school production of 'Grease' during the inspection. A number of pupils organise charitable collections.

28. Attendance is satisfactory. Both authorised and unauthorised absence rates are around the national average. This reflects the unstinting hard work done by the school to encourage better attendance. The number of fixed term exclusions in the last reporting year was 89, and one was permanent.

Sixth form

29. The attitudes of students in the sixth form are good. Behaviour and attitudes in lessons are always at least satisfactory, and very good or better in more than half of lessons observed during the inspection. The personal development of students and their relationships are also good. Those chosen to mentor younger pupils take their responsibilities seriously. Students recognise the value of what the sixth form has to offer, and most enjoy being part of it. Their generally positive views were reflected both in the pre-inspection questionnaire and in discussion with inspectors. Students talk openly and with maturity about their work and life in the sixth form. Many pupils do not come from a tradition of further and higher education and they are clearly enjoying the challenge of learning at this level. They are courteous, responsible and behave well. Relationships with each other and with the staff are good. There is little absence and most students complete the courses they have started. There have been no exclusions of sixth form students.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

30. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. It has improved since the time of the previous inspection, but remains variable both within and between subjects. Almost three out of five lessons were judged to be good or better, and much teaching observed was skilfully delivered. One lesson in five was very good or better. However, unsatisfactory teaching remains and the school must now ensure that the standard of teaching continues to be raised to that of the best.

31. Much of the teaching is good, but problems with recruitment have led to some dependence on teachers on short-term contracts in some subjects. While this does not necessarily lead to unsatisfactory teaching, the problems of ensuring continuity of learning does sometimes mean that progress for some pupils is less good. This has been particularly marked in some subjects, notably mathematics, ICT and RE.

32. During Years 7 to 9, the quality of teaching in English, mathematics and science is satisfactory, although much of it is good. This is leading to satisfactory learning in these core subjects. However, some unsatisfactory teaching remains in both mathematics and science. In Years 10 and 11, the teaching of English and mathematics improves and is more consistently good. This is largely because of a sharper focus on examination requirements and lessons have a better pace and challenge. However, in the case of mathematics, there is also greater continuity in the teaching because fewer classes are taught by different teachers. The teaching of science remains satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. In other subjects, teaching is at least satisfactory, except in RE, where it is unsatisfactory because teachers lack confidence in their own subject knowledge and understanding. In history, geography, design and technology, PE and French, teaching is good throughout. In music, teaching is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. In art and drama teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, it is often because of poor attitudes from some students, combined with the teacher's inability to control and interest the students. When teaching is good, the teacher knows the students well and has planned appropriately to meet their needs.

33. The teaching of literacy is satisfactory in English, where the recent introduction of the Key Stage 3 literacy strategy is beginning to have a beneficial impact on pupils' skills and confidence. However, the contribution of other subjects to improving standards of literacy is marked by inconsistency and is not yet satisfactory. There is good practice in art, where pupils are encouraged to talk and write about art using technical vocabulary and expressions. Key vocabulary is displayed and reinforced. Pupils are encouraged to do reading research from the Internet and from books in the school library and in the art classrooms. Pupils are also encouraged to use description precisely and imaginatively and are given opportunities to use different styles of writing, such as newspaper articles about Kandinsky, or stories based on Australian aboriginal art. In other subjects, most display and reinforce the technical vocabulary of their subject, and several provide opportunities for reading aloud from textbooks. However, in some subjects teachers do not always draw sufficient attention to errors in spelling, punctuation and expression when marking work, or create adequate opportunities for the reinforcement of literacy skills. Opportunities for speaking and reading aloud are missed in most subjects, and writing gets limited attention.

34. The teaching of numeracy is satisfactory, particularly within mathematics, where basic numeracy skills are taught well. This is particularly the case in Years 7 to 9, where many mathematics lessons initially involve the pupils in a range of mental arithmetic exercises. This is leading to an increase in the overall skills and confidence of pupils when handling number, and a faster and more accurate recall of number facts, and often of mathematical terminology. In other subjects such as science and design and technology, pupils are taught

to apply numeracy skills appropriately, although the school has recognised that there is a need for a greater level of co-ordination to develop skills more consistently. However, there is no evidence that a lack of numeracy skills is impeding progress in any subjects. This marks an improvement since the last inspection, when the use of numeracy across the curriculum was found to be unsatisfactory.

35. Teachers' skilled classroom management characterises much of the good teaching, and the sensitive handling of some very challenging behaviour is very good. In one Year 9 technology lesson, effective management of the pupils enabled them to settle to work purposefully after a noisy start. Initially, the teacher needed to be quite forceful to establish a good working atmosphere, but was able to develop a more relaxed approach as the lesson progressed. Any off-task conversation was quickly picked up and dealt with. Very good management of the learning in a Year 8 art lesson ensured good progress and the full involvement of the pupils, some of whom have a history of challenging behaviour.

36. On occasions, teachers do not manage the learning so effectively. In a Year 9 science lesson on electromagnetism, the teacher's demonstration was difficult to see from the back of the class. Time management was poor and the consequent pace of learning unsatisfactory, which allowed opportunities for the pupils to disengage. Although the pupils' attitudes and behaviour were satisfactory overall, progress during the lesson was not as good as it might have been.

37. In an excellent Year 9 art lesson, where pupils were producing batik prints based on the work of Rousseau, the class made very good progress because of the clear expectations for both behaviour and work. Individual pupils were challenged, supported and encouraged to do their best. The work set was suitably challenging but presented in a way which allowed all to succeed. Fundamental to the success of this lesson were the good relationships between teacher and pupils and the confident classroom management and organisation.

38. In another excellent lesson, a top set Year 10 English class were aiming to find beauty in the language of Italian poetry. Pupils rose to the high levels of challenge posed in the lesson. They felt secure in taking risks in the secure framework set by the teacher. The teacher's own enthusiasm and energy were infectious. Skilful questioning encouraged the quieter pupils to be drawn into the class discussion. The effective use of personal anecdotes by the teacher enabled the pupils to see the relevance of the learning. A summary of learning enabled progress to be consolidated and related to earlier work on 'Romeo and Juliet'.

39. Expectations of what pupils might achieve are good in Years 10 and 11, but not consistently so in Years 7 to 9. In a very good Year 11 geography lesson on the climate of the Amazon, the teacher's high expectations of the standards to be produced, combined with very good class management and rapport with the class, resulted in very effective learning. The class was kept busy throughout, and the range of planned activities ensured that all pupils were positively engaged. However expectations remain too low in some classes.

40. Planning is usually effective in meeting the needs of all pupils, but not consistently so. This sometimes results in all pupils moving at the pace of the slowest in the class. In one Year 7 science lesson on metals, pupils made satisfactory progress, but there was some underachievement because the material used by the teacher was not specifically written for the low attaining pupils in the group. Similarly in a Year 11 science lesson on waves, all pupils worked from the same material and additional challenge for the high attaining pupils in the group was more of the same rather than extended work. As a result, some high attaining pupils are allowed to coast. Good relationships and a calm manner with some potentially disruptive pupils ensured that pupils remained on task throughout, but this was at the expense of higher expectations. Although pupils identified as gifted and talented benefit from

extra- curricular activities designed to develop their specific skills, there is sometimes insufficient challenge in lessons.

41. Homework is not consistently used to reinforce learning and encourage pupils to develop research and enquiry skills independently of the teacher, particularly in Years 7 to 9. Pupils themselves report that the timetable is not rigidly adhered to and that homework journals are not always checked to ensure that homework is recorded. Marking of homework is usually helpful and often immediate, but this is not consistently the case, and pupils remarked that homework is sometimes left unmarked for weeks. The setting of homework in Years 10 and 11 is better, when coursework requirements for GCSE often impose their own disciplines.

42. The marking of some teachers is thorough and comprehensive, and follows the school's policy. Teachers' comments are often supportive and encouraging, without missing opportunities for challenging the pupils to improve. However, the quality is variable, and in some cases, marking tends to praise quite modest work and fails to give the pupils clear signals as to how to improve.

43. The quality of the teaching of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory overall. Where pupils are withdrawn, particularly in Years 7 to 9, they are taught very well. There is a very good balance of individual and group activities. Pupils benefit from the interaction of shared tasks, such as shared reading and small group discussion, but also from tasks tailored to individual needs and individual learning targets. The use of computer programmes such as Success Maker is highly self-motivating. Pupils set and know their own targets and it increases their self-esteem when they are successful. Pupils also learn well when they are supported by a teaching assistant. In some lessons where there is no additional support, learning is not as effective because a few pupils are left too long without teacher intervention. In some lessons, teachers do not plan sufficiently for differing needs within a mixed-ability group, and alternative learning strategies for pupils with special educational needs have not been considered.

44. Currently just one pupil with English as an additional language, is at early stage of learning English. He is well supported and is making good progress, both in one-to-one support in lessons and in a small withdrawal group. The school very effectively tracks the progress of other pupils who are at a more advanced stage.

45. In almost all cases, the quality of learning matches the quality of teaching, helped by pupils' usually positive attitudes in lessons. In most cases, pupils demonstrate good attitudes to learning, and in general, pupils work and try hard, concentrating and listening well. However, for many pupils, learning needs continual reinforcement through the lesson, and knowledge acquired and used in one lesson is often forgotten by the next. A particularly good example of continual reinforcement of learning through the lesson was observed in a Year 11 mixed basketball lesson, when the pupils gained in skills through practice and the teacher's constant reference to the key learning points. Similarly, in a Year 7 technology lesson, the teacher's effective use of questions made the pupils think and consolidate their learning through repetition.

46. Some pupils lack confidence in their ability to recall knowledge and in particular to use skills and knowledge in different contexts. In addition, many have poor recall skills, which can adversely affect their performance in tests and examinations. Pupils' knowledge of their own progress is not as consistently satisfactory as other aspects of their learning, although this improves in Years 10 and 11.

Sixth form

47. The overall quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form is good. During the inspection all teaching observed was at least satisfactory, and nearly nine out of ten lessons were at least good. Around two out of five lessons were judged very good or better. Of the subjects inspected in detail, teaching is good in English, mathematics, chemistry, technology, ICT, and health and social care; it is very good in geography, French and art.

48. Strengths of the teaching include the teachers' subject knowledge and understanding. This expertise enables them to approach the syllabus confidently, pose and answer questions which challenge the students' thinking, and plan lesson and schemes of work which successfully build on prior attainment in a meaningful and relevant way. The teacher's excellent subject knowledge of English, in one good Year 12 lesson on the poetry of John Donne, enabled him to adopt a very effective strategy to provoke constructive argument, in which the students were encouraged to take a point of view and support it by reference to the texts. The students were required to take a complex stance and argue that the poetry cannot be categorised. They all demonstrated a good understanding of the poems and made perceptive and intellectually challenging comments. The confident approach of teachers to their subject at this level was characteristic of teaching observed in most subjects and is a key factor in students' achievement.

49. Teachers often put points across skilfully and ensure that material is presented in an interesting and relevant way. Consequently, students participate fully in the lessons and make good progress. Students themselves reported how much they value the time given by teachers to their work and to supporting them when they have difficulties. Teachers will go out of their way to advise and support individual students. Students particularly appreciate teaching which encourages them to contribute. The high quality of relationships is another key factor in the students' satisfactory progress. Students who stay on into the sixth form report that they do so because they know the teachers well and are keen to continue learning from them.

50. Most sixth form teachers have high expectations of what all the students in the group are capable of achieving. Students respond very positively to this approach. Although some lack confidence in their learning, most adopt a very positive and mature attitude to their studies. They are keen to do well and succeed to the best of their ability. In a Year 12 health and social care lesson observed, the teacher generated both interest and some excitement through a well-managed discussion. Despite the students' limited vocabulary, and the difficulty some had in expressing their own ideas, the teacher skilfully created a secure environment for students who had limited confidence so that, by the end of the lesson, students who had been content only to listen were contributing their own ideas.

51. Some teachers adopt good strategies to promote the students' independent learning and their perseverance to solve problems and overcome difficulties themselves. High levels of independent learning and research skills were demonstrated in an excellent Year 12 art lesson, in which a wide range of different media were being employed. The students were highly motivated and showed both excitement and pride in their achievements. The teacher's excellent relationships with the students, and knowledge of when and when not to intervene,

ensured that the students were prompted to work as much as possible on their own. This they did with confidence, demonstrating high levels of resourcefulness and independent thinking. A Year 13 media studies lesson demonstrated similarly good levels of independent work, and by the end of a Year 12 English lesson, the teacher had given sufficient information to enable the students both to understand the stylistic and linguistic features of the two texts being studied and to undertake their own independent analysis. For some students, however, this more independent and self-reliant approach to learning is the biggest challenge of sixth form work. On occasions, there is a tendency for teachers to over direct the learning, and not allow students to pursue their own thinking and ideas.

52. In other lessons observed, the quality of discussion and encouragement of students to express their ideas and opinions was good. The teachers constantly challenged and provoked the students to think more deeply and to re-consider their views. Sometimes, opportunities are missed to link abstract concepts to everyday and relevant examples. In discussion with the students themselves, it was clear that they have a mature and sensible view of what makes for effective teaching. They reported that one of the key factors in the most successful teaching was the fact that the teacher made the learning relevant to everyday events and to contemporary issues. Good examples of this were observed in health and social care, in media studies and in government and politics.

53. Other students indicated that teaching which encouraged active learning was most helpful, and that too much note-taking was considered dull. Students praised the support and helpfulness of teachers and their approachability and willingness to offer help at any time. Students also reported that lessons in which their own views and ideas were valued were effective.

54. Students' learning skills are good. Most work hard and improve through a steady and persistent approach. The commitment and hard work of staff is another key factor in the levels of student achievement. Most students take care with the presentation of their work, and files and notes are well organised and can be used effectively for revision. In general, students' skills in self-study and research are good

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

55. The curriculum is a strength of the school, and the overall quality and range of learning opportunities are good throughout Years 7 to 11, and particularly in Years 10 and 11. The school's commitment to the learning needs of individual pupils is strong, and it makes considerable efforts to match the curriculum to individuals rather than force all pupils to fit into the school's curriculum mould. The school has made good progress since the last inspection in improving the range of options available, particularly for pupils in Years 10 and 11.

56. The subjects provided during Years 7, 8 and 9 ensure a good breadth and balance, and appropriate experiences for pupils. Most subjects work with classes consisting of pupils of varying levels of attainment, though some groups are formed on the basis of attainment in mathematics, science and literacy. Additional provision is appropriately made for literacy. This is in order to improve the below average literacy skills with which the majority of pupils enter the school. With the exception of RE and ICT, the curriculum provided within subjects

is good. Statutory requirements are only partially met in RE and some aspects of the required programmes of study are not fully covered in ICT. Timetable constraints also mean that, for a number of classes, more than one teacher is involved in the teaching of the subject. This leads to discontinuity in the learning and has some impact on progress over time.

57. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 provides rich and varied opportunities for all pupils to broaden their experiences. A wide range of options is available for individual pupils to follow. Pupils can take programmes leading to five, seven or nine GCSE courses, with mathematics, science and English forming the core in each case. Those for whom a strictly academic curriculum is unsuitable can choose a more vocational option that includes work experience and a Youth Award programme based at a local community centre. GNVQ programmes in ICT and in health and social care are also available for pupils to undertake as alternatives to GCSE. In Year 10, GNVQ health and social care and ICT are offered at Foundation and Intermediate levels. Pupils are given good guidance to ensure that they embark on their chosen course at the most suitable level. The programmes of study are linked to the teaching of key skills, namely communication, the application of number and ICT. GNVQ provision is effectively supported by staff trained in Careers Guidance. There is a high level of disapplication from the National Curriculum in order that the identified needs of individual pupils can be closely met. Opportunities for some pupils to attend additional lessons in some subjects are provided. Statutory requirements for religious education and for information and communication technology are not fully met at this stage.

58. A good range of extra-curricular activities in the school includes opportunities for additional study support. An extensive range of visits, residential weekends and trips is undertaken by both staff and pupils and includes some trips overseas. Drama presentations are also made on a regular basis. Sporting activities have more recently been extended, and overall a wide range of opportunities is now available to the pupils. Additional courses are arranged for those preparing for examinations and pupils can join a wide range of subject and homework clubs which meet after the end of the normal school day.

59. The provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is satisfactory. All pupils in the main school follow an agreed programme of social education for one lesson per week and this is taught by form tutors. The programme contains personal and health education aspects including careers, drugs and sex education. A range of opportunities for pupils and students to take responsibility includes taking an active role in the school council.

60. Provision for careers education is very good, and the well-planned programme is taught within PSHE. During Years 10 and 11, all pupils receive professional careers advice provided by the school and the careers service. Individual interviews are arranged as necessary. Parents and pupils are encouraged to attend careers and information evenings aimed at raising awareness of the range of sixth form options available. The drawing up of individual action plans by pupils in Year 11 is an effective means of ensuring that all pupils have considered their future course choices carefully. All pupils in Year 10 take part in two weeks of useful work experience. The programme is well organised and monitored. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, are well prepared for the next stages in their education.

61. The school provides good access to all parts of the curriculum for all pupils. The school's inclusive ethos includes a strong commitment to promoting equal opportunities for all. This covers equal access to the curriculum, the promotion of issues of equality, and the

challenging of stereotyping and inequality. The variety of academic, vocational, work-related and social experiences, especially in Years 10 to 11, cater well for the needs, interests and aptitudes of each individual, regardless of race, gender or background. Overall, a broad and balanced curriculum is provided for all pupils.

62. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. When necessary, there is adequate provision for pupils with English as an additional language. Pupils with special educational needs are given as much access to the curriculum as possible. The provision of 'catch-up' groups at Key Stage 3 is designed particularly to reintegrate pupils into mainstream lessons as soon as possible. Withdrawal is only seen as a short-term strategy. Where there is a likelihood of longer-term withdrawal from lessons, subjects are rotated. For some pupils with statements of special educational need, extra provision is given in areas of the curriculum where the pupil can be successful. For example, a pupil with moderate learning difficulties and speech and language difficulties receives extra PE and swimming.

63. Setting arrangements in Years 7 to 9 and the successful initial developments of the Key Stage 3 literacy and numeracy strategies are focusing the teaching and learning on the needs of different ability groups. Pupils and staff have a strong awareness of the need to respect all individuals and racial harmony is strong.

64. Strategies for a whole-school approach to the teaching of literacy are satisfactory, although much remains to be done to raise standards. Separate literacy lessons are being taught in Years 7 and 8, and pupils with specific literacy difficulties are withdrawn in small groups for reading support. Pupils also follow individually tailored computer programmes which develop spelling, vocabulary and reading skills. The majority of pupils show clear evidence of progress. Training on the Key Stage 3 literacy strategy has been undertaken by all teachers, but the school's literacy policy is not yet applied consistently across all subjects. Where it is effective, for example in art, the subject is making a very good contribution to literacy development. However the impact of these recent initiatives has yet to be felt in all subjects.

65. Numeracy strategies are satisfactory, largely because of the strong input by the mathematics faculty itself. A strong emphasis on mental arithmetic exercises in Years 7 to 9 is improving the skills and confidence of pupils when handling number. The use of numeracy across subjects is generally satisfactory though in some it is somewhat restricted. The school has recognised the need for a greater level of co-ordination to support numeracy within subjects.

66. Links with outside organisations are good. Those with partner primary schools are particularly well developed. There is a full induction programme for pupils in Years 5 and 6. Prospective pupils come into the school to undertake lessons. Parents of these children are also invited into the school. Regular visits are made to the primary schools by members of the school staff. Links with the local community are also well developed. The school provides several courses for the community in the evenings. Good links have been developed with a number of local businesses as a result of the work experience undertaken by pupils. These good links have enabled pupils to appreciate the relevance and importance of much of what they learn. Good links also exist with the careers service and an officer is in the school for between three and four days each week. Links with further education colleges are less well developed.

67. To forge closer community links and to celebrate the cultures represented in the school, the school organises an afternoon and evening called "East Meets West". This is a major celebration of Asian cuisine, costume and culture and was attended by pupils and about fifty parents this year.

68. The quality of provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory, although there are variations in how well subjects contribute. The PSHE curriculum encourages pupils to explore and develop what animates themselves and others, for example in careers' work in Year 8 where pupils are encouraged to explore their hopes and aspirations for the future. Work in RE sometimes gives pupils an opportunity to explore feelings and emotions as in a thoughtful piece of work in Year 9 comparing emotional and physical pain. Statutory requirement for collective worship are not met, and in this respect, opportunities for spiritual development are missed.

69. The provision for pupils' moral development is satisfactory. The school is clear about what it stands for and has a moral code that is evident in the respectful way teachers and other adults in the school community relate to each other and to pupils. However, although the school's framework for behaviour is very clear, there are inconsistencies in the way in which it is implemented by staff. Pupils are aware of the extent to which staff, particularly form-tutors, take an interest in their personal development and are appreciative that often this exceeds reasonable expectations. Rewards for good behaviour, work and attitude are an increasingly effective incentive for pupils. The peer mediation initiative, that involves trained pupils in Years 10 and 11 helping to resolve disputes among pupils, emphasises the concepts of reconciliation and understanding the feelings and wishes of others.

70. The provision that the school makes for pupils' social development is good. The PSHE programme and assemblies cover topics relevant to social education. During the inspection, a Year 8 assembly taken by a local vicar raised the issue of whether the UK should remain a monarchy or become a republic. This assembly urged pupils to become active citizens participating in public debate. Lessons in a number of subjects encourage pupils to learn to work collaboratively and co-operatively. Year councils, which feed into the school council, involve all pupils in voting for representatives, discussing what should be taken to council meetings, and listening to reports from representatives of what has transpired. Pupils in different years confirmed that the councils do make a difference, for example the repainting of the toilets. The staff committee overseeing the Healthy Schools Initiative, which is itself a considerable contribution to pupils' personal development, decided at a meeting during the week of the inspection to co-opt five pupils to ensure pupils' views were considered. Groups of pupils have been involved in discussing what they need from a sex education programme and the ways in which pupils can be involved in the development of school policies. Other opportunities for pupils to become involved in the life of the school include each Year 8 pupil having two days of the school year spent assisting the school office, particularly with reception duties.

71. Provision for cultural provision is good. The school offers a wide-range of clubs and societies that pupils attend, including both sporting and artistic opportunities. During the inspection a wide range of pupils from all years were involved in the school production of 'Grease'. This provided excellent opportunities for both social and cultural development. The school is keen to involve members of the wider community to run clubs and societies, and a poetry club run by an Afro-Caribbean poet and a judo club are now widely supported. The multi-cultural aspect of school life is less prominent and lacks sufficient emphasis. Nonetheless art and music both make a strong contribution.

Sixth form

72. The curriculum provided in the sixth form is good and designed to build on the experiences of earlier years. Seventeen AS levels are offered in Year 12 and most of these lead to A Levels in Year 13. Additionally, GNVQ programmes at intermediate level and AVCE courses are operated in several vocational subjects including business, ICT and health and social care. Students can also retake GCSE English or mathematics if they wish to attempt to improve the grade achieved at the first attempt. Courses are carefully designed and include a certain amount of flexibility in order to provide learning opportunities that take account of the aptitude and aspirations of the students. Several classes in the sixth form operate with very small numbers of students. The school does not offer a discrete key skills course, although aspects of the application of number, communication skills and ICT are offered in other subjects. Statutory requirements for religious education are not met. Satisfactory provision is made for PSHE and general studies through one lesson each week.

73. There is a wide range of enrichment activities, including first aid courses and driving theory, planned for Wednesday afternoons. These are very popular, but a number of students have been timetabled for subject lessons at that time and are disappointed to be unable to take advantage of these opportunities. The heads of sixth form are in the process of reviewing the situation with the sixth form team. Students are encouraged to spend some time each week, within the school community or beyond, on activities such as the paired reading scheme, mentoring and the in-class support programme in the lower school. Aspects of issues related to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are integrated into the general studies programme and into topics covered by different subjects.

74. Sixth form students receive good careers guidance. This is provided through the PSHE programme and guidance is given on procedures for applying for further and higher education. Interviews with careers advisers are available on request. Although some students were critical of the lack of detailed guidance on higher education courses or on what to do after school, many others reported that they found support and guidance helpful.

75. Overall the provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in the sixth form is satisfactory. The spiritual aspect though is very limited as the lack of an overall assembly time means that the students do not have many opportunities to come together to be quiet and reflect on their experiences and develop any sort of spiritual awareness. The PSHE and general studies programmes cover a good number of issues which provide for the students' moral development. Good opportunities for social development include involvement in the school council, mentoring younger pupils and arranging their own social programme. Cultural development is provided for through good opportunities in art, drama and music.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

76. The school makes satisfactory arrangements to ensure the safety and welfare of all the pupils and students in its care, though there are some variations in their effectiveness.

77. Extremely good links with primary schools help to ease the transition to the high school. Induction visits for Year 6 pupils introduce them to the staff. Tutors and heads of year move up with the pupils, so close links are developed through the form tutor system. Heads of year are hardworking and caring, and try very hard to find individual solutions to individual problems.

78. Tutors give good support and guidance to pupils to help raise their achievements. They monitor and support the pupils in their care and those in Years 10 and 11 are offered mentoring if they are felt to be underachieving. Good work, consistent effort and positive contributions are recognised through various rewards, and through special assemblies to which parents are invited. Tutor time, however, is used inconsistently. While some tutors conscientiously check homework journals and equipment during the morning registration period, others are less assiduous and allow pupils to get away with incomplete journals and equipment for the day.

79. Child protection procedures are satisfactory. The designated officer works closely with the pastoral year teams who have a close knowledge of those in their care. Pupils reported that they would feel confident to approach tutors about any personal or emotional problem.

80. The school has worked hard to address the problem of unsatisfactory behaviour, and has provided a range of strategies to deal with difficult pupils, including a clear behaviour framework for encouraging good behaviour. A number of recent initiatives are in place which have the potential to be effective. However, because of the inconsistent way in which policies are being implemented, and the often fragmentary nature of different approaches, the procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are judged unsatisfactory overall. In Year 7, for example, there are several different and cumbersome report systems. In general these tend to focus on the negative, although pupils do respond well to the star system leading towards a reward such as a bowling trip. The school has rightly identified in its improvement plan a move towards rewarding good behaviour. Pastoral support plans are sometimes too loosely meshed with other arrangements to be effective in improving behaviour.

81. Inadequate supervision by staff allows behavioural problems at lunchtime in particular to flourish. Both parents and pupils report continuing problems of bullying - mostly name-calling and petty unpleasantness - which is not being dealt with consistently and effectively by staff. Some younger pupils in particular feel vulnerable. A number of Year 10 and 11 pupils are trained as mediators. They may then be approached by individual pupils or asked by a member of staff to help sort out inter-personal difficulties with other pupils. An essential element of the work is that the mediators seek to bring together the parties in dispute and help them negotiate a mutually satisfactory outcome. This has proved very successful. A recent monitoring exercise found that 86 per cent of pupils who had used the scheme were satisfied that it had resolved their difficulties.

82. The use of the 'remove' room as a place to which troublesome pupils can be removed during lessons is proving effective in relieving individual teachers. However, more should be done to ensure that repeat offenders are counselled and followed up. The school has recently put social inclusion funding into the provision of specialist teaching support for pupils in Years 7 to 9 who may work more effectively in a small group than in their normal class for some subjects. This is an imaginative approach to the problem, which has the potential to be very effective. It is intended to provide curriculum support for pupils who would otherwise be excluded. Pupils are also taken out of lessons where they have particular difficulties that lead to their poor behaviour. Pupils are expected to take more responsibility for their behaviour. They are also offered a range of social skills courses in building self-esteem, anger management and friendship, and run by a trained special needs assistant. At the time of the inspection, the provision had only been in place for about four weeks, and its impact on improving the behaviour, motivation and progress of pupils had yet to be seen.

83. The monitoring of attendance and punctuality is satisfactory, and good in the sixth form. The school has made strenuous efforts to improve attendance. Form tutors fill in registers according to statutory guidelines each morning and latecomers are challenged. The

computerised system is used to discover any who appear to be absent each day. Year heads receive this information by mid-morning and use it to determine further action. This may be confirmation of genuine illness, or an immediate telephone call home. Teachers also take the register in each lesson, but it is not clear how individual pupils are tracked to ensure there is no internal truancy.

84. Routine medical and welfare arrangements work well, and there are safe working practices in PE, science and design technology. The problems identified at the time of the last inspection have all been rectified. There is, however, some lack of attention to minor health and safety issues, and the state of the pupils' toilets is unsatisfactory.

85. The school's concern for the individual pupil is shown through the provision of three separate mentoring schemes, all of which are making a strong contribution to pupils' self-esteem and personal and academic progress. Pupils identified as needing to raise their aspirations are offered mentors recruited from the local community. One Year 10 pupil, identified by the school as gifted but underachieving, has been matched with a local author who meets with her regularly. A second mentoring initiative matches each member of a group of senior staff with about fifteen pupils who are judged as borderline GCSE A to C prospects. The third mentoring scheme matches sixth form pupils with pupils lower down the school who are judged to be likely to benefit from the sort of academic and social support an older student can offer.

86. The school has rightly identified that removing the barriers to learning through a focus on social and pastoral issues is a priority. Its recent involvement in the 'Healthy Schools Initiative' is a reflection of its concern. This has enabled the school to look afresh at a number of its practices and introduce others.

87. In seeking to support disaffected pupils, the school has supplemented work experience with short, practical, training courses that lead to the acquisition of a skill from which paid employment may result. For example, three boys have been receiving instruction on the maintenance and operation of brush cutters and trimmers used in forestry, financed from the Healthy Schools Initiative.

88. The assessment of pupils' academic progress is good. Cognitive assessment tests on entry in Year 7, alongside National Curriculum tests and the teachers' own assessments, are recorded centrally and used to monitor progress and set targets. The information is made available to heads of year and subject staff to use in establishing base-line assessment and setting targets for each pupil. Each pupil is monitored and individual progress against the targets set is reported to parents in terms of higher, equal to, or lower than anticipated progress. Data is analysed to provide information on the performance of pupils from different ethnic backgrounds, and the relative performance of boys and girls. As a result the school has a clear picture of overall performance and is able to focus its efforts to raise standards.

89. The use teachers' make of assessment data to inform planning is satisfactory. Improvements have been made since the last inspection, but practice remains inconsistent both within and between subjects. Good practice in the mathematics, humanities and English faculties enables individual pupil's progress to be tracked carefully, and procedures to identify underachievement are clear. Practice is not so comprehensive in some other subjects, notably RE, PE and ICT.

90. There are good systems in place to identify pupils' special educational needs on entry to the school. Good links with primary schools ensure that pupils' needs are understood before they begin. A suitable range of assessment procedures is used to back up national

test results and teacher assessments of pupils at the age of 11. Other tests are used throughout the school, as required, to support the assessment of pupils with learning difficulties. There are suitable criteria for identifying those with behavioural problems and support procedures for those in danger of being excluded. Regular meetings are held with all key staff, and parents too whenever possible, to review the progress of pupils towards their individual learning targets and set further targets. Individual education plans are compiled by the SENCO and shared with all the relevant classroom teachers. They are very detailed and give a clear summary of individual needs. They include data such as reading ages, and cognitive assessment test scores. Support staff understand the special needs of the pupils with whom they work, and where necessary there is suitable knowledge of medical needs. They assess and record the progress made in every lesson against pupils' personal targets.

Sixth form

Assessment

91. Assessment is good in the sixth form where an analysis of GCSE performance helps to inform staff of the potential of pupils and to set realistic targets for their courses. Valued added measures for setting targets and tracking progress have only recently been introduced, and the school is only just beginning to undertake detailed analyses of sixth form performance and use the information gathered to improve that performance.

92. Good guidance is given to students on courses which they aim to take in the sixth form and, in the main, courses match their abilities and aspirations. In the sixth form, progress is monitored against pupils' performance at GCSE and all students have target grades for AS and A Level courses that they follow. Regular testing and other forms of assessment help to provide students with information on how well they are doing through their central performance reviews. These reviews highlight any concerns regarding attendance and standards of work. Reports are subsequently issued to parents from both subject teachers and tutors, and are used by teachers, students and their parents for future planning. Some subjects such as geography and mathematics have set up, in addition, rigorous faculty-based tracking and recording systems.

93. Students themselves have a very positive attitude to the assessment process and consider it to be helpful to their progress and achievement. They consider that the detailed feedback from teachers gives them a clear indication of what they need to do to improve the standard of their work. Overall students have a clear view about what they want to achieve in the sixth form and what they aiming for in the future.

Advice, support and guidance

94. Students feel very well supported in the sixth form and appreciate the fact that they are now treated as young adults. The school operates a comprehensive, staged induction process for entrants into the sixth form, which begins in Year 11. Both staff and existing students are involved in running the induction, and pupils are given impartial advice and guidance for their future choices at the school or elsewhere. Once in the sixth form, students are allocated a personal tutor, who supports and guides them regarding their work and personal development. Students are required to register regularly with their tutors but attendance varies. The weekly scheduled tutor sessions follow a general studies programme; there is no structured tutorial programme based specifically on personal and social education and development. Tutors and teachers, however, know and understand their students very well from their early years in the school. Students joining the sixth form

from other schools are carefully integrated and any specific learning needs are assessed at an early stage.

95. Subject teachers give unstintingly of their time, both in class and outside. Many give additional support to individuals and groups, in the evenings and at weekends, especially in respect of examination preparation such as that for French oral examinations. Relationships between teachers and students are very good and students have continuous access to their subject teachers and tutors, both for learning support and personal guidance. The school chaplain and school nurse are also available to assist with students' spiritual, emotional and health support. An educational psychologist has been training some students in counselling skills, which they are using, under supervision, to provide additional support for pre-16 pupils. A careers service, situated on the school site, provides students with objective advice on future careers and entry into further or higher education.

96. Students with special learning needs are well supported and a structured programme of support for dyslexic students has enabled them to progress well. Students receive comprehensive guidance in making choices for entry into higher education and help in understanding and using the system for application. A well-structured and comprehensive guidance booklet on applying to university has been devised by one of the joint heads of sixth form and has been issued to students.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

97. The views of parents and carers towards the school are generally positive, though mixed. Over four out of five parents say their children like school and they are making good progress. Several took the trouble to write and say how satisfied they were with what the school provides. Most feel that the teaching is good, and that teachers are very largely supportive and approachable. A significant minority are unhappy with the information they receive about their children's progress, though the inspection found no evidence to substantiate this. Indeed reports give good information on progress. Four out of ten parents are concerned about poor behaviour in the school.

98. Sixth formers are also largely positive about the school. Most praise the induction arrangements and almost all say the choice of courses is suitable for them, and that they were given good advice about how to choose. They strongly praise the teaching, help and support they are given and four out of five would recommend the sixth form to others. A minority were less positive about the quality of careers advice, and felt that they were not kept well informed about their progress.

99. A good range of information is provided for parents. There is a professionally produced and very readable prospectus for the main school, and an extremely informative one for the sixth form. The governors' annual report to parents is also well presented, but does not contain some statutory information – for example, about the election of new parent governors, absence rates or examination results. Regular parents' consultation evenings are arranged, but despite being advertised in the local press, they are often poorly

supported; only about 40 per cent of parents came to a recent Year 11 evening. There are also regular parent forums and the headteacher runs a 'surgery' once a month to which parents can come with their individual concerns. Annual written reports to parents are very good. They give a clear picture of strengths and weaknesses in each subject, and contain clear targets for improvement.

100. All parents of pupils with special educational needs share and agree to individual education programmes. All parents of pupils with statements are invited to annual review meetings and most attend. Where pupils are on behaviour management programmes, parents are invited into school and behaviour targets and positive rewards or sanctions are agreed with them. Parents are generally very supportive of these programmes and wish to work with the school. The co-ordinator for special educational needs is in regular contact with parents and the school provides considerable support, liaising between families and other agencies such as medical and social services, the educational psychologist and counselling services.

101. Parents' involvement in their children's learning is just satisfactory. There are some links, such as the home-school agreement and daily journals, which teaching and pastoral staff use to inform parents about particular achievements. However, use of the journals is very inconsistent. Parents rightly point out that teachers do not always sign these regularly or follow up comments made. The home-school liaison teacher is very helpful in communication between the school and the small community of Asian parents, especially where they do not speak English. On occasion, he is involved in translating school communications for them, and also runs an Urdu class. A parent-teacher organisation has done some sterling work in raising funds, and individual parents have also contributed generously, for example, towards the purchase of a set of computers for school use. In general, however, many parents do not play an active part in their children's education.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

102. Leadership and management at all levels in the school are good. The headteacher and his senior staff are providing the school with a clear sense of direction and purpose, in which the educational needs of each individual pupil are paramount. The school's core value, 'opening minds, sharing success' is increasingly being adopted by both staff and pupils. Because of the school's concern for individuals, and its commitment to good relationships and school improvement, governors, staff and pupils are working together on shared values and purpose. The school is now well placed to move forward with confidence.

103. One of the main reasons for the recent improvements in the school's work is the effective leadership provided by the headteacher. He is clear about the direction of the school and his calm authoritative manner is widely respected. He is seen about the school and as a consequence knows individual pupils well. He has identified the way forward clearly from a realistic identification of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Much remains to be done, but there is now a coherent strategy which has the full support of governors and staff. The headteacher is well supported by his two deputy headteachers and assistant headteacher, who work efficiently and effectively within their areas of responsibility.

104. The responsibilities of the senior management team are clearly laid out. The team have shared values about education and a common purpose to improve the standards achieved and the quality of education provided. The impact of many recent initiatives, such as the three-tier curriculum in Years 10 and 11, the healthy schools initiative, and the

introduction of the in-school behavioural unit, has yet to be felt. However, inspectors share the senior management's confidence that management at all levels is improving and beginning to make a difference to pupils' performance in the classroom.

105. A system to support, monitor and review teaching is in place, but it is over-reliant on the headteacher and his senior staff, who observe teaching in each faculty on a regular basis. The teachers seen receive written and oral feedback and the outcomes are discussed with the head of faculty concerned. Heads of faculty observe teachers less frequently and less consistently. The school has made progress in responding to the issue of faculty management since it was identified at the time of the last inspection, but more remains to be done to ensure more consistent and rigorous monitoring by heads of faculty of the work of their teams. More opportunities for teachers to observe each other would provide a springboard for greater sharing of good practice and discussion of methodology. The drive to ensure more consistently good standards of teaching and learning must be constantly on the agenda. Analysis of subject examination results is now carried out with more rigour and there are plans to carry out a regular pattern of faculty reviews.

106. Management at other levels is more variable. There is now considerably more understanding of the role and responsibilities of middle managers. Some heads of faculty are providing effective leadership of their subjects, working hard to secure improvements in teaching and learning, and giving a clear lead based on a careful evaluation of standards and provision. In some other subjects, management approaches remain uneven, and improvement in all subjects since the last inspection has not been consistently satisfactory. In particular more work needs to be done in ICT and RE. Year team leaders are taking an increasingly active role in monitoring both the personal and academic development of pupils. Sometimes, as in mathematics, ICT and RE, staffing instability has led to some inconsistent practice.

107. Communication between the different layers of management and between faculties is good. Regular line management meetings enable the senior team to monitor the activities of faculties formally. The accessibility of members of the senior management effectively supplements the more formal methods of communication. All staff are now committed to improvement and there is now a recognition that the school can do better. The school's capacity for further improvement is good.

108. These management procedures provide a good basis for improving standards and ensuring that the quality of teaching is more consistently good. However, there is room to sharpen and extend the procedures to ensure a more consistent implementation of school policies. This applies in a number of areas, but is perhaps most apparent in the different expectations that staff have of pupils' behaviour and attitudes to work. This lack of a consistent approach is exploited by some pupils and produces an uneven pattern of response across different classrooms.

109. Governors are committed and hard working, and bring a wide range of experience and expertise to the school. Their knowledge of the school is not over-reliant on the information provided by the headteacher and his staff, and they are increasingly confident in their ability to challenge and question senior staff. Many are parents of pupils at the school. Discussions in the four committees and full governors' meetings are based on a good knowledge and understanding of the issues. Statutory requirements are not fully met; in particular, the National Curriculum requirements in relation to ICT, RE and collective worship. In addition, some minor reporting requirements are not fully met in the governors' annual report to parents.

110. Increasingly the school is adopting procedures which will enable it to monitor and review its practice in a realistic way. It has some way to go before it is a fully self-evaluating school. However, the school improvement plan provides a good framework for further improvement. It is securely based on an audit of current standards and provision, and the priorities identified are realistic and achievable.

111. Governors have a good overview of a tight budget and are kept regularly updated with monitoring statements. Issues related to best value are considered, and the school seeks best value wherever possible in its spending, but governors do not monitor the educational impact of spending decisions. Budget planning is carried out with the school's educational priorities in mind. Designated funds, including those for special educational needs and social inclusion, are used appropriately, and in some cases imaginatively, to support individual pupils, for example the curricular provision for disaffected pupils in Years 10 and 11 at Ashenhurst. The school is efficiently administered and it makes satisfactory use of information systems to process data and ensure that information is readily available for governors and staff. The most recent financial audit (1998) indicated that financial procedures and controls were largely satisfactory.

112. The head teacher has a very good grasp of the issues relating to educational inclusion. Individual pupils who are potentially at risk of exclusion are well known and their progress is closely tracked. The school makes significant efforts to be educationally inclusive whenever possible. The underachievement of some pupils, particularly in Years 10 and 11, is a particular concern, and a number of potentially effective strategies are being developed to address this issue.

113. Leadership and management of special educational needs and the learning support team are good. There is a clearly communicated and shared learning support policy. Systems and procedures for the management of provision for special educational needs and the meeting of statutory requirements are thorough and rigorous. The quality of provision is kept under on-going review. Planning is good, and funding and resources are appropriately allocated.

114. The school has sufficient well-qualified teaching staff, and the match of staffing levels, qualifications and experience to subjects is good overall. However, there are weaknesses in mathematics, RE and ICT, and recruitment problems, the use of non-specialist teachers, and long-term sickness have had an adverse effect on standards. Support staff provide effective assistance to the teaching staff and contribute strongly to the smooth running of the school.

115. Staff development and performance management have improved since the last inspection. The school has an effective performance management procedure in place. Whole-school staff training is driven by the priorities of the school development plan, but opportunities are taken up for appropriate subject skills development, often set by the outcomes from performance management. The training of heads of faculty has been a priority, and they have a much better understanding of their roles and responsibilities than at the time of the last inspection. Support staff are now included in performance management cycles. The school has good procedures for the induction of staff new to the school and for newly qualified staff. The school won the status of Investors in People in 1999 and has been successfully re-appraised.

116. Accommodation is adequate, but is unsatisfactory in terms of the quality of learning environment it provides. Much of the fabric of the building is in a poor state of repair. It is difficult to manage and does not make for an inspiring learning environment. Several buildings suffer from dampness and corrosion, and severe problems of drainage affect the

structural soundness of some of the buildings. Toilets are a particular source of complaint by pupils. An asset management survey reveals that over £978,000 is required for essential remedial work including roof work. But an eight year rolling programme of work has refurbished some areas, including some science laboratories and the food hygiene area. These are now of a better standard.

117. The staff minimise the adverse effect of the buildings by making best use of their facilities even to the extent of repainting them themselves. Where they work in subjects that have suites of adjacent rooms and good storage, as in art and the humanities, the accommodation can have a good impact on learning. Display is often good so that, overall, a satisfactory learning environment is maintained in most subjects. In PE, however, facilities are poor. The changing rooms, the toilets and the drainage of the fields all have an adverse impact on provision. Only limited use is made of the adjacent leisure centre.

118. Learning resources are satisfactory overall. In a number of subjects, good resources and their effective use in the classroom are making a significant impact on attainment. In English there is a good use of a range of texts which support the development of literacy skills in Years 7 to 9, and pupils with special educational needs make effective use of computer programmes designed to improve basic skills. In art and geography, resources are good and well used. In science, however, there is a shortage of basic equipment and textbooks, and in RE there are few textbooks to support learning.

119. The school library is reasonably well stocked and very well managed by the librarian, who provides a very good service to both teachers and pupils. The number of computers is adequate and the computer suites are heavily used throughout the day.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

120. The sixth form is led effectively by the newly appointed joint heads of sixth form, under the overall guidance of one of the deputy headteachers. The governing body discusses sixth form issues, but no governor has a specific link with this aspect of school activity. A prioritised sixth form improvement plan for 2001-2002 is in the process of evaluation. Certain aspects such as the school procedures for university entrance have worked very successfully but others such as timetabling for enrichment activities need to be revised.

121. Managers, teachers and students share a common sense of purpose and commitment to hard work and success, which assists students in their learning and achievement. The school holds high expectations of students' attitudes, conduct and efforts, and students respond positively to these. They value the fact that they are respected as young adults. and enjoy taking on responsibilities across the whole school. The provision of equality of opportunity focuses on meeting the specific needs of the individual student and students appreciate this. A number of students have recounted that staff spent a whole weekend at the beginning of the year adjusting the timetable to structure a programme for a student with specific needs.

122. Students' access to senior management is through a number of routes, including the school council, the head boy and girl and their deputies. Managers hear and respond to their views. Complaints made by students, regarding the decoration of their toilets and common room, resulted in planned refurbishment for Autumn 2002 and some temporary redecoration by the students themselves.

123. Teachers' knowledge and skills are good and are valued highly by students. The school monitors teaching and learning through a performance management scheme. This includes lesson observation of all teachers and a check of their marking. New teachers follow the school induction programme, which is the responsibility of the assistant headteacher. Members of the senior management team monitor staff attendance and walk around to check activities and atmosphere in classrooms and other areas throughout the school.

124. The school offers a wide range of courses at AS Level, A2 Level, GNVQ Intermediate, ASVCE and AVCE, which can be taken individually or combined to form a one, two or three year course to suit the needs of the individual. Numbers of students in some subject areas are, however, very low. Although improvement of recruitment into the sixth form is one of the priorities for the school improvement plan, the impact of this planning has yet to be felt. In order to meet local students' needs, some subjects are being subsidised by others at AS Level and A2 Level.

Resources

125. The provision of accommodation and curriculum resources for the sixth form is satisfactory overall. Subject teaching rooms are shared with Years 7 to 9 and are generally adequate. The buildings are, however, in need of renovation and redecoration and, in the view of many students, this is a key weakness of the school. There is a sixth form common room and a quiet room with two computers for private study purposes. These rooms are well used but are in need of refurbishment and redecoration, which are now scheduled for Autumn 2002. Students have access to a sixth form section of the library, but their opinions vary regarding its usefulness. Many subject books and resources are kept in subject rooms, where students can easily gain access to them. A number of students find it helpful to work in the library computer room in order to gain easy access to a computer for their homework.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

126. In order to raise standards and improve the quality of education, the governors, senior management and staff of the school should:

- Improve the achievements of lower attaining pupils by:
 - * continuing to review and evaluate the curriculum to ensure that their learning needs are being met;
 - * ensuring that the teaching is planned to be both relevant and appropriate to their needs.

- Improve the behaviour of some pupils by:
 - * ensuring that all staff understand and agree a consistent system of rewards and sanctions, which is regularly reviewed and evaluated for its effectiveness;
 - * sharing good practice in classroom behaviour management;
 - * involving the pupils more actively in taking responsibility, showing initiative and building a calm and welcoming ethos;
 - * improving the supervision of public areas at break and lunchtimes, including consideration of a prefect system to help with the management of behaviour;
 - * agreeing, implementing and monitoring more orderly arrangements for moving between lessons around the school and in the use of the canteen;
 - * providing safe, supervised indoor areas at lunchtime for quiet activities;
 - * urgently improving the condition of the toilets and ensuring that they are monitored during break and lunchtimes;
 - * tightening the internal attendance procedures to ensure that all pupils can be located

- Ensure that school policies are implemented consistently by:
 - * ensuring line management procedures regularly evaluate the implementation and impact of agreed policies.

- Improve standards of writing in all subjects by:
 - * implementing the literacy policy more consistently in all subjects.

- Continue to work to improve the quality of the accommodation.

- Improve the provision for ICT and RE by:
 - * ensuring that statutory requirements in relation to both subjects are fully met;
 - * appointing a head of subject for ICT who takes responsibility for managing and assessing the learning across all subjects;
 - * ensuring that all subjects plan for the use of ICT;
 - * improving the quality of resources for RE
 - * ensuring that the scheme of work for RE matches the agreed syllabus;
 - * ensuring more consistently good teaching and management of RE.

Sixth form

127. The governors and senior management of the school should:

- improve the cost effectiveness of the sixth form by continuing to review recruitment arrangements into the sixth form.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 - 11	129
	Sixth form	39
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		58

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 – 11							
Number	2	24	51	45	6	0	1
Percentage	1.5	18.6	39.5	34.9	4.6	0	0.7

Sixth form

Number	5	10	19	5	0	0	0
Percentage	12.8	25.6	48.7	12.8	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	786	108
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	161	N/A

Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	31	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	225	5

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	68

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	28
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	18

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	9.7
National comparative data	9.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.3
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	75	84	159

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	27	45	44
	Girls	65	48	50
	Total	92	93	94
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	58 (56)	59 (49)	59 (50)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	20 (23)	27 (24)	22 (16)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	29	47	40
	Girls	56	56	51
	Total	85	103	91
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	56 (57)	64 (58)	61 (56)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	15 (20)	34 (34)	29 (24)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	74	73	147

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	25	59	65
	Girls	30	54	65
	Total	55	113	130
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	37 (33)	77 (85)	88 (89)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	29.9 (32.0)
	National	39.0 (38.4)

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	17	14	31

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	17	15	32
	Average point score per candidate	14.2	14	14.1
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	18	17.5

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	17	14	31	5	5	10
	Average point score per candidate	12.1	13.4	12.7	7.2	4.4	5.8
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.9	17.4	9.8	11.4	10.6

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	53
Bangladeshi	16
Chinese	3
White	821
Any other minority ethnic group	0

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	4	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	85	1
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes:

Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	50.7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.6

Education support staff:

Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	253.25

Deployment of teachers:

Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	0.78
---	------

Average teaching group size:

Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	19.0
Key Stage 4	18.2

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
----------------	------------------

	£
Total income	2338110.00
Total expenditure	2290825.00
Expenditure per pupil	2622.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	20000.00
Balance carried forward to next year	67285.00

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	13.4
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	6.4
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1.4
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out
Number of questionnaires returned

890
280

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	29	56	10	4	1
My child is making good progress in school.	30	53	11	4	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	16	37	27	13	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	16	49	20	11	4
The teaching is good.	21	52	14	5	8
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	19	45	23	11	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	33	45	13	8	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	40	44	11	3	1
The school works closely with parents.	15	41	24	12	8
The school is well led and managed.	17	39	22	12	10
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	21	49	20	6	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	20	37	18	8	17

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths:

- The quality of teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11.
- The teaching of reading, the fostering of the enjoyment of reading, and the support for pupils with reading difficulties.
- Marking and assessment that give pupils clear targets for improvement.

Areas for improvement:

- More regular opportunities for extended writing in Years 7 and 8.
- Consistent monitoring of teaching and standards in Years 7 and 8.
- More access to and use of ICT in English lessons.

128. In 2001, pupils' performance in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 was below average compared with pupils' performance nationally, but above average in comparison with pupils in similar schools. Their performance in English was about the same as in mathematics. Results since the previous inspection in 1998 have remained constant, although after a relatively poor year in 1999, they have been improving steadily. However the trend has been lower than the improving national trend. Given that pupils' attainment on entry to the school is below average, the performance indicates satisfactory achievement.

129. English language GCSE results for A* to C grades in 2001 were significantly below average. In English literature, however, results for A* to C grades were above average. A substantial number of pupils were not entered for these examinations, which has affected the overall performance. Compared with their average points score at the end of Year 9, pupils' results indicate that achievement for the pupils who completed the course was good. There are no marked differences between boys and girls. GCSE results have been improving over the last three years. Results for media studies are about in line with the national average.

130. In work seen during the inspection in Year 9, attainment in English was below average, but given their attainment on entry, pupils' achievements are satisfactory. Pupils make particularly good progress during Year 9 although progress is less marked in Years 7 and 8. Standards in speaking and listening are satisfactory, and pupils of all abilities are willing to participate and speak clearly and confidently. Where the opportunities are provided, pupils are willing to give detailed explanations to the rest of the class. For example, Year 7 pupils were able to explain at length how the choice of language used in the presentation and packaging helps to sell chocolates. In reading standards are satisfactory but range more widely. Many pupils read with fluency and understanding. Year 8 pupils showed sympathetic understanding of the characters and the theme of homelessness in a shared reading of the novel, "Stone Cold". Year 9 pupils were able to analyse aspects of persuasive writing in an article on smoking. Other Year 9 pupils of all abilities read aloud expressively and showed enjoyment and appreciation of Shakespeare's "Macbeth". Even pupils with reading difficulties persevere and show improvement.

131. Standards in writing are less satisfactory but vary considerably, particularly in Years 7 and 8. Higher attaining pupils write expressively using lively vocabulary and a variety of sentence structures. They organise their writing well into paragraphs. However, too many other pupils in Years 7 and 8 do not develop their writing at any length, and there are common errors in grammar, punctuation and spelling. In some cases the presentation of written work worsens. By Year 9, pupils across the ability range are achieving well. Writing is much more ambitious and structured, more accurate and more fluent. Even lower attaining pupils are beginning to develop their ideas at greater length. Higher attaining pupils are using language well for a range of purposes.

132. In Year 11, standards in work seen were average overall. Pupils are achieving well through Years 10 and 11. Speaking and listening skills are good. In one lesson, Year 10 pupils gave extended commentaries on the process they used to write their own compositions based on an Italian poem. In Year 11 lessons, pupils of differing abilities all prepared and presented their ideas on selected poems confidently, fluently and precisely to the rest of the class. Standards of reading are also good. All pupils show some perceptive understanding of a range of literature, non-fiction and media texts. For example, pupils of differing abilities were all able to demonstrate a personal response to poems about love and relationships between the sexes. Both boys and girls made perceptive comments on the feminist perspective of Liz Lochhead's "Rapunzilstiltskin", showing a good appreciation of how the poet reverses a traditional fairy tale in terms appropriate to our times. Standards in writing remain only average but continue to improve. All pupils write for a range of purposes and audiences with increased ambition, organisation and control. Higher attaining pupils express themselves imaginatively, particularly in narrative and descriptive writing. For example: "Grime seeped through the gaps, craving to creep into the corridor like a prisoner from behind bars." Low attaining pupils still show weaknesses in spelling, grammar and sentence structure. Pupils of all abilities show some weaknesses in writing formally. Too often otherwise fluent writing is diminished by grammar that is not Standard English ("a magazine that were aimed for older women"), or by the inappropriate use of colloquialisms ("I think that people are stupid to get angry about it and are obviously too thick to understand.").

133. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 taking GCSE media studies show good technical proficiency in the use of ICT, particularly in the manipulation of images and text. Higher attaining pupils produce fluent, coherent analyses of advertisements, films, magazines and television. Lower attaining and average attaining pupils choose to write about an interesting range of media such as web sites and promotion films for popular music, but their critical appreciation is more superficial and they are less confident in the use of technical vocabulary. They also rely too much on colloquial language, both in writing and orally.

134. Teaching in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory overall, but some examples of good and very good teaching were observed. Where teaching is effective, the teachers share the learning objectives and give a very clear indication of how future learning will develop. Several teachers plan and prepare stimulating resources. For example, in a Year 9 lesson, pupils had to categorise quotations on homelessness displayed around the room into sympathetic and antipathetic viewpoints, in preparation for designing their own leaflets for the charity, Shelter. This aroused their curiosity and they were eager to start composing their own leaflets. Other teachers employ differing strategies to make learning accessible to a range of abilities in the class. For example, writing frames and spider diagrams are used to help pupils plan and draft their writing. Skilful questioning ensures that all pupils are included, contribute to discussion and understand. Lower attaining pupils receive very good support with their reading in small groups. They have opportunities both for shared reading and for individual support, and they are set clear, regular reading targets. The progress made by pupils with special educational needs and gifted and talented pupils is good.

135. Where learning is less effective, writing tasks are not clearly modelled or demonstrated so that some lower attaining pupils are uncertain of what to do. In some lessons, lower attaining pupils and those with special education needs are left unsupported for too long when they have difficulties. Sometimes insufficient time is planned in a lesson to allow pupils to reflect and to reinforce their learning. There are also not enough opportunities for extended writing, and some opportunities are missed to build up pupils' understanding and use of vocabulary.

136. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is good overall. Teachers have high expectations of all pupils. In one class studying "Romeo and Juliet", high attaining pupils rose to the challenge of being asked to translate an Italian poem, given only a few English phrases. Learning tasks are very well prepared and structured to meet differing needs. For example, in a Year 11 lesson all pupils were expected to prepare a presentation on a poem. The poems were allocated carefully with helpful prompt sheets so that all pupils were able to give a successful presentation. High attaining pupils were extended in discussion with the teacher on Marvell's use of sophistry in "To His Coy Mistress". In most lessons, pupils are expected to use language as precisely as possible and teachers reinforce key vocabulary. Marking and assessment are good. Work is marked regularly using agreed school grades. Comments are encouraging, very detailed and give clear indications how pupils can improve. All pupils are set targets for improvement.

137. The English curriculum provides a wide range of opportunities to use, produce and appreciate language, literature and media texts. The English department offers very good opportunities for revision and examination support in addition to lessons. Pupils with literacy difficulties receive very good support for reading and spelling in additional small groups and through computerised literacy programmes. They are well motivated by these programmes and are able to evaluate their own progress. The English faculty and the school librarian have worked hard to develop children's enjoyment of reading with some success. All Year 7 and Year 8 classes receive a discrete literacy lesson each week that is based partly on the resources of the National Literacy Strategy for Key Stage 3 to accelerate reading and writing, and partly on the school's own resources. This has been implemented carefully, but has not yet had a marked impact on standards. There are other good examples of curriculum enrichment through visits to the theatre and visits to the school by local children's writers. Years 7 and 8 recently enjoyed workshops on "Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone" and a complete preview of the film.

138. Although all teachers have had training in the teaching of literacy within their own subject, the impact of this initiative has yet to be fully felt. Although some subjects are making a good contribution to the teaching of basic literacy skills, this is not consistent across all subjects. Reading aloud from textbooks is common, but few subjects correct spelling and punctuation.

139. The use of ICT in English, apart from literacy programmes such as "Success Maker", is under-developed. Pupils with special educational needs and those who have difficulties with handwriting benefit from having their own portable computers. Access for other pupils in English lessons is restricted, and there are no computers in classrooms. Some pupils show a high degree of proficiency in work they have completed at home, or as part of GCSE media studies, but planned opportunities for use in English lessons are limited.

140. The department is well led and consists of a team of very well-qualified specialists whose strengths are complementary and who support each other effectively. Resources, apart from ICT resources, are at least satisfactory. An effective improvement plan is closely

related to whole-school priorities. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching are effective for Years 9 to 11, but less effective for Years 7 and 8, where teaching, standards and assessment are less consistent. Despite a dip in examination results three years ago, improvements since the last inspection have been good.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths:

- National Curriculum test and GCSE examination results are improving.
- Pupils in Years 10 and 11 make good progress because of good teaching.
- The faculty is well managed.

Areas for improvement:

- The proportion of pupils gaining A* to G grades in GCSE.
- Some teaching in Years 7 to 9 which is unsatisfactory.
- Attitudes and behaviour of a minority of pupils.
- The use of information and communication technology.

141. In 2001, the performance of Year 9 pupils in National Curriculum tests was well below the national average. However compared to pupils in similar schools, the results were average. This represents an improvement on the previous year's results. Boys performed better than girls in 2001 in the tests but not significantly so. Performance in mathematics at this stage has tended to be lower than in the other two core subjects. However the improvement in 2001 has made the difference less marked. Given the pupils' below average attainment on entry, pupils' achievements through Years 7 to 9 are satisfactory. Despite the improvement last year in the proportion of pupils reaching at least Level 5, there has been no discernible trend in results since the last inspection when measured by average points scores.

142. In 2001, almost 43 per cent of pupils gained grades in the range A* to C in the GCSE examination. This was close to the national average of 48 per cent and represented a significant improvement on the results achieved in the previous year. However, the percentage of pupils gaining grades in the range A* to G in this examination continued to be below the national average. Moreover, about 17 per cent of pupils in Year 11 in 2001 were not entered for the examination and this reduces overall GCSE success rates significantly. Performance in mathematics has been improving and is now similar to that in both English and science. There is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls at this stage.

143. Standards of work seen are below average in Years 7 to 9, but given their below average attainment on entry, most pupils, including those with special educational needs, make at least satisfactory progress. Gifted and talented pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 7 to 9 and good progress in Years 10 and 11. Pupils in a middle attaining Year 9 class were observed working in groups on the calculation of modes, medians and ranges of sets of data. After the group work, the pupils were expected to undertake similar examples from a text-book. Although the concepts involved and examples set were both relatively basic, several pupils had difficulties with the work. During the group work, several pupils showed a lack of understanding of the basic concepts in attempting to answer questions. Many pupils required significant help from the teacher in order to complete their assigned tasks.

144. Standards of work seen in Year 11 are average, and pupils, including those with special educational needs, are making good progress and achieving well through Years 10 and 11. Pupils in a high attaining Year 11 class were undertaking work involving distance-time graphs and an interpretation of these. After an initial introduction by the teacher, the pupils successfully completed a range of increasingly complex examples. Many were able to do this without any further support from the teacher. Most pupils in the class had predicted GCSE grades of either A* or A.

145. Teaching is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. However, the quality varies at each stage and a limited amount of unsatisfactory teaching remains in Years 7 to 9. All lessons are well planned and, in many classes, good links are made to the previous work. In a few classes, pupils are encouraged to work collaboratively in small groups. Group work includes, in most cases, significant questioning of the pupils so that their level of understanding can be monitored. In a few classes, pupils are expected to develop solutions at the white-board for the rest of the class. In many classes, good use is made of worksheets to support aspects of the work. Pupils in the higher attaining classes are set homework on a regular basis, whereas many other pupils are either not set homework or provided with it on a much more irregular basis. This inconsistency is having a detrimental impact on the learning for some pupils. Pupils are regularly tested and good records of pupils' progress are kept by the teachers. Several classes, particularly in Years 7 to 9, have more than one teacher for mathematics each week, and this is having an adverse effect on the continuity of learning for pupils. Although the pace with which the work proceeds in most classes is well matched to the needs of the pupils, sometimes this is not the case. In a number of classes, and particularly in Years 7 to 9, the pace is insufficiently challenging. In a few classes progress slows because the teacher spends time dealing with unsatisfactory behaviour. Unsatisfactory teaching results from poor management of pupils by the teacher, allowing a number of pupils in the class to disrupt the learning of the other pupils. Teachers in the faculty provide significant support to pupils outside their normal lessons when they require it.

146. The attitudes and behaviour of the majority of pupils are good, although a minority of pupils in a few classes are poorly behaved and disrupt the learning of others. Most pupils respond well to the frequent questions that are asked of them during the group work. In a number of classes some pupils arrive late. Although most pupils make good responses to the homework that is set for them, a few fail to complete it. Opportunities to consolidate the work undertaken in the classes are therefore not being taken by these pupils. Relationships with the teacher and between the pupils are supportive in most classes.

147. Management of the faculty is good, and the head of faculty has a clear understanding of its strengths and weaknesses and of the action needed in order to improve. Effective monitoring and evaluation procedures are in place, and a recent review of the faculty accurately identified the main strengths and areas for improvement. Examination and test results are analysed on an annual basis, and a good faculty improvement plan has been developed. Teachers are mostly well qualified though difficulties in recruitment have led to the need for non-specialist appointments. Although detailed schemes of work have been developed for Years 7 and 8, those covering Years 9, 10 and 11 require further development. There is currently only limited use of ICT to support teaching and learning, which means that statutory requirements are currently not being fully met in this respect. Satisfactory progress has been made since the previous inspection. Test and examination results fell soon after the last inspection largely as a result of difficulties in the recruitment of suitable staff. The contribution of other subjects to standards of numeracy is satisfactory but limited and there is no coherent approach to developing basic skills in numeracy.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths:

- Provision is well planned to meet the needs of all pupils.
- High levels of subject expertise amongst the teachers.
- Technicians provide a good level of support.

Areas for improvement:

- Overall attainment, particularly in Years 7 to 9.
- The monitoring of teaching to ensure more consistently good standards.
- More consistent expectations of behaviour and standards of work.

148. National Curriculum test results for pupils at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were below the national average when compared to all schools but above average in relation to schools in similar contexts. The proportion achieving the Level 5 and above has risen over the past three years. In the most recent tests, girls achieved better than boys. The results for science are below those for English but better than those for mathematics. In 2001, at the end of Year 11, the majority of pupils were entered for GCSE science double award programme, with smaller numbers following a single award science course. The proportions of pupils gaining A* to C and A* to G both compare well with national averages. The A* to C grades show an improvement over the last three years whilst the A* to G grades have fluctuated. In the most recent tests, girls significantly outperformed boys using both measures, and exceeded the national average for A* to G grades by a marked margin.

149. Standards of work seen in science during the inspection were below average in Years 7 to 9 but average in Years 10 and 11. Taking into account the low standard of attainment on entry, over the past few years, this represents satisfactory achievement throughout the school. Overall progress through Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs achieve in line with the rest of the class, particularly when the former are supported by teaching assistants working in collaboration with the class teacher. Pupils from minority ethnic groups, the great majority of whom are fluent English speakers, also achieve in line with the rest of the class. Gifted and talented pupils make only satisfactory progress, as their needs are not met fully because of a lack of enrichment materials. Pupils in Year 9, some of whom are taught in single sex classes, considered weathering of rocks in a lesson that was made more interesting because the teacher, a caver, showed slides of subterranean formations he had visited. A high attaining Year 9 group of girls who were considering reactivity of metals, correctly identified some of the products of simple displacement reactions. A mixed group of high attaining pupils in Year 11, who were following a programme of three separate sciences, looked in detail at breathing in humans. They knew why the left lung is smaller than that on the right as well as why it was advantageous for alveoli to be only one cell thick. In this class, as in others, pupils identified as having special educational needs or as being gifted and talented worked at the same pace as the rest of the class. Pupils of average attainment revising laws of refraction and reflection were able to explain most observed features, but all failed to recall the significance of the critical angle. Lower attaining pupils in preparing for an assessed practical test on electrical resistance displayed very poor behaviour, so that initially the lesson was very teacher dominated.

150. Overall the quality of teaching is satisfactory throughout Years 7 to 11. However, the quality of specific lessons varies from very good to unsatisfactory. Overall, the quality of teaching improves as pupils get older. Features of the good teaching include well-considered

lesson plans and firm but friendly discipline. In the most effective lessons, a good range of learning opportunities are provided through short, linked activities; a recognition of many pupils' short attention span. In lessons where a single activity dominated, the pace of work fell; pupils lost their earlier inquisitiveness, and behaviour, more often that of boys, was poor. Most lessons were well-planned and made good links to previous learning. The well-organised technician support masks the evident lack of some basic equipment. When such shortages could not be disguised, the quality of learning suffered. In one such practical lesson, groups had to share the use of microscope lamps. Teachers know pupils by name, are generally aware of their individual needs and give good support to those with special educational needs. Teachers' management of the class is satisfactory but variable. Where it is effective, pupils stay on task and display a lively interest in the subject matter. Where it is less effective, pupils, mostly boys, lack interest in the subject and display unacceptable behaviour. Teachers regularly set appropriate homework, and the marking of this and of class work is accompanied by helpful, formative comments. Written does however, vary in rigour and standard of presentation, and also in terms of the level of expectation from the teacher. For example, not all teachers correct inaccurate spellings, even of key words. Because science is often taught to each class by different teachers, pupils do not receive consistent guidance as to what is expected of them or what they could do to improve. The use of ICT in the laboratory is currently unsatisfactory but the faculty has plans to improve its use to support learning. In all years, many pupils' listening skills are unsatisfactory so that, in many lessons, time is wasted because the teacher has to repeat instructions. In Years 8 to 11, pupils are grouped by prior attainment. However, the range of attainment remains wide and the range of available teaching materials is insufficient to meet the needs of all pupils. At times the timetable arrangements are unsatisfactory; for example, all Year 11 physics lessons fall on the same day of the week.

151. Leadership and management are satisfactory, and the commitment of teachers to raising standards is good. The monitoring of teaching is not carried out with sufficient regularity and good practice is not shared. Since the last inspection, improvement has been satisfactory. In particular, determined and successful efforts have been made to address under-performance. National Curriculum requirements are fully met, but the use of ICT is not as developed as it should be. Homework is linked closely to classwork and is set regularly, but teachers do not always insist that homework is recorded in the pupils' journal. Gifted and talented pupils have little opportunity for enrichment so the progress is not as high as it might be.

EXPRESSIVE ARTS

152. The provision for art, music, drama, dance, media studies and physical education is managed within the expressive arts faculty. The faculty adopts whole-school policies successfully and interprets them in a co-ordinated way. This supports consistency while promoting the appropriate development of the individual subjects. There is shared commitment to monitoring, evaluation and review, and the faculty has its own development plans and targets.

153. An example of how the co-ordination and performance management of the faculty have improved since the last inspection was observed in the successful performances of a musical theatre production which integrated elements from most of these subjects.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths:

- The relationships between the teachers and the pupils are very good, and promote a very effective learning environment in lessons.
- The management of the subject is extremely effective in the promotion of high expectations and opportunities for all pupils.
- The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Therefore the achievements of pupils in external examinations are amongst the best in the school.

Areas for improvement:

- To make more effective use of homework and sketchbooks as a means of developing in pupils the skills of research and analytical thinking.

154. Teachers' assessments in 2001 of pupils' attainment in Year 9 indicated that standards were average. In 2001, GCSE results at grades A* to C were above the national average, and were also above average when compared to most other subjects within the school curriculum. Over the past two years, all pupils entered for GCSE art have achieved a pass. In the three years from 1999, attainment has shown a gradual improvement against national averages.

155. The teachers' assessments of standards in Year 9 are confirmed by inspectors' observations. By the end of Year 9, the standards of work seen are average, although small proportions of pupils in all year groups in Years 7 to 9 produce a good standard of work. Pupils achieve well given their attainment on entry in Year 7. Pupils experience a wide variety of creative experiences. As a direct consequence of the level of provision, combined with very effective teaching, the majority of pupils show an interest in their work and are achieving considerable success. By the end of Year 9, the majority of pupils draw and paint with a reasonable degree of confidence, have experience of print making and three-dimensional construction, and have some appreciation for the use of colour, line and tone. They also increase their knowledge and understanding about certain artists and cultures. Some interesting work is being produced. In Year 7, pupils were creating paintings and artifacts based on aboriginal art and culture. They were also writing stories based upon aboriginal traditional tales as part of the school cross-curricular literacy programme. In Year 8, pupils were creating some computer generated written work and paintings based on the life and work of Kandinsky. Pupils in Year 9 were producing fabric prints using batik techniques based on the work of Rousseau and the art of Native American Indians. The use of homework to develop research skills and the use of sketchbooks is more limited. Pupils are willing to discuss their work and a significant proportion show pride in their achievements, which is a reflection of the quality of teaching and learning. Overall, pupils make good progress and those with special educational needs also progress well.

156. In work seen in Year 11, attainment is above average, consistent with recent GCSE results. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 achieve very well and make good progress. A majority of pupils handle a wide range of materials competently and show a sound understanding of their progress. Research skills are satisfactory. A particular strength of the department is printmaking. Some very impressive work has been produced using batik and lino-printing techniques. Of particular merit is the work produced by pupils on the GCSE course on the theme of 'Reflections'. Good progress is due to the challenging and often diverse nature of the experiences on offer, together with very effective teaching.

157. Throughout Years 7 to 11 the majority of pupils are often articulate when discussing their work and many are capable of understanding and using technical language. The promotion by teachers of key words in many lessons has a positive effect on the pupils' understanding of technical language within the subject. The attitude of the pupils in Years 7 to 9 is good, and is very good in Years 10 and 11. Although the majority of pupils show a good level of interest, a minority finds difficulty in sustaining concentration, independent learning, problem solving, and understanding aesthetics. These problems are more common with the less motivated pupils in Years 7 to 9 for whom the subject has little attraction. Relationships between pupils and towards the teachers are very good, creating a pleasant atmosphere in lessons. A majority of pupils are more than willing to share materials and ideas and assist in the distribution and collection of equipment in lessons.

158. Teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. The best lessons are challenging and well planned in order to provide all pupils with opportunities to progress and to attain levels of achievement commensurate with their abilities and aspirations. Pupils with special educational needs are well served through sensitive teaching and specially designed learning opportunities, which offer pupils the opportunity to succeed. Classroom organisation and management are very effective. Regular references are made to the work of significant artists and cultures in order to raise creative and visual appreciation and awareness. Connections are also established in many lessons to the school literacy strategy. Pupils are encouraged to read as part of their research into artists and cultures. All classrooms within the department and certain public areas around the school contain excellent displays of work, providing an opportunity for pupils to appreciate the standards of work being produced. Assessment is effective and is used to influence future curriculum development and lesson planning. Assessment includes a certain amount of self-assessment and when questioned the pupils were well aware of teacher expectations and their own strengths and weaknesses. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are given target grades for examinations and are capable of discussing their progress towards achieving their targets. Work is marked at periodic intervals usually linked to the completion of a project. The marking of work is always supported by detailed comments by the teachers and pupils are well aware of their level of achievement and of what they have to do to make further progress. Pupils with special education needs are given individual learning targets, which are reviewed regularly.

159. The management of the department is very good, promoting high standards in lessons and giving clear direction. The teachers work as a very effective team. The subject meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. Accommodation is good and made attractive by displays of pupil work. Resources are sufficient for need and used effectively. A wide range of good quality papers, paint, sketchbooks, printing and ceramics equipment is provided. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

DRAMA

Overall the provision for drama is **good**.

Strengths:

- Consistently very good teaching promotes good learning and achievement.
- The rapid establishment of a high quality drama curriculum provides a secure foundation for the future development of the subject.
- Practice in evaluation encourages pupils to respect the work of others and judge it critically.
- Pupils' experiences in drama contribute strongly to their social development and understanding of ethical issues.

Areas for improvement:

- There is no provision for drama in Year 7.
- Pupils have limited ability to express their opinions in a clear and focussed manner.
- Resources are poor both for the delivery of the curriculum and productions.

160. Standards of attainment in Years 8 and 9 are average overall, although in some classes and areas of work, they are above average. The challenging demands made by the subject are new to most pupils in Year 8 and stretch their personal and interpersonal skills. Some pupils are beginning to temper creativity with self-discipline and to respond imaginatively to imposed stimulus. They can harness the resources within themselves and from their fellow pupils. They can work productively with only minimum supervision. Other pupils, particularly those who are less self confident, find these skills more difficult, and they need and receive lots of support. Overall, however, good achievement occurs for all pupils in Years 8 and 9 because they are challenged to refine and improve their efforts, and because they benefit from the good practice which is demonstrated by the teacher and increasingly adopted by pupils in every lesson.

161. The progression of the provision in drama is based firmly on the accumulation of skills and experience. For that reason standards would improve for most pupils by the end of Year 9 if they began drama study in Year 7.

162. The good levels of achievement observed in Years 8 and 9 mean that overall attainment in Years 10 and 11 is above average. It is well above average in Year 10 and for some pupils in Year 11. These pupils have benefited considerably from the new provision and work practice in drama. Pupils respond almost without hesitation to vocal or physical situations with imagination. They can pitch appropriate levels of pathos and humour. They are aware of the symbolic effect of body language and gesture. They work together naturally and with considerable enthusiasm. Achievement is also good and provides the school with sound evidence to target for high grades in GCSE examinations.

163. Teaching is consistently very good. Because the teacher is resourceful and organised, pupils learn in a secure environment, where creative activity is supported by clear objectives and outcomes, and by time and situation limitations. Where pupils find difficulties, they are appropriately supported, although the overall teaching and learning practice is for pupils to take responsibility and accountability for their own development. This is enhanced by many opportunities to evaluate, both through self-appraisal and peer appraisal. This constant monitoring of performance of pupils by the teacher and also by each other is an important part of the subject's assessment and development process. It

also means that, as pupils gain more experience, they become critically aware of their own standards and those of others working with them. Some pupils in Years 8 and 9 are still finding it hard to listen attentively. This is always corrected. All pupils need more skill in making focussed and reasoned oral judgements.

164. Pupils build on skills and experience throughout each lesson as well as from lesson to lesson. Year 10 pupils devised effective body sculptures, presenting initially a static response to show how body-shape, spatial distribution and facial expression can express emotions. Then they developed what they had learnt into movement sequences, which demonstrated successfully how the message they were trying to convey could be heightened by action in space.

165. Pupils' experiences in drama lessons provide wide-ranging opportunities to explore many areas and issues of concern for the human condition and the environment. These can be historical, political, ethical, social, racial, educational and multicultural. Pupils in Year 10 are devising a scenario on street violence. Year 9 are working on responses to the sinking of the Titanic. Year 11 are free to devise their own powerful introduction to a controversial topic. These activities represent an important contribution to their moral, social and cultural understanding.

166. The good provision in drama and the significant improvement this represents since the previous inspection are hindered by poor resources. In many cases they have been begged and borrowed, or are the teacher's personal possessions. Resources are also inadequate to support the growing development of extra-curricular activities.

MUSIC

Overall the provision for music is **satisfactory**.

Strengths:

- Standards of attainment and achievement in Years 11 are above average.
- Pupils experience a wide range of music of different styles and from different cultures.
- Good feedback and assessment help pupils to improve.
- Good extra-curricular provision enhances pupils' musical experiences and develops links with the community.

Areas for improvement:

- Attainment and achievement by the end of Year 9 for all pupils.
- The challenge and rigour of pupils' learning in Years 8 and 9.
- The responses, concentration and application of some pupils in Years 8 and 9.
- The development of ICT resources and skills, particularly for composing.

167. Attainment in Year 9 is average overall, and pupils are achieving satisfactorily through Years 7 to 9. In Year 7 nearly all pupils are energetic; have good levels of concentration; respond enthusiastically to music, and answer correctly questions about what they hear. They learn quickly to access the musical instrument programme of the classroom computer and to make intelligent comparisons between the sounds of gamelan and western orchestral instruments. They retain what they learn and can apply it well to more searching problems. When tested, the majority of pupils can identify the new sounds they have heard and make

goods attempts at evaluating the mood of the music. Some higher attaining pupils provide well-developed answers. Some pupils have composed a *rantang* which shows they have understood the objectives of the task and have achieved satisfactory outcomes. Overall achievement in Year 7 is good and pupils are progressing well towards the National Curriculum level target which has been set for this year.

168. There are some pupils in Years 8 and 9 whose overall attainment is below average, and only a small number are attaining at levels above average. The majority can play a simple melody correctly on an electronic keyboard, although there is great variation in their ability to sustain a regular rhythmic pulse. This makes ensemble performance difficult for them, either in small groups or for the whole class. Incorrect keyboard fingering prevents rhythmic fluency. About one third of pupils are still uncertain of the note names and have difficulty recalling the meaning of simple notational signs and symbols. A few pupils are more fluent and can play two lines of music with both hands simultaneously. Written examples of an eight bar jig melody composed by pupils in Year 9 show similarly wide variations in standards of invention and notation, but are overall below average for this year of study. While the majority of pupils in Years 8 and 9 show satisfactory achievement in lessons, some underachieve. As a result all of them are unlikely to meet the National Curriculum levels which the school has set for the end of these years. The teacher's assessments of Year 9 pupils in 2001 showed overall levels of attainment below the national average.

169. Attainment in Year 11 is above average, and pupils' achievements are good. Pupils have good levels of instrumental or vocal technique and are gaining valuable performing experience, especially in extra-curricular activities. Although in conventional style, their compositions show invention and good formal construction and are well written for various instruments in small ensembles. These aspects have improved since the last inspection. Pupils benefit from working with professional performers, who have also recorded their original work. Pupils are attentive when listening to music and can make intelligent responses to questions about instruments, such as the sitar, tabla and Indian accordion, which they have not heard before. Their written work shows that they have covered a large and varied range of musical styles and types, including multicultural music, rock, jazz, opera and musical theatre.

170. Currently numbers of pupils who wish to study music in Year 10 are relatively small, but previous GCSE results have been above national and school averages. Targets for current pupils in Year 11 are ambitious but attainable. Despite the encouraging achievement of these pupils and the good level of previous examination results, the school will not allow pupils to study music in Year 10 unless there is a minimum number of ten pupils.

171. The quality of teaching is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Pupils have a clear idea of the objectives of each lesson and what activities they will follow. They are questioned about previous lessons, but they should be encouraged to remember more accurately and develop their answers more fully. During each lesson, pupils experience a satisfactory range of activities which develop and integrate listening, performing and composing. However, these are somewhat restricted by lack of instrumental resources, especially classroom percussion, and by inadequate equipment for information communication technology. Pupils in Year 11, for example, are not able to prepare their compositions by using a computer notation system. Pupils of all levels of attainment are

well supported by their teacher and encouraged when they achieve, but higher attainers should be more stimulated and could assist other pupils, particularly in group activity. Some pupils practise their performances out of the main classroom and are partially unsupervised. Generally they respond well to this arrangement and work productively. This is good development of personal responsibility for learning.

172. Pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 are regularly assessed in lessons and have useful oral feedback. They are also tested more formally on a regular basis in key elements of the curriculum. The profile which is built up feeds into the teacher's assessment at the end of Year 9. As pupils are generally aware of their strengths and weaknesses in the subject and what they need to do to improve attainment, this process is an improvement on that noted at the previous inspection. Pupils do not practise written self-appraisal.

173. In some lessons in Years 8 and 9 the pace of work is too slow and pupils lose learning time by taking too long to organise group work and resources. It is in these classes too that the progress of the lesson is sometimes interrupted by the inappropriate behaviour of some pupils, who have not yet learned to listen to instructions, questions, answers and musical extracts. The attitude of some pupils is unsatisfactory when their concentration and responses are limited. The teacher carefully corrects these problems, but the atmosphere of these lessons is disturbed and sometimes tense. These factors, together with the minimum recommended allocation of time for music in Years 7, 8 and 9, restrict pupils from reaching their maximum potential achievement by the end of Year 9.

174. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory, and improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Teachers are hardworking and committed to further improvements. The school provides instrumental lessons in guitar, woodwind, drums and singing, but enrolment is low. The curriculum is enriched by opportunities to perform publicly in the school, in concerts and musical theatre productions, and in the local community. There are also organised visits to professional performances and pupils benefit from contact with composers and performers.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths:

- The quality of teaching, supported by well-planned courses, enables pupils to develop a good understanding of designing and making, and to reach above average standards.

Areas for improvement:

- The development of strategies for assisting pupils to become more independent learners.
- The monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning with particular regard to the effectiveness of single sex teaching in Year 9.

175. The attainment of pupils in Year 9, as measured by teacher assessments, has been rising steadily over the past 3 years. The number of pupils gaining National Curriculum level 5 and above is now at the national average. This is borne out by inspection evidence.

176. Attainment for pupils in GCSE examinations is above average. In 2001, 56 per cent of pupils gained A* to C grades against a national average of 50 per cent. This represents a considerable improvement since the last inspection. When the results of each area of design and technology are considered separately, the biggest improvement has occurred in food technology and textiles. These results are now well above average. Results for systems and

control have been consistently well above average. Results for pupils taking resistant materials have declined, but when pupils' prior attainment is considered, their achievements are good. Comparative figures show that pupils' achievements are better in technology than in many of their other examination subjects. The performance of boys is particularly good.

177. In work seen during the inspection, standards for pupils in Year 9 are average. Given their attainment on entry, pupils' achievements are good. Pupils work better in a practical situation than with design and development work. At this age, girls do markedly better work than boys. This has been highlighted by the adoption of single sex teaching groups in Year 9. For example, girls of all abilities in a resistant materials group were able to produce creative and colourful design work in well-organised folders. Folders of boys in a parallel group were disorganised, and their sketches and drawings did not support practical work in a constructive way. As yet there is no systematic monitoring to evaluate the effectiveness of single sex groups in raising standards for both girls and boys. Independent working skills are not well developed and many pupils find it difficult to manage their time and effort effectively. For example, Year 8 food technology pupils worked enthusiastically on the practical tasks of preparing food but found it difficult to change activity and compile an evaluation of their work. Consequently, initially good learning was not consolidated effectively. Pupils are being introduced to a good design methodology which includes methods of research such as questionnaires and the Internet. Higher attaining pupils are able to analyse the information and use it to support their design work, but for many pupils the analysis is shallow. Pupils with special needs are supported by the structured nature of design projects and teaching materials suitably adapted to their level of ability. By Year 9, pupils are able to make a more individual and creative response to a design project. For example, in the 'groovy chick' textiles project, pupils had used patterns, conducted research and experimented with fabrics. They produced a range of ideas and applied selection criteria. Where ICT is used, it improves both the quantity and quality of pupils' work and is particularly effective in helping pupils with special educational needs to overcome difficulties with low literacy levels. Pupils of all abilities make good progress in relation to their low level of ability on entry to the school.

178. For pupils in Year 11, standards of work seen were above average and progress throughout the key stage is good. Many pupils work with accuracy and care on practical projects, as for example in systems and control, where higher attaining pupils combined good practical skills in marking and cutting joints with detailed design folders. Some pupils have low literacy skills which limit their ability to write extended evaluations of their work. The introductory practical tasks in Year 10 resistant materials do not provide sufficient opportunity for pupils to develop the breadth of designing skills needed for independent GCSE project work, and this contributes to the generally low standards on this course. In many GCSE folders for food and for systems and control, good use is made of computer skills to word process text, present data and analyse nutritional values. Good cooperation between teacher and learning support assistant in Year 11 food technology enabled two boys with special needs to be fully involved in the lesson and successfully prepare a dish of their own choice.

179. Teaching is good throughout the school. As a result pupils make good progress and learn well in all years. Teachers work hard to develop good working relationships with pupils and, where they receive a positive response, the climate for learning is good. Very good teaching of Year 8 pupils in a resistant materials lesson was characterised by a high expectation of quality work, clear explanations and a brisk questioning technique which required pupils to think. Teaching materials were adapted for different levels of ability and, consequently, pupils of all abilities were able to respond to the evaluation task with enthusiasm and understanding. The lesson usefully supported the development of pupils' literacy skills by emphasising the correct use of technical vocabulary. Teachers' effective management of practical work, together with good co-operation from pupils, creates a safe and orderly atmosphere in most lessons. Some pupils, however, do not respond in a positive

way. The inappropriate behaviour of some Year 10 girls, for example, diverted the teacher's time and energy from her primary task and reduced the benefit they derived from a well-prepared health and social care lesson. Year 9 boys in a predominantly low ability food technology group worked with enthusiasm to prepare a main course dish, but poorly developed powers of self discipline resulted in disorganised working and inappropriate behaviour at times when a degree of responsibility was needed. Teachers' marking of work is thorough. Pupils receive detailed information on the level at which they are working and what improvements are needed. Careful monitoring of GCSE projects enables pupils to respond to all the assessment criteria. Teachers receive good technician support but the allocation time for food technology is insufficient to allow basic routine cleaning tasks to be completed.

180. The leadership and management of the department are good. The head of faculty has brought about good improvements since the last inspection and there is now a clear vision for the subject contained in a well-drafted development plan. Departmental policies and schemes of work support the effective delivery of National Curriculum programmes of study and this has been a factor in improving standards. The role of the head of faculty, however, carries a wide range of responsibilities. Time and energy are being divided and there has been insufficient monitoring of teaching and there is a lack of clarity in the responsibility for delivering ICT. Support for gifted and talented pupils is not effectively targeted because of a lack of precise methods for identifying them. The curriculum for Years 7 to 9 is broad and balanced. The curriculum for Years 10 and 11 is restricted by the absence of courses in textiles and graphics. A GNVQ Foundation and Intermediate course in health and social care has been added to the range of options. This has been a valuable addition for some pupils and makes a good contribution to their social, moral and cultural development. Computer-aided design and manufacture is becoming more integrated into project work and pupils' have enough access to computers to allow their use during lessons. Pupils benefit from a range of curriculum extension activities, including woodcarving, which serve to generate enthusiasm for technology work. The necessity for some teachers to work in other subjects divides their time and energy and creates timetabling difficulties. The necessity for two teachers to share a teaching group disrupts the continuity of work for some pupils. Accommodation and resources are adequate. Good management ensures they are used to maximum effect but a shortage of textbooks prevents pupils having access to quality resource material. Examination results, accommodation for food technology, planning, assessment procedures and the use of National Curriculum levels have all improved since the last inspection.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths:

- Teaching is good and staff support pupils well.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are good.
- Fieldwork contributes to good achievement in Years 10 and 11.
- Attractive and colourful wall displays provide an effective working environment.

Areas for improvement:

- Assessment strategies need to be more closely matched to National Curriculum level descriptors
- Materials and tasks provided for low attainers should be more appropriate to their needs.

181. Teacher assessments in 2001 indicated that attainment at the end of Year 9 was well below the national average. These underestimate performance in the subject. The department is aware of the problem with planning and assessment and is implementing appropriate strategies to overcome this. Overall results at GCSE are above the national average, and in 2001 67 per cent of pupils entered gained grade C or better. This represents a marked improvement since the last inspection and was substantially above the results for the previous two years.

182. Standards of work seen during the inspection are close to national averages at the end of Year 9. Pupils' achievement in relation to their below average standards on entry to the school is good in Years 7 to 9. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs achieve standards which are below average, but most are satisfactory given their prior attainment. Pupils have a sound factual knowledge of all the topics covered because teachers are secure in their own subject knowledge and provide clear explanation. By the end of Year 9 the pupils preparing a newspaper article understand how hurricanes are formed and what effect they have on people's lives. They can locate world deserts and explain the different factors that have caused them to form. The best learning occurs in lessons that have practical activities which require pupils to be involved in their own learning. In one Year 7, lesson pupils experimented with sediment suspended in jars of water. From observation they are able to understand how sediment settles out of water and use this information to explain the formation of river features. They use maps, diagrams and graphs to present and interpret information. This makes a satisfactory contribution to the development of numeracy.

183. Attainment in work seen in Year 11 was above average and achievement is good because of the high expectations of their teacher. In Year 11, pupils have produced impressive fieldwork studies on Bacup. The overall standard has improved since the last inspection because of thorough preparation and good support for all pupils. Pupils are confident with surveys, questionnaires, graphs and maps of many kinds. Supporting conclusions with reasons, summarising information and making deductions are frequently managed well. Higher attaining pupils extend analysis and evaluation and produce high standards of work.

184. Pupils' attitude to learning is mostly positive and many display a real interest in their work. Most are attentive, work conscientiously and many show pride in their work. Pupils' behaviour is usually good. Pupils generally form good relationships with their teachers, and in Year 11 a real rapport has been established. In a small minority of lessons, when

behaviour and subsequent learning are less good, low attaining pupils are unclear what they are expected to learn. The learning requirements of some of the low attaining pupils need simplifying so that the pupils are provided with more manageable materials and tasks that can be completed in the time available.

185. The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout Years 7 to 11, and has improved since the last inspection. Teachers are committed, caring and supportive of pupils. Classroom management is good and is built on effective relationships with pupils. These provide a good basis for learning. Lessons are well planned, have a brisk pace and a variety of activities. The use of visual resources, particularly video, has increased progress. In one Year 9 class with behavioural problems, a short video clip on the effects of a tornado provoked real interest and active discussion. The opportunity for pupils to work in groups or use ICT, however, has not been so well developed since the last inspection. The pupil's use of ICT needs to be extended. Marking of pupils' work is conscientious and comments are supportive and encouraging. However spelling is not always corrected, and comments need to be more precise so that pupils know what they have understood and what they need to do to improve.

186. The department is well led and managed. The enthusiasm of the teacher in charge of geography, supported by the newly appointed head of faculty, has made a positive impact and there is a strong commitment to take the subject forward. He is well aware of the strengths and weaknesses and is beginning to develop other assessment strategies based on key elements and level descriptors in the National Curriculum for geography. This will allow pupils' progress through the programme of study to be better monitored. The department has worked hard to improve the accommodation. The quality of the wall displays and the high standards established in the classroom have provided an effective working environment. There has been good progress since the last inspection.

HISTORY

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

Strengths:

- The good quality of teaching leads to effective learning.
- Good leadership and management of the subject.
- The assessment of pupils according to National Curriculum levels is good.
- The evaluation of historical sources is good.

Areas for improvement:

- ICT is under-developed in the subject.

187. Teacher assessments of pupils at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were broadly in line with national expectations. This represents good progress given their attainment on entry in Year 7. In 2001, 47 per cent of pupils entered for history in GCSE examinations achieved grades A* to C, which is below the national average but an improvement on last year's results. The percentage achieving grades A* to G has been at the national average for the past two years. In the recent past, pupils' progress in history has not been as good as in some other subjects. This has been due to instability of staffing rather than to unsatisfactory teaching.

188. By Year 9, standards in the five key elements of the National Curriculum are average, and pupils' achievements are good, especially in relation to source evaluation. Pupils in Year 7 have a good chronological framework in which to place their knowledge and understanding

of the Romans and other topics studied. In Year 8 pupils can interpret several kinds of evidence, including that of portraiture, and can exercise their imagination in reconstructing scenes from the Civil War or the Great Plague. In Year 9 they can imagine what it was like to be in the trenches in the First World War, and they both learn and use an appropriate vocabulary to do with the slaughter and destruction of a futile conflict. Teachers give a good emphasis to developing literacy skills in all years. Pupils with special educational needs in all years achieve well with the help of support staff, modified materials and, in some cases, lap top computers used in class. Gifted and talented pupils make good progress helped by extension work.

189. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are average, and pupils' achievements are good given their prior attainment and the unstable staffing which affected these pupils in the recent past. Pupils in both years benefit from a good introduction to examination techniques and source evaluation. As in Years 7 to 9, the department has developed good assessment procedures linked with National Curriculum levels so that the progress of individual pupils can be better measured and their grades predicted with some accuracy. This improvement has also dealt with a criticism made by the last inspection. By Year 11, it is clear that pupils have acquired an accurate knowledge of the dates, facts, events and personalities of such topics as Hitler's rise to power and of America in the 1920's. They are also able to handle a variety of sources with a view to selecting, organising and evaluating evidence and communicating results.

190. Such gains in knowledge, understanding and skills, and such improvement in learning that has taken place recently, are the result of good teaching. Teachers have provided the enthusiasm and encouragement as well as the teaching skills that have opened up good learning opportunities to the generally well behaved and co-operative pupils. Teaching and learning are good throughout Years 7 to 11. The teaching is particularly strong in the area of source evaluation and, in Years 10 and 11, on the acquisition of skills useful to improve examination results. All the teachers have good all round skills. Some teachers are equally at home enthusing Year 7 pupils, and working Years 10 and 11 hard for examinations. Examples of the best teaching occurred in two lessons with Year 9. The first one involved evaluating sources on the topic of civilian life in World War 2. Both teaching and learning experience were very good because of the clear aims, strong teaching voice and questioning technique and good organisation of the teacher, as well as the links with prior learning, and the interesting material which led to productive pupil involvement. The second lesson was based on an imaginative reconstruction of life in the trenches in World War 1, which used graphic pictures, video tapes and sound tracks to keep the pupils interested and involved throughout. In some lessons well organised group work had the same effect, as in a lesson on America in the 1920's in Year 11.

191. Underpinning the good teaching and the improving standards and achievement are good leadership and management. The recently appointed head of faculty is getting to grips with the need to update monitoring procedures, planning, schemes of work and resources designed to foster further improvements. There is a need to link the schemes of work more specifically with desired outcomes in terms of ICT and the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. In particular the instability of staffing, which adversely affected standards in recent years, has been addressed and the present team, teaching in a specialist suite of rooms, promises well for further improvement. ICT is underdeveloped at the moment but most of the features that needed improvement at the last inspection have been addressed and improved. Response has been particularly good to the main criticism concerning the need to link assessment with National Curriculum levels and key elements. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

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

Strengths:

- The good progress that is made in GNVQ part I courses, and in the " success maker " classes, as a result of dedicated teaching, effective administration and effective assessment.
- Good use of ICT in art and design and technology.

Areas for improvement:

- To appoint a head of subject to implement a coherent delivery of the National Curriculum.
- To rectify the unsatisfactory progress and attainment of pupils in Years 7 to 9 and the majority of those in Years 10 and 11.
- To organise the curriculum to ensure that all National Curriculum programmes for ICT are met and that all subjects contribute.
- To ensure the rigorous use of assessment to judge teaching and learning.

192. In 2001, teacher assessments of Year 9 attainment in information and communication technology were not undertaken because of staffing problems. In previous years, assessments indicated that standards were below average. This trend continues and standards in work seen in Year 9 are below average. The 2001 GNVQ Part I ICT results were below the national average, although they were better than those of previous years and confirm an upward trend. Pupils' learning has suffered as a result of staffing problems and the employment of a number of temporary teachers.

193. Standards in Year 9 remain below average because the Year 7 schemes of work lack depth and detail, and there is no discrete teaching in Year 8. With the exception of the art and technology departments, subjects do not strongly reinforce and extend ICT capability. Year 9 pupils, therefore, begin their key skills course with too little knowledge, and overall through Years 7 to 9, pupils' achievements are unsatisfactory.

194. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are below average overall, although pupils in GNVQ classes are working at a higher standard. Teaching on this course is good, well planned and characterised by very high expectations of behaviour and standards. Consequently, pupils understand coding systems and are able to use quite complex editor systems when designing a web page for a cybercafe. The progress and achievements of most other pupils in Year 11 are unsatisfactory. No GCSE courses are offered. Pupils take a Key Skills examination that only covers basic aspects and, at times, they are taught by non-specialists and temporary teachers. There are no national figures for results in this course, but in 2001, the school's assessment indicated that only half of the pupils had finished the coursework. Pupils in Year 10 classes are not taught ICT as a separate subject, and they have an uneven experience and use of computers in other subjects. Consequently, they begin Year 11 with gaps in their understanding and one lesson a week gives too little time to catch up. Pupils observed used word processing, spreadsheets, databases and some desktop publishing, but at a level below the expectations for their age group. For example, they were not able to discuss the advantages or disadvantages of the software they were using and did not automatically review, modify and evaluate work as it progressed.

195. The quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. Pupils have good access to computers and most make steady progress in acquiring basic skills through the lesson. Teachers work effectively as facilitators, helping pupils on a one-to-one basis, but most

pupils are over-reliant on the teacher for help and support to solve problems. At times this means that pupils' attention wanders as they wait for the teacher to help them. Most pupils have a basic knowledge and understanding of simple applications and programs. A Year 7 class observed were able to use a spreadsheet to enter data and perform calculations, while high attaining pupils were considering how to display the data in chart form. Year 9 pupils observed searched the Internet for information and could create headers and footers; most were able to use a spreadsheet confidently.

196. Although teaching overall in Years 10 and 11 is judged satisfactory, the teacher's expert knowledge and the production of high quality guidance notes result in very good learning for pupils taking the GNVQ Part 1 course. Pupils respond very positively to the committed and enthusiastic approach of the teacher, and make very good progress. Their work in folders is well planned and presented. Teaching elsewhere lacks the depth of subject knowledge to promote high standards, and in several classes observed, a purposeful working atmosphere was not established.

197. Leadership and management of ICT are unsatisfactory. Currently there is no head of subject responsible for ensuring a coherent delivery of the National Curriculum. There has been no audit of the way in which different subjects can contribute to the overall curriculum. Problems associated with the new network and software have been a factor in impeding progress. This compounds the problem of too little time to teach ICT in separate lessons. As a result, the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum are not fully being met. With the exception of the GNVQ and the courses for special educational needs pupils, there is no rigorous assessment of learning. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths:

- Good teaching and effective class management facilitate successful learning.
- Extensive teacher support of pupils within the classroom and in additional examination preparation sessions.
- Significant improvements in GCSE results in 2001, which reflect the development of appropriate teaching strategies.
- A strong focus on active learning to motivate pupils.
- Good, productive working relationships in the classroom which foster industrious learning.
- A well-managed faculty which promotes progress and achievement.

Areas for improvement:

- The use of ICT to enhance learning in Years 7 to 11.
- Marking of pupils' work in Years 7 to 11 which is not always sufficiently detailed.
- The sharing of good practice and learning materials.

198. Although teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2001 improved, standards remain below average. Boys do not do as well as girls, although the faculty has recently set in place active learning strategies which have had a positive effect on the motivation of boys in the classroom. It is too soon, however, for their specific impact on attainment to be

measurable. Pupils' attainment at GCSE has improved since the last inspection, and is now around the national average. All pupils achieved grades within the A* to G range and 54 per cent achieved a grade in the A* to C range. Standards have been improving over the last two years and challenging targets have been set for future performance.

199. In work seen during the inspection, attainment of Year 9 pupils is broadly in line with national expectations, and their achievements are satisfactory. Oral skills are generally good and higher attainers are confident and adventurous in their speaking. Effective use of a variety of active learning strategies and visual aids in the classroom motivates both boys and girls to develop their skills and acquire new vocabulary and language structures. Pupils' listening and reading comprehension skills are well developed from an early stage, aided by the use of a wide range of materials. Boys and girls attain similar standards in these skills. Standards of writing are, however, variable during these years and the lack of challenging and imaginative writing tasks prevents pupils, especially the boys, from achieving their full potential in this skill. Not all pupils take a pride in what they write and levels of attainment suffer as a result.

200. In Years 10 and 11, standards are average and pupils achieve well given their prior attainment. Higher attainers are able to communicate clearly and accurately in French, using a range of vocabulary and tenses. Middle and lower attainers speak confidently, but their range of vocabulary is narrower and they are less accurate in their use of grammatical structures. Written work is of an appropriate standard and grading is generally accurate.

201. Most pupils in Years 7 to 11 have a positive attitude approach to French. They arrive punctually and participate enthusiastically in lessons, especially in oral work. They are mostly attentive and settle well to class work, pair work and individual tasks, and are uninhibited in speaking French. The behaviour of a very small minority of pupils is, at times, disruptive in lessons but good classroom management normally prevents this from affecting the progress of others.

202. The quality of teaching and learning is good through Years 7 to 9. Relationships between teachers and pupils, and between pupils when working in groups or in pairs, are good. The purposeful atmosphere produced by these relationships is productive in increasing pupils' motivation and progress. All teachers have a fluent command in French, and in Years 10 to 11, they make good use of the language in lessons. They encourage pupils in their speaking, correct their pronunciation and extend their vocabulary. In some lessons in Years 7, 8 and 9, however, teachers do not always make sufficient use of French and potential opportunities for learning are lost. Lessons are generally well planned and well structured. In the best lessons, teachers use a variety of activities and materials in a challenging and imaginative way to stimulate the adventurous use of language and active learning. These lessons proceed at a good pace with the effective use of pictures, games, quizzes and songs, and constant checking of understanding and learning. In many lessons teachers skilfully integrate grammatical structures, such as tenses, in the context of the topic. In one Year 10 lesson on the theme of childhood memories, the teacher introduced the uses of the imperfect and perfect tense in the context of her childhood memories, compared with those of pupils. The emphasis on active learning is particularly effective in motivating the boys, who show great enthusiasm for working out solutions and demonstrating correct answers. This was observed, for example, in a Year 7 lesson where the teacher introduced a range of vocabulary and phrases by means of a series of pictures on the board, and games involving pupils in matching pictures with words and verbal structures.

203. Often issues relating to pupils' personal, social, cultural and moral development are integrated into lesson topics. For example, in one Year 9 lesson, pupils learnt about young people's musical preferences in Guadeloupe. The teacher introduced them to the French words for various types of music, which were familiar to their age group, through songs and pictures. In a Year 11 lesson, pupils learnt about the topic of pollution in French by reading the opinions of some young French people. During lessons teachers support pupils well, encouraging and helping them according to their individual needs. For example in one Year 8 lesson, work on the calendar and Saints Days aroused the curiosity of higher attainers, who made comparisons with the English calendar, whilst lower attainers initially enjoyed trying to identify names and vocabulary. However there is not always consistent planning of extension tasks to meet the needs of higher attainers.

204. Teachers systematically assess pupils' progress in relation to national levels of attainment and GCSE specifications, and this guides the planning of teaching strategies. Homework is set at regular intervals to consolidate and extend work carried out in class, but not all pupils make good use of their homework journals to systematically record the work set. Writing tasks are not always challenging enough to promote pupils' creative use of French. Pupils' written work is regularly marked but not always in enough detail, either to correct inaccuracies or to enable pupils to understand what they need to do to improve. Overall there is little use of ICT in lessons to support and enrich pupils' learning of French.

205. The curriculum meets statutory requirements but the school has taken the decision to focus on French and does not currently offer any other languages. In past years, German and Spanish have been offered as options but numbers of pupils were low. The faculty is well managed and the head of faculty promotes clear aims for teaching and learning. The language team meet regularly and teaching and learning issues are central to discussion and debate. Challenging targets are set and monitored within the faculty and there is a self-critical approach to the planning of teaching strategies. Faculty staff are well qualified and experienced. There is no language laboratory and no language assistant in the faculty, but a French native speaker has recently been appointed to replace a teacher who is leaving. Teachers are very supportive of pupils in the classroom and provide additional examination preparation sessions in the evening or at weekends. There are no computers in language teaching rooms and there is little evidence of faculty planning for the use of ICT resources in the school, as a teaching strategy. There is some informal sharing of good practice amongst staff but it is not sufficiently systematic to be fully effective in enhancing learning. Also there is no central bank of school-produced learning resources for use by faculty staff. Improvement since last inspection has been good overall.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths:

- A strong team of specialist teachers of physical education.
- Very good relationships throughout the school with pupils and staff, which foster effective learning.
- Pupils show positive attitudes and behaviour is good.
- The use of the new leisure centre enhances learning opportunities for the pupils.

Areas for improvement:

- Accommodation is not ideal for effective teaching and learning.
- Assessment procedures, particularly in Years 7 to 9, and the linking of assessment procedures to curriculum planning and teaching.
- Schemes of work and subject documentation.
- The development of teaching strategies through an effective policy for managing teaching and learning and more use of ICT in the curriculum.

206. The majority of pupils in Year 9 are working at average levels. Attainment is higher than was shown by teacher assessments for pupils in 2001 which indicated much lower levels of performance. The department is now reviewing its methods of assessment for Key Stage 3. Pupils' achievements are satisfactory through Years 7 to 9. Boys attain good standards in rugby in terms of knowledge skills and understanding of particular aspects of play, such as how to tackle and off-load the ball effectively. In volleyball, Year 8 pupils try hard to select and apply skills such as setting, digging and spiking the ball.

207. In 2001, GCSE results were below the national average with 42 per cent of pupils achieving A* to C grades, but standards are rising and compare favourably with those of other subjects in the school. For non-examination groups in Years 10 and 11, the majority of pupils are working at average levels, and their achievements are satisfactory. There are no marked differences in the performance of girls compared to boys, and pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. Boys and girls achieve good standards of performance in skills practice and in small-sided games. For example, in Year 11 volleyball lessons, pupils apply the correct skills and techniques learnt in practice situations to full games. There is, however, a wide range of attainment levels amongst pupils, and teachers need to accommodate for this more fully when planning their lessons.

208. The quality of teaching and learning is good through Years 7 to 11, and is a major strength of the department. Teachers are knowledgeable, enthusiastic and generally well prepared for lessons. The department consists of a team of specialist teachers who are well qualified and who understand pupils' needs, and this impacts on the quality of learning experiences throughout. The teaching team have good relationships with students, both boys and girls, of all ages and all abilities. Teachers set clear learning objectives for their lessons and set high expectations of behaviour and of achievement for all pupils. They use the resources available to them to good effect and pupils acquire the knowledge, skills and understanding in most activities necessary for successful application to games such as basketball in Year 7, girls' soccer in Year 9 and boys' rugby in Year 7. Teaching styles are at times too restricted, particularly those used for examination courses where pupils do not take responsibility for their own learning. There is little use of ICT to enhance learning. A

particular strength of the department is that it fosters good behaviour and positive attitudes to physical education. Most pupils respond well to their teachers and co-operate in games activities such as volleyball in Year 9, where both boys and girls work together effectively. Most pupils are interested in their work and enjoy their lessons. Girls showed commitment and enthusiasm in their soccer lessons despite very cold conditions.

209. The department pursues a policy of inclusiveness so that girls and boys, together with pupils with special educational needs, have equal access to the curriculum. This is shown in the mixed-sex teaching groups and the range of activities offered in curriculum time. Some disaffected pupils inhibit the learning process through poor behaviour which impacts on those who wish to learn. The range of extra-curricular activities available to all pupils is limited, although the department has plans to increase this provision. The onsite facilities, which include the hall, gymnasium and outdoor fields, are not conducive to effective teaching and learning. However, when the adjacent leisure centre is used, this enhances learning opportunities for pupils and is an excellent environment for pupils to learn in. The subject encourages the development of social and moral skills through working together and promoting teamwork and fair-play. Detailed records of pupils' achievements are kept for all practical and examination work. Safety is of a high priority in all lessons and students are aware of safety procedures when planning, performing and evaluating their work, especially in rugby at Year 9. However, assessment is not linked to the planning of lessons and the teacher assessments for Key Stage 3 are inaccurate. The marking of examination work lacks detail and rigour, particularly in GCSE coursework.

210. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory, although the monitoring of teaching and learning is not carried out rigorously. Communication is good and staff development procedures effective. Subject documentation, including schemes of work, is out of date. The department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. Accommodation remains an issue for improvement, although limited use is now made of the adjacent leisure centre.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths:

- The teaching skills of some non-specialist staff.

Areas for improvement:

- The match of the scheme of work to the local agreed syllabus in relation both to content and to a focus on what can be learned from religion.
- The quality of teaching, including subject knowledge, range of teaching methods and use of assessment.
- Resources, especially textbooks.
- The management of the subject to secure necessary improvements.

211. Standards in religious education are well below those anticipated by the locally agreed syllabus in both Year 9 and Year 11, and pupils' achievements are unsatisfactory. This is because of a lack of focus on either the content or the attainment targets of the agreed syllabus, and also because of inadequacies in the teaching and the management of this subject. Currently there is no examination work in religious education.

212. In most of the work seen during the inspection, there was little to engage or challenge pupils. Whole- class discussion-based lessons allowed some members of classes to disengage, whilst those who did participate were rarely challenged to think more deeply about their views or give serious consideration to different points of view. There were exceptions to this and one lesson was seen where good questioning skills by a teacher enabled pupils to explore in some depth the motivations of Christians and others to take social action and become involved in charitable giving. Examination of pupils' journals and exercise books showed that homework is set infrequently and is often of a sort that is wholly inappropriate, as when for example, pupils were required to draw a picture of Moses, an exercise that took no account of the religious sensitivities of Muslim pupils.

213. Pupils generally have a negative attitude to the subject and this must in large part be due to the fact that it is taught in a way that they see as irrelevant to their lives and concerns. Year 11 pupils said they had never experienced a visit to a place of worship or had a member of a religious community come into class to talk about her/his beliefs and practices. The subject is taught without textbooks, without any use of computers, and with scant use of artifacts or video material. There is over-reliance on worksheets and discussion-based lessons. Some teachers' lack of knowledge of the subject makes it impossible for them to engender interest and enthusiasm in pupils, whilst their lack of awareness of the expectations of either the agreed syllabus or of national expectations in RE means that both teaching and the teachers' expectations of pupils are pitched at far too low a level. In Years 10 and 11 there are units of work, for example on citizenship, that have no identifiable components of religious education.

214. The lack of textbooks and the low level of much discussion work mean that RE contributes less well than it should to pupils' literacy skills. Teachers' are aware, in each class, of pupils with special educational needs, and of others who have been identified as being gifted or talented. Planning for pupils of different levels of attainment is at an early stage of development, although an example was seen of two versions of a worksheet being provided in a Year 11 class, one offering more help and support to pupils who needed this. No particular effort to be inclusive towards the school's Muslim pupils was evident, although there was little evidence that these pupils (the only significant ethnic minority group) were disadvantaged by this. In class discussions, there was no obvious disparity in the participation or achievement of boys and girls, although in one Year 11 class observed, none of the four boys who should have been in the class were present in the lesson.

215. The quality of teaching and learning is unsatisfactory overall, although some good teaching was seen. Unsatisfactory teaching resulted primarily from a lack of clarity as to learning intentions, lack of subject knowledge on the part of non-specialist teachers, and a failure, in one lesson only, to manage a class appropriately. Pupils do not understand the purpose of much that they are engaged in and have little idea of what they need to do to improve. The lesson pro-forma in use in the department is not a useful tool for planning lessons. This is because it asks teachers to plan content without asking them to address questions of why they are teaching a lesson and how it follows on from what has gone before or leads into what is coming next.

216. Leadership and management of the department are currently unsatisfactory. However, the teacher in charge of RE is due shortly to return from maternity leave, and a relatively newly appointed head of the humanities faculty will then be able to work alongside her to tackle the weaknesses detailed by this report.

217. Progress since the last report is unsatisfactory. A weekly lesson has now been provided for pupils in Years 10 and 11, but teaching, learning and standards achieved in Year 9 are now less good than they were found to be at the time of the last inspection.

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

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2001

GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	3	66	62	0	15		
Biology	13	69	53	0	3		
Design and technology	6	100	85	17	25		
Sports studies	4	75	88	25	24		
Art	6	100	88	50	44		
Media studies	6	50	94	17	37		
Geography	4	100	91	25	39		
History	6	66	91	17	43		
Government and politics	6	83	89	0	44		
Psychology	9	66	83	22	30		
English Language	12	83	95	58	37		
English Literature	11	100	95	27	37		
French	4	100	91	75	46		

GCE A Level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	4	100	87	0	43	5.5	5.8
Chemistry	3	100	91	0	43	4.0	5.9
Biology	11	100	96	0	34	3.8	5.2
Physics	3	100	88	0	40	5.3	5.7
Design and technology	5	100	90	60	30	7.2	5.4
ICT	5	100		40			
Sports studies	6	100	92	0	25	4.0	5.1
Health and social care	2	100		0		10.0	10.8
Art	4	100	96	50	46	7.0	6.6
Media studies	4	75	96	25	30		
Geography	3	100	92	33	38	6.0	5.7
History	8	50	89	0	36	2.2	5.4
Government and politics	9	78	91	11	44	4.2	5.3
English language	12	66	90	25	29	3.5	5.3
English literature	4	100	95	50	37	7.0	5.9

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

218. The focus was on AS level mathematics in Year 12 and A Level mathematics in Year 13. Four classes were seen with students working towards a range of modules that includes statistics, pure and discrete mathematics. Although GCSE mathematics is offered for students wishing to improve their grades, no classes were operating at the time of the inspection. In science the focus was chemistry but biology was also sampled. Although offered, physics is not taught. Examination results in biology were below the national average in 2001. Two lessons were observed. In both, students' achievement was good, as was the quality of teaching. Year 13 students responded well to a lesson on meiosis and genetic structure.

Mathematics

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

Strengths:

- Pass rates for A Level are good.
- Good progress is made by the majority of A Level students.
- Teaching is of good quality.
- The provision is well managed.

Areas for improvement:

- Number of high grade passes for A Level.
- Pass rates and completion rates for the AS level course.
- The use of information and communication technology.

219. Pass rates for A Level are good. Over the last four years, only one candidate out of the 17 entered has failed. However, no candidates have achieved the highest grade. AS level results are far more variable and a high number of students failed to complete the course in 2001. Results for students re-sitting GCSE mathematics have been poor up to 2001. For example, in 2000 only one candidate of the 14 entered achieved their aim of a grade C or better. However, in 2001 six of the 14 candidates were successful. The progress of the majority of A Level students is good. However, progress for AS level and GCSE students is far more mixed.

220. The standards of work of current A Level students is at the expected level, though for some aspects they are working above this level. For example, two Year 13 students were undertaking revision work in preparation for a pure mathematics module revision test. Both students had a good grasp of the concepts involved and, after an initial introduction, were able to complete examples largely on an independent basis. Both the students had predicted grades of C for the forthcoming A Level examination. In another Year 12 class leading to AS level, students were undertaking work on arithmetic and geometric progressions. Although most students had a good understanding of the work, for others this was more restricted.

221. Teaching in the sixth form is consistently good. All lessons are very well planned. The group work often involves a significant level of discussion between the students and with the teacher. The small group sizes that exist support a more informal and interactive style during the development of topics. The students present respond well to this approach. Overall,

students are well motivated. Teachers have a secure knowledge of the subjects that they teach. Very supportive relationships are developed with the students. The pace is brisk and appropriately challenging in the lessons. Attitudes, particularly those of the A Level students, are very good. Those of the AS level students are more mixed, with some students somewhat passive during aspects of the group work. There are some small groups for mathematics in the sixth form. Currently only two girls are following the A Level course in Year 13. Whilst this means that each student receives significant support from the teacher, the interactions associated with teaching and learning of larger groups are lost.

222. The mathematics provision in the sixth form is well managed. The staff involved in the teaching work closely together. A good range of courses is available including AS and A Level. Students can also re-sit the GCSE if they wish to attempt to improve their grade. As with the main school, there is a need to develop the use of ICT to support teaching and learning on the sixth form courses. Satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection.

Chemistry

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

Strengths:

- The positive attitudes the students have to the subject.
- The use of the students' own reports to inform group discussions.
- The high quality of teaching and high level of teacher expertise.

Areas for improvement:

- The need for opportunities for students to design their own investigations.
- The size of teaching groups, which currently are too small to yield the full range of teacher student interactions.

223. The A Level examination results for 2001 showed an improvement over the previous year, but numbers are too small to achieve valid statistical analysis. All students who took this examination gained a pass. Overall, the average points score was below the national average but above that expected given the students' performance at GCSE.

224. Currently, no Year 13 students study chemistry. The standard of work of the Year 12 students is close to average. They have a positive attitude to the subject and they show good understanding of the precise techniques involved in acid-base titrations. They are able to use their results to determine the molarity and, consequently, the formula mass of an unknown mass and so identify it. They demonstrated a sound grasp of key parts of the periodic table.

225. Teaching observed was good. As a result, students learn effectively. The teaching is characterised by good teacher-student relationships and good subject knowledge on the part of the teacher. In one lesson seen, material developed as a homework project was used by the students to provide a report back to their colleagues. This research generated extended written material and, in one case that was delivered as a multimedia presentation, it maintained interest well and represents good practice. All students will be entered for the AS examination, and for one of them this is the target. Others will use the outcome as a

measure of their progress. External tests applied in this way give the students a good sense of what is required of them, and provide knowledge of the detailed criteria they must meet. Student learning is good. They are expected to be more than passive receivers of knowledge and they respond effectively, both by preparing well-considered presentations and by asking probing questions.

226. The management of the subject is satisfactory. The scheme of work meets the subject's requirements fully. The good teaching and adequate level of resourcing help explain the improvement in A Level results. In order to continue the subject's growth, more detailed information about the progress made by individual students needs to be collected at key points in the learning cycle. This information can then be shared systematically with the students and more accurately inform them about what they need to do to improve their work.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

227. Two courses were observed during this inspection; AS/A2 levels in product design and AS level textiles.

Product Design

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

Strengths:

- Teaching is good and has resulted in good working relationships with students.
- Design projects are carefully chosen to provide sufficient challenge but with a reasonable prospect of success.
- Examination results have been consistently good; well above average in 2001 and with a good proportion of higher grades.
- Students have a good grasp of designing and making processes and most achieve well.

Areas for improvement:

- The provision of better and a wider range of resources specific to A Level work.

228. Standards on the course are above average. Students have maintained a 100 per cent pass rate for the last three years and the number of higher grade passes has been high.

229. Attainment in lessons is above average. In general, students have good graphic skills and can use sketches effectively to express and record ideas. They have a good understanding of designing and making processes and are developing comprehensive research and development folders. Design projects are carefully chosen; they arise from identified problems and provide students with an appropriate challenge. Some Year 13 students do not use a wide range of research methods or compile well-thought out design briefs. For example, some questionnaires are not formulated to gather information in the most useful way and some graphic work lacks sufficient detail for manufacturing to take place. Students use good ICT skills for a variety of purposes to enhance both the content and presentation of their work. Design studies projects are drawn from a wide range of sources from Breuer to Bayliss. For example, a detailed study of the 'Wassily' chair had enabled one Year 13 student to appreciate the relationship between artists and craftsmen and the influence of the Bauhaus on 20th century design. The inventive flair behind the clockwork radio enabled another student to appreciate the role of engineering in product

design. Design work is supported by good craft skills. For example, Year 12 students were able to use a range of materials to model or prototype their ideas. Good teaching and high self-confidence enabled one student to work carefully and accurately to cut and fit through dovetails for a display case. Students have a high level of commitment to the course and often provide quality materials for their work. The quality and use of graphics in Year 12 folders clearly show the development of ideas and combine good hand-drawn sketches and drawings with computer generated images.

230. Good teaching has established good working relationships with pupils. The course is popular and attracts both male and female students. There are now 10 students in Year 12 and 6 in Year 13. All enter the course with good GCSE grades. Students feel that this was a good basis from which to build and most had found the progression to advanced work to be challenging but manageable. They receive good individual help and advice and detailed verbal and written evaluations of their work. Teachers act as effective facilitators and consultants as well as knowledgeable instructors. Students are willing to seek advice and act upon it. Both teachers work closely to ensure that all aspects of the course are covered and that continuity of work is maintained. Teachers know the strengths and weaknesses of each student and lesson plans include a note of short-term targets for each. Accommodation is satisfactory but resources are limited by low funding.

Textiles

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

Strengths:

- Teaching is good and the positive relationships with pupils lead to good standards of work.
- Students' enthusiasm and high level of commitment lead to good progress and good achievement.

Areas for improvement:

- The provision of better resources appropriate to this level of work.

231. Standards of work seen in lessons are above average. Students are following a good design methodology and compiling detailed design folders with well-constructed design briefs and wide- ranging independent research.

232. This new course was introduced in response to requests from a group of students who wished to build on good GCSE grades and continue at advanced level. The 7 students are drawn from both Years 12 and 13. Students are enthusiastic about the course and feel that their GCSE work was a good foundation for A Level work. Most feel that the work requires a greater degree of independence and greater depth of research and understanding. None felt daunted by the task and most agreed that they received good guidance. Students are given thorough written evaluations of their work and progress. Most students intend to continue with some aspect of the work in higher education, for example, textile design at university or as an entry qualification to a teaching course.

233. Teaching is good. During a well-taught lesson, students were able to apply previous knowledge of fibres and materials technology to extend their understanding of how designers select materials for specific purposes. Skilled questioning by the teacher made students think and generate answers to their own questions. The teacher knows students' strengths and weaknesses well and attainment and progress are well recorded. Resources are limited but good management ensures that they are used to best effect.

234. There are no current plans to extend this course beyond AS level. When current Year 13 students leave, numbers in the group will not be viable.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

235. Sixth form information and communication technology is taught through a GNVQ course and by applications encouraged in other subjects. Those choosing the GNVQ option gain good pass rates, and in some classes, distinction and merit grades are achieved. Very good teaching is an important factor in achieving these higher grades.

Information and Communication Technology

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

Strengths:

- Good teaching encourages positive attitudes for the students.
- The procedures for assessing attainment and progress.
- Appropriate courses are matched well to students' needs.

Areas for improvement:

- The clash of subjects affecting students' attendance in ICT classes thus reducing learning.
- The adequacy of learning resources.

236. During the inspection it was possible to evaluate students' portfolios, their attitudes to the subject and their competence in some classes, as well as their individual examination results. Teachers were able to provide background information and were well able to predict the potential attainment grade for each student.

237. In 2001 all 7 students gained a pass grade in the GNVQ Part 1 intermediate examination. In 2000, 4 students gained merits and the one other student gained a distinction. Although there are not enough students to give statistical significance to the results, these achievements are good. In previous years, small numbers of students have studied GCE A Level computer studies and A Level IT and have gained useful results. Overall, these results are similar to those reported at the time of the last inspection.

238. In a Year 12 group, students were learning to use some of the more advanced features of a spreadsheet. They are familiar with entering a variety of formulae in cells such as average, maximum and vertical look-up. They often use short cuts to speed up operations such as replicating formulae. Headers and footers are included and they use auto format to improve the appearance of a table. Attainment is in line with expectations and achievement is good. Work in Years 12 and 13 is well presented and includes more advanced features that clearly reflect the advanced single award AVCE syllabus. Overall, the work indicates good progress. In another class where students had gained lower GCSE results previously, attainment was below expectations when compared nationally. However, their work

contained evidence of effective use of desk top publishing with text, pictures, letters, tables, logos, spreadsheets and simple graphs. Other sixth form students who have not chosen a specific ICT option gain their knowledge from cross-curricular applications. This is particularly effective in English, art, design and technology and general studies. Business studies and geography in particular encourage the use of ICT so that most students are near expectations overall. All are encouraged to use the Internet as a research tool.

239. Where the teacher is well qualified in ICT, the teaching is very good. Lessons are very well prepared and follow a scheme of work. Information is given clearly so that all students can understand what is required. Targets are set and pace is excellent so that students learn rapidly. The students say it is a well organised course and that they appreciate the knowledge of the teacher and are stimulated by it. In one class, students showed their understanding of html coding when involved in web site design as a means of communication. They were able to answer questions and detect errors.

240. Learning is very good because the students know that they will have their work marked at regular intervals. The results are fed back to the students so that they are well aware of their progress and potential grade. Relationships between teachers and students are very good. However learning is reduced because timetable clashes and other events make it impossible for the students to attend all classes during any week. Other classes have a combination of business applications and ICT and are taught satisfactorily by several teachers.

241. The GNVQ course provides a suitable option for sixth form students wishing to develop their ICT skills and knowledge to a more advanced level. Retention rates for the course are excellent. The students say that the course is appropriate for their needs and interests and more enjoyable than expected. These students have considerable respect for their teacher and appreciate the present continuity. The key skills course has now been dropped from the sixth form curriculum.

242. The organisation of the sixth form ICT courses is assisted by a teacher in charge of GNVQ. Aims and objectives for the course are made clear and targets set. All sections of the syllabus required for the examination are addressed. Assessment records are designed, prepared and kept up to date by this co-ordinator and the teachers of the subject. Coursework portfolios are stored safely and maintained in good condition. In recent years, problems in the staffing of ICT have adversely affected learning throughout the school, including the sixth form. This has improved recently with the appointment of an enthusiastic specialist teacher. The accommodation is adequate for sixth form students although resources need some improvement. Discussions are in hand for improving the response of the network when several classes are using the equipment simultaneously. Although the library has few ICT books, the computers are accessible at all times of the day.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

243. In sports studies at A- level, 33 per cent of pupils achieved grades A* to C and 100 per cent achieved a pass grade of A to E, which is above the national average. However, only six students were entered. The department is addressing the issue so that numbers are increased for A Level entry. At AS Level, four students were entered in 2001 and three achieved a pass grade of A to E in line with national averages.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Overall, the quality of provision in health and social care is **good**.

Strengths:

- The relationships between students and their teachers provide a good basis for effective learning.
- The structure of the course is well planned and therefore offers all abilities the opportunity to succeed.
- The quality of teaching is good, providing the students with challenge, and developing their skills, knowledge and understanding of the subject.

Areas for improvement:

- Students' skills of critical analysis and evaluation are not particularly well developed.

244. The course is offered to intermediate and advanced levels. Overall, standards are average but, because of the small number of students, comparison with national examination outcomes is not valid. Evidence based on a scrutiny of student portfolios, including the centre-assessed assignments, indicates that standards of achievement are improving. When consideration is given to the students' previous average points score in GCSE examinations, their level of achievement by the completion of their intermediate or advanced course is good. Almost all students who complete their course gain a pass and a small percentage achieve merit. The majority of the present Year 12 students have made a good start to their course. It is evident from scrutiny of their work that Year 13 advanced level students understand the concepts of health and social care. The students respond well to the consultative style of teaching. Their skills in critical analysis and evaluation, although satisfactory, are not so well developed. Students' written work is generally well organised and presented, often by the use of computers.

245. Evidence based on classroom observation together with a scrutiny of work from both years, indicates that the quality of teaching and learning is good. Primarily, this is the result of a combination of methodical planning, very good subject knowledge and strong teamwork. Theory and practice of health and social care are well related, and lead to good learning, particularly in Year 13. The enthusiasm of the teachers creates a positive environment for learning. The students are developing an appreciation of the impact of health and social care on society. The students appreciate the freedom they are given to pursue independent study. This style of teaching and learning is generally effective because of the clear structure of the experiences being offered. The majority of students are attentive, and show a positive attitude to their work. They are practised in discussion and, with few exceptions, contribute in response to effective encouragement. Communication skills are improved by the regular discussions that take place in lessons. Students speak highly of their supportive relationships with their teachers. Work is assessed regularly and students are given appropriate and constructive feedback. Students' progress and attainment are carefully monitored by teachers and used to influence future planning. Teachers are well qualified and have relevant specialist and vocational experience. Accommodation is satisfactory. A good range of resources is available and students have access to computers. There is a good selection of books available, both in the classrooms and in the school library.

246. Leadership and management are good. There is a clear vision and an appreciation of what is required to support the development of the subject and the attainment levels of the students. The staff within the department work as a very effective team, generating a very good atmosphere. This in turn has a positive effect upon the quality of teaching and

learning. Knowledge gained regarding student progress and attainment is used effectively. Students' academic records are comprehensive. High standards are promoted and expected and, as a result, students' portfolios are well presented and well organised.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

247. The focus was on art and design, but media studies was sampled. Students' assignments for the practical production module of the media studies course are of a high standard. One student who was evaluating advertising aimed at women gave a very clear analysis of the target audience and the representation of women. She had very creatively selected and manipulated images from the Internet to produce a set of six advertisements for an imaginary cleaning product as it might appear now and in the past. Another student had shown good technical proficiency in producing a video to support an advertising campaign for women's perfume. A third student also demonstrated excellent technical proficiency in researching, selecting and transferring images to create his own advertisements for cars.

Art

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

Strengths:

- The standards of attainment in the sixth form.
- The quality of teaching. The teachers work as an extremely effective team.
- The attitude of the students and their relationships with the teachers.
- The quality of leadership and management of the subject.

Areas for improvement:

- Consideration to be given to offering students vocational education qualifications as a strategy for improving the numbers of students electing to study art in the sixth form.

248. Overall, the standards are above average and have improved since the last inspection. Results in the A Level examinations are above national averages both for the proportions achieving a pass grade and for those achieving higher grades. Achievements in the recently introduced AS level examinations have also been above average. The quality of work in the students' portfolios and sketchbooks confirms these very good standards. Some of the results produced are very impressive, particularly in illustration and printing. Some students in both courses show exceptional flair and imagination producing work of significant quality and originality. Portfolios of art and design demonstrate very good research skills and attention to detail. In Year 12, students were developing paintings and drawings, printing and some computer generated illustrations based on an interpretation of the concept of 'Reflections'. Research was based on the work of significant artists who have used reflective concepts. The work produced by students in Year 13 demonstrated that the development of skills and knowledge was improving over the two years of their studies. The majority of the students are confident when working with a variety of materials and resources. Some examples were to be found of the use of computer generated art applications. These included transferring and distorting images, mixing text and graphic illustrations and experimenting with colour. The students are articulate and can discuss their work with confidence and pride in their achievements. Their attitude toward the subject borders on excellent, and is probably a major contributor to the quality of work produced in their portfolios and displayed throughout the art department and the school reception area.

249. Teaching is excellent overall. The lessons are challenging and well planned in order to provide all students have opportunities to progress and to attain levels of achievement commensurate with their abilities and aspirations. Classroom organisation and management are extremely effective. Excellent relationships between the teachers and the students provide a pleasant atmosphere in the lessons. Regular references to the work of significant artists and cultures raise creative and visual appreciation and awareness. All classrooms within the department contain excellent displays relating to the work of significant artists or cultures, which provide an opportunity for students to learn and appreciate the wider aspects of art education. The quality of work produced is particularly impressive and deserves a wider audience.

250. Students learn well as a direct result of very effective teaching. They are attentive and productive and have excellent relationships with their teachers, due primarily to the variety of very effective teaching styles employed by their teachers. They rise to the challenges set by their teachers and use their time well, often working outside set lesson times in their own designated area within the department. Students support and help each other, talking and listening to each other. There is a very good level of independent learning because the teachers encourage the students to attempt to solve their own problems. This generates high levels of originality in finished work. Assessment is particularly effective as an influence on future curriculum development and lesson planning. It includes a certain amount of pupil self-assessment, and consequently, when questioned, the students were well aware of teacher expectations and their own strengths and weaknesses. Work is assessed at periodic intervals that are usually linked to the completion of a project.

251. The quality of leadership and management is very good. There is clear vision and very effective planning, which promote high standards in lessons. The teachers work as a very effective team. The impressive quality of the students' work on display promotes high standards and interest in the subject, and celebrates achievement.

HUMANITIES

252. Work in history and government and politics was sampled. Students in Year 12 demonstrated an ability to handle difficult concepts such as "Revolution from Above" or "Revolution from Below" in relation to Germany after the First World War. Students in Year 13 were able to participate in interesting and purposeful discussions on Marxist philosophy or on the voting intentions of different social classes.

253. Sixth form students studying history at AS level achieved grades well below the national average in 2001. They did less well in history than in their other subjects, although the small numbers involved do not make for statistical significance. In the A2 level examinations, no student has gained grades A-B in the past two years and the number gaining grades A-E has been below the national average. This compares unfavourably with other subjects and standards have not improved since the last inspection.

Geography

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

Strengths:

- Teaching is very good and stimulates students.
- Good provision for fieldwork in Year 12 extends learning opportunities and builds strong student- teacher relationships.
- The subject is well led, and as a result more students are taking the subject.

Areas for improvement:

- The use of ICT resources is not yet fully developed to benefit all students.
- The range of opportunities for students to carry out independent learning.
- The provision of additional geography books in the library to extend student learning.

254. In recent years, relatively low numbers of students have followed geography courses. In 1999 seven students achieved very good results. The subject was not taught to Year 12 students during the Year 1998-1999. There were therefore no candidates for A Level in 2000. Although the average point score for the four candidates who were entered for A Level in 2001 was well below the national average, they all achieved pass grades and either matched or exceeded their targets. Student performance in geography, relative to their performance in other subjects, has shown continued improvement.

255. Observation of lessons, discussions with students and scrutiny of work show that students in Year 12 are already making good progress from their GCSE work and achieving well. Students in Year 12 can explain how processes have created different landforms at the coast and use appropriate key geographical terms in class. In a lesson discussing the sustainability of large cities, the students could accurately analyse figures from a graph and give well-thought-out reasons for increasing tensions in a city. The students study very effectively and respond very well to questions from their teachers with whom they have a very productive working relationship. Students' learning is well managed, but it remains very much under the direction of the teacher and this allows too little scope for independent learning. This needs to be developed for standards to continue to improve. Fieldwork provision in the sixth form is a strength in the department and is clearly helping to raise standards. The AS coursework seen during the inspection, based on a study of Haworth, shows an in depth knowledge of human processes. Findings are accurately explained and suitable conclusions are drawn. Year 13 students were seen presenting reasoned arguments about the causes of population change, which skilfully built on work done in the local area in Year 11. In another lesson on the reduction in the size of the Aral Sea, the students quickly understood why it was an international problem and why therefore management of it would be very difficult.

256. Teaching is very good overall. This is a key factor in raising and maintaining standards. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject and the large number of self-generated resources keep students on task. In one Year 12 lesson, the teacher produced a 'virtual' field trip using a projector linked through a computer. The slides of individual landforms such as headlands, bays and stacks built on work done in the previous lesson on coastal processes. They also gave the students an insight into the Holderness coastline, the area they will be visiting later in the year on their residential field trip. The field trip clearly helps to build teacher-pupil relationships. Teachers are well aware of the prior attainment of their students and set challenging targets. Although teachers encourage the use of ICT to research topics, particularly on the Internet, there is insufficient provision within school. This needs to be developed if standards are to continue to rise.

257. The students are very positive about geography in the sixth form, and their attitudes to study are very good. Their interest in class is high and their note-taking is conscientious. The students speak very highly of their teachers and they have enjoyed the range of courses covered in the syllabus. The students are pleasant and forthcoming and the teachers ensure that they have every opportunity to succeed.

258. Improvements in the students' achievements are not just the result of very good teaching. The subject is well managed and the teachers have worked hard to produce resources for the new syllabuses. The use of individual record cards has improved the assessment of individual students. However, the number of specialist geography books available in the school library is limited. This reduces the ability of the students to read widely around the topics covered in class.

259. Overall, there has been good progress since the last inspection. Teaching has improved and is impacting on learning. The number of students opting for the subject in the sixth form is rising and the teacher in charge of the subject has a clear vision for the future. The teachers support the students well and are well placed for future development.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

260. English and French were inspected in detail.

English

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

Strengths:

- The quality of teaching is very good.
- Marking and assessment are very good.
- Lessons are well-resourced and students are encouraged to be independent learners.

Areas for improvement:

- Consistently employ the effective strategies used by some teachers to ensure that less confident students are more actively involved in lessons.

261. Standards are satisfactory. Over the last three years results have fluctuated. Results for A Level English Language in 2001 were below average but reflected the attainment of the candidates at GCSE. All A Level English literature candidates attained A to E grades, including two at A/B level. In AS level English language in 2001, 10 students were awarded A to E grades, 7 at grades A and B. In AS level English literature, all 11 students were awarded A to E grades. These are good results and indicate good achievement by students.

262. Standards observed in lessons are good. Year 12 AS English language students comparing the forewords of two political manifestos are able to comment on emotive language, the use of superlatives, and how contrast is used to present a negative view of the governing party. High and average attaining students think critically and are able to use key terminology. They show an informed appreciation of how language is used to persuade. They are confident enough to form their own judgements and to argue constructively against the teacher, supporting their opinions well from the texts. Lower attaining students are less

able to use the correct terminology and are still uncertain about aspects of grammar. Year 13 A Level language students, preparing a case study analysing a training pack for teachers on theories of child language acquisition, show a high level of independence. They are able to apply previously acquired knowledge of types of text, tenor and tone to a previously unseen text with some skill.

263. Year 12 AS level English literature students demonstrate very good understanding and appreciation of John Donne's poetry. They are unwilling to make simplistic judgements and argue that Donne's poetry cannot be easily categorised, and that most poems contain a variety of poetic effects and emotions ("There is more than one John Donne"). The writing of high and average attaining students is fresh and shows a lively personal response. Students are willing to take and argue an unexpected viewpoint. Standards in Year 13 A Level English literature are more varied. High attaining students are able to present an appreciation of a previously unseen prose passage to the rest of the class analysing in some detail aspects of a writer's style and use of imagery. Average attaining students show a growing precision in their use of language over time. Lower attaining students are still finding it difficult to organise and express their thinking clearly and precisely, and some choice of language is colloquial ("The rhythm Coleridge uses is very upbeat"). They also find it more difficult to make objective judgements about a writer's purpose.

264. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers have high expectations, and relate the lesson to examination requirements, reinforcing the criteria for examination success. Students are encouraged to think independently. A range of strategies is employed to involve students in discussion. In one language lesson, the teacher questioned very skilfully and insistently until students had shown sufficient understanding of the linguistic features of two texts to write an independent comparison. In a literature lesson, students were invited to place selected poems of John Donne along a continuum between extremes of 'realistic, sincere, spontaneous' to 'contrived, insincere'. This resulted in genuine intellectual debate that advanced the learning of all students. Where teaching is less effective, teachers do not employ enough strategies to ensure that all students participate in discussion. Some students should also be encouraged to consider more thoughtfully a writer's intentions, rather than to make easy subjective judgements based on personal likes and dislikes.

265. Students receive very good support and guidance. Essays are very thoroughly and regularly marked and students are very appreciative of the individual help they receive. They all have a clear idea of how to improve. They also feel that they were given very clear guidance on the content of the courses they chose and all had opportunities for 'taster' lessons before they entered the sixth form. They feel that English helps them with their other subjects, particularly in the planning and drafting of essays, and also in reading for meaning and researching independently.

266. All English sixth form courses are very well managed and resourced. Students are encouraged to read widely from the school library and from books loaned to them by staff. They are also encouraged to research from the Internet. The teaching team is well qualified and has a range of expertise. There is good curriculum enrichment. Students have visited local theatres to see performances of set plays and have visited Haworth as background to Emily Bronte's "Wuthering Heights". Both language and literature students have attended lectures in Leeds presented by internationally renowned academics. Some students also attend out of hours creative writing workshops.

French

The quality of provision in French is **very good**.

Strengths:

- Very good teaching which facilitates successful learning.
- Strong support for students in the classroom and in additional examination preparation sessions.
- Good AS Level results in 2001, which reflect good teaching strategies and students' hard work.
- Good working relationships between teachers and students, which encourage independent learning.
- Strong focus on active learning which encourages the adventurous use of language.
- Effective, responsive management of the courses.

Areas for improvement:

- The number of students on AS and A Level courses.

267. French is the only language studied in the sixth form and students are currently preparing for AS Level and A Level examinations. Numbers of students on these courses are low. No students were entered for the A Level French examination in 2001. In AS Level for 2001, however, all students achieved grades A to C. These were well above national standards and demonstrated a considerable improvement from the 2000 A Level results, which were below the national average.

268. The quality of students' oral work is high. Students communicate confidently and clearly, using their knowledge and skills in an adventurous way to express their own opinions and ideas. Standards of pronunciation and fluency vary according to the attainment level of individual students, but are generally good. All students demonstrate a sound understanding of both listening and reading reference materials. Written work is of a good standard overall.

269. The teaching of French is very good overall, with a strong focus on active learning. Teachers have a good knowledge of the topics and use their fluent command of the language to maintain the target language throughout the lessons. Lessons are well structured and delivered at a good pace which promotes active learning. Teachers make effective use of a variety of activities and of authentic reading and listening materials which range from articles from national French newspapers and the Internet, on topics such as Europe, the Euro and pollution, to French songs and poems. Interactive learning strategies enable students to learn and retain new vocabulary and structures. In one Year 12 lesson, students revised new vocabulary on pollution by means of a game. In this one student described the meaning of a word or phrase in French, and the rest of the group had to guess the correct answer in French. Grammar points are successfully integrated into the study of topics and, in one fast-paced Year 13 lesson on the topic of Edith Piaf, students examined certain complex grammatical structures as part of their analysis of the songs.

270. Teachers have high expectations of students' commitment to work and of their ability to take on and succeed in challenging tasks. Working relationships between teachers and students and amongst students in the groups are very productive and encourage independent and effective learning. Students are enthusiastic, hardworking and very responsive in class. They take responsibility for their own learning, taking notes and undertaking individual research on topics outside the classroom.

271. Teachers know their students well and have clearly identified their specific strengths and weaknesses. Students receive strong individual help in class which is sensitive to specific needs in respect of skills, vocabulary, grammar structures and pronunciation. In addition teachers provide substantial help for students in the evening and at weekends, to help them prepare for public examinations. Homework is set frequently and, under the direction of their teachers, students make good use of ICT for research purposes. Both teachers and students provide information regarding useful Internet websites. Written work is marked in detail, based on AS Level and A2-level specifications and feedback is helpful in showing students how they can improve.

272. The French courses in the sixth form are well managed and teachers share a strong commitment to attaining high standards. The faculty has a clear educational direction, focussed directly on students' needs, and it provides good support for individual students both in class and outside. Students' progress is carefully monitored and teaching strategies are adapted to meet changing needs. Sixth form teachers use a variety of challenging and authentic materials, but there is too little sharing of resources. There is no language laboratory and no language assistant available in the school to support oral work. A native French speaker has just been appointed, however, to replace a teacher who is leaving and she will give some additional help to sixth-formers.

273. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory overall. Examination results have improved and standards of work are higher. Students are more proactive in their speaking of French and more fluent. The numbers of students on French courses in the sixth form have, however, remained low.