

INSPECTION REPORT

ST EDMUND'S CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Wolverhampton

LEA area: Wolverhampton

Unique reference number: 104400

Headteacher: Deirdre Finucane

Reporting inspector: Roy Hedge
2932

Dates of inspection: 5 - 9 November 2001

Inspection number: 212753

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	11 -19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Compton Park Compton Road West Wolverhampton West Midlands
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Donald S Courten
Date of previous inspection:	26 April 1999

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9424	Jim Cassidy	Lay inspector		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?
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11044	Jean Hedge	Team inspector	English Equal opportunities	Sixth form co-ordination
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31963	Malcolm Padmore	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT) Design and technology	
29972	John Webster	Team inspector	Geography	
1523	Trevor James	Team inspector	History	How good are curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
31129	Jeffrey Pickering	Team inspector	Art and design	

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
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1210	William Walton	Team inspector	Physical education Special educational needs	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St. Edmund's is a smaller than average Catholic comprehensive school of 769 boys and girls with a sixth form of 123 students. The standards reached by pupils at the time they enter the school in Year 7 are above average, as are standards of literacy and numeracy. An average number of pupils are eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs is broadly average and the proportion for whom statements of special needs are maintained is well below average. The proportion of pupils speaking English as an additional language is higher than in most schools, though there were no pupils at an early stage of English acquisition at the time of the inspection.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

At the time of the last inspection, the school was judged to have serious weaknesses, largely in management. This is no longer the case. Very good progress has been made towards rectifying the weaknesses that were identified. This is now a good school that is still improving. The quality of management is now very good. Standards are well above average, largely as a result of very good teaching. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Teaching is very good.
- Overall standards are well above average and pupils' achievements are good.
- Management is very good and much improved since the last inspection.
- Test and examination results are analysed very skilfully and used effectively to set targets for pupils and departments.
- Procedures for monitoring and promoting pupils' personal development are very good: as a result behaviour and pupils' attitudes are also very good.

What could be improved

- Standards, the quality of teaching and management in art and design.
- Planned opportunities for pupils to develop information and communication technology (ICT) skills in all subjects.
- Level of resourcing for the library and access to computers.
- The poor state of areas of the building.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has improved very well since the last inspection in April 1999, when it had serious weaknesses. The quality of management, which was the main issue in the past, has improved enormously. Governors and senior managers have a clear vision for the school's development, plan effectively and set appropriate priorities. Financial planning is much improved. Standards have risen and the quality of teaching is better. Most of the issues raised in the previous report have been successfully addressed though standards in ICT and art and design are still not good enough and some resourcing issues remain.

STANDARDS

The table 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	A	A	A	A
A-levels/AS-levels	E	D	C	

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

In the National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 9 in 2001 overall standards were well above average. English, mathematics and science results were well above average. Results are improving, though more slowly than is the case nationally. Standards overall were well above the average of other schools with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. Standards are above average in French, music and physical education, well above average in history and average in design and technology and geography. Standards are below average in German, not because of poor teaching, but because too little time is allocated to the subject. Standards are below average in ICT and well below average in art and design. Pupils make good progress from Year 7, though their standards are above average when they enter the school. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well. Girls do better than boys overall, though the gap is less than is the case nationally.

These standards are maintained through to Year 11. Pupils' average points score in the 2001 GCSE examinations was well above average and well above the average of similar schools. In 2000 pupils did better at GCSE than those from other schools at a similar standard in Year 9 two years earlier. The school exceeded its 2000 GCSE target and almost met its challenging 2001 target. In 2001, the proportion of pupils gaining at least one GCSE pass at grades A* to G was well above average and well above the average of similar schools. Results are improving faster than they are nationally. In the years since 1998 girls have done better than boys, but by a smaller margin than is the case nationally. Standards by the end of Year 11 are generally less impressive in other subjects than they are in the core areas of English, mathematics and science. Standards are above average in French, though below average in German. Standards in music are also above average. In physical education, design and technology, geography and history standards are broadly average. Standards in ICT are well below average; pupils' exposure to challenging work in ICT is inadequate and they do not make enough progress. In art and design, unsatisfactory teaching and planning continue to depress standards and they are well below average. Standards of literacy and numeracy are above average throughout the school. Pupils of minority ethnic heritage make as good progress as other pupils.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils like school and work hard. They are generally courteous, pay attention, work hard and concentrate. They ask and answer questions readily and are able to work collaboratively or individually as required.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. On the whole, except where teaching is unsatisfactory, standards of behaviour support learning. Last year there were no permanent exclusions.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils relate very well to one another. There is occasional bullying but teachers move swiftly to deal with it. Inspectors saw no instances of racist or sexist behaviour.
Attendance	Above average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching is very good and is the main reason why pupils do well. Of the lessons seen by inspectors in Years 7 to 11, over three-quarters were at least good and almost four out of ten were very good or excellent. Only about one lesson in 15 was unsatisfactory. With Year 10 and 11 pupils more than eight lessons out of ten were good. The quality of teaching in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science is a particular strength. There is challenging and exciting teaching in English which promotes concentration, imagination and a sense of purpose. Science teaching is similarly impressive, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Questions are used very effectively to check that pupils have understood instructions and scientific ideas. Mathematics teaching is good, and much is very good. In the best lessons teachers plan well, have clear aims and involve all pupils with effective question and answer sessions. They challenge pupils with the work and they make good use of time. In some mathematics lessons, however, especially in Year 11, less effective use of question and answer sessions leads to pupils having too little to do. Teachers across the curriculum seek to ensure that lessons meet the needs of all pupils. Those of minority ethnic heritage and the small number of pupils for whom English is an additional language learn effectively. Specialist teaching for pupils with special needs is in limited supply but is of high quality. This generally good or very good teaching leads to effective learning and good achievement by pupils. There is very good teaching in music and physical education and good teaching in geography, history, French. Teaching in specialist ICT and design and technology is satisfactory, although pupils' attention is allowed to wander in some food technology lessons. Teaching in art and design is unsatisfactory because lesson planning lacks sufficient focus on the systematic teaching of basic skills, lesson objectives are unclear and pupils lose sight of what they should be doing. The work is not sufficiently demanding. As a result learning suffers and standards are unsatisfactory.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. National requirements are met except for ICT, where subject teaching does not present pupils with adequate opportunities to improve their skills and knowledge. The sixth form timetable is too congested and students have too little time for independent learning.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Specialist teaching focuses successfully on literacy and numeracy and in other lessons teachers successfully target work at pupils' individual needs.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory. There are no pupils at an early stage of language acquisition. Other pupils learn effectively in lessons which meet their needs well.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Provision for pupils' spiritual and cultural development is good. That for social and moral development is very good. The school has a considerable commitment to pupils' personal development that is evident in lessons and relationships generally.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. Personal and academic progress is monitored well. There are high standards of care for pupils. The school has good relationships with parents.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good – and enormously improved from the last inspection. Leadership and direction by senior staff is very good. Financial planning has improved. Most departmental management is good, except in art. There is a clear commitment to driving up standards and improving the quality of provision.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors have responded very effectively to the serious weaknesses in management outlined in the last report. The governing body and the senior management team have been restructured to great effect. Governors know the school well and play their full part in setting future strategy.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. Data about pupils' achievements is used very well to set targets and support monitoring of departments. Teaching is now being systematically monitored.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. Some resources for supporting special educational needs are not appropriately used, but overall financial planning and the setting of appropriate educational priorities are good. The school takes care to ensure best value in its expenditure. Value for money is good.

There are sufficient teachers who are appropriately qualified and experienced to deliver the subjects of the curriculum and this has a positive impact on standards. There is too little technician support for science and design and technology. Some aspects of accommodation are unsatisfactory. Areas of the school are shabby and some floor coverings are hazardous. Art and textiles rooms are unsatisfactory. There are some serious resourcing issues. Sixth form students feel obliged to buy many of their course books. The library has an insufficient stock of modern, useful books. Sharing of textbooks is commonplace in history and modern foreign languages and in Year 10 in mathematics. There are no computers used in the teaching of modern foreign languages and no language software on the school network. The music department has recently acquired a computer but this is not enough to enable good computer access for music composition. Many departments find access to modern computers difficult and this is part of the problem of inadequate ICT provision.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils make good progress. • Teachers have high expectations and teaching is good. • Behaviour is good. • Management is good. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is too little information about pupils' progress. • The school does not work closely enough with parents. • There is too little homework.

Inspectors agree with parents' positive comments. Many parents would like to see more reports about the progress of their children. The school issues a full and an interim report each year and holds parents' evenings, which represents satisfactory provision. Homework is generally appropriate and purposeful. Some pupils do not always note their homework in their planners.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

At the time of the inspection the school had 123 students in the sixth form. Teaching is organised in collaboration with two other local schools and local education authority central provision. In the main, teaching is shared with a neighbouring school on the same site. These arrangements enable the school to provide a broad range of academic and vocational subjects. The number of students entering the sixth form has remained fairly constant in recent years, although a significant proportion of high attaining students choose to go to other schools in the area. As a result, the overall attainment of students entering the sixth form is below average at the beginning of their sixth form courses. Small numbers of students from other schools join the school each year. There are a few students of ethnic minority heritage in the sixth form. The background of sixth form students is similar to that of the rest of the school.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form is cost effective and as a result of the consortium arrangements provides a broad range of courses. Most students learn effectively and achieve results that represent satisfactory achievement given their attainment on entry to the sixth form. Teaching in the sixth form is very good in health and social care and music, good in physical education, mathematics, geography and English literature and satisfactory in biology, history and French. Students have a very congested timetable, particularly in Year 12 and so are unable to spend much time on extra-curricular activities, independent research, or activities in the community. Monitoring of students' academic progress is very good but there is little regular time available for tutors to offer wider support to students. The quality of and access to careers information and guidance is unsatisfactory. Leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory.

Strengths

- Teaching is good.
- Liaison with the other schools in the consortium is good.
- A broad range of subjects is offered as a result of consortium arrangements.
- The monitoring and support of students' academic progress is good.

What could be improved

- The monitoring of teaching and learning across the consortium.
- Time in the curriculum for students' personal development and participation in community work, independent study, research and other activities.
- Provision of resources for study such as essential course books, computers in some subject areas and for students' independent use, and the number of appropriate books in the library.
- Care and guidance of students.

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Satisfactory. Teaching and learning are good. Standards are broadly average. Students' achievements are satisfactory.
Biology	Satisfactory. Teaching is satisfactory but variable. There is some good teaching. Attainment is improving and is now average. High-attaining students do well. Achievement is satisfactory given students' prior attainment.
Physical Education	Good. Teaching is good and some is very good. Students' achievements are satisfactory. Standards are average. Examination results are improving.
Health and Social Care	Good. Standards are above average. Teaching is very good. Students achieve well given their prior attainment at GCSE.
Music	Very good. Teaching and learning are very good. Independent learning is encouraged. Very small numbers take music. Examination results fluctuate. Standards in the present Year 12 are above average. The achievement of students taking AS level in 2001 was satisfactory.
Geography	Satisfactory. Standards fluctuate but overall they are below average. In 2001 all A level candidates passed. Teaching is good. The achievement of students currently in the sixth form is satisfactory.
History	Satisfactory. The quality of teaching is variable. Standards in the sixth form are average. Standards are higher in European history than in English history. All students achieved a pass at A level in 2001. Results were well above average. Achievement is good given students' attainment on entry to the sixth form.
English Literature	Good. Overall teaching and learning are good. Some teaching is excellent. Students achieve well given their prior attainment. Standards are below average.
French	Satisfactory. Standards in Year 12 are above average. In Year 13, where there have been some staffing problems, standards are below average but students are beginning to achieve their potential. Teaching is satisfactory. Examination results are improving. Students learn well.

Work was sampled in other subjects including physics, chemistry, theatre studies, English language and literature, German and an AVCE course in science. Overall achievement is satisfactory. Teaching is good in chemistry, physics, English language and literature and satisfactory in theatre studies and German. Standards are improving in chemistry and in physics. Students did well at AS level in English Language and Literature and in German at A level. Standards in theatre studies are below average.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Information about courses in the sixth form is good. Students are helped to settle well into the sixth form but do not feel well prepared for sixth form study. Most students feel teachers are accessible to give advice but there is too little time with tutors to establish good relationships or to seek advice and provision in this respect is unsatisfactory. Students are concerned about the quality of and access to careers advice. Monitoring and support of students' academic progress is very good.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Overall leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory. There is a good relationship with partners in the consortium although arrangements for monitoring teaching in biology and history do not currently work well. Day-to-day management of the sixth form is satisfactory.

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"> Teaching is good and students are given good advice. Teachers are accessible and will help readily. Information about subjects and courses in the sixth form is clear, accurate and helpful. They were helped to settle quickly into the sixth form. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students feel the workload in Year 12 is too great. They have too little free time. They do not enjoy key skills lessons. The burden of having to buy essential text books. The quality of and access to good careers advice. Opportunities and time to take on more adult responsibilities.

Students are generally positive about the sixth form. They are very loyal to and supportive of the school. They speak well of the teaching they receive and their relationship with teachers. Inspectors agree with the views expressed by students. The effect of the very full timetable in Year 12 (and to a lesser extent in Year 13) is to deny students time to pursue valuable educational opportunities such as independent study, personal development and community-based activities.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Results of national tests taken in Year 6 indicate that pupils join the school in Year 7 at an overall standard that is above average. They make good progress in their first three years in the school. In national tests taken at the end of Year 9, standards in English and science over the three years from 1998 to 2000 were above average. In mathematics they were well above average. In 2001 English, mathematics and science results were well above average. Standards are well above the average of other schools with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. The school does not monitor the relative achievements of pupils of different ethnic heritage but observations made during the inspection indicated no significant differences. Girls do better than boys overall, though by a smaller margin than is the case nationally. In mathematics and science, however, boys do better than girls. Results are still improving, though at a slower rate than is the case nationally.
2. Observations made during the inspection indicate that standards at present in Year 9 are well above average in English, mathematics and science. These impressive standards in the core subjects come about as a result of strong teaching and good management. Standards by the end of Year 9 are also well above average in history. Standards are above average in French, music and physical education. Pupils reach average standards in design and technology and geography. Standards are below average in German, not because of poor teaching, but because too little time is allocated to the subject.
3. Standards are below average in ICT. Pupils have too little opportunity to use and develop ICT skills as part of their work in subjects across the curriculum so make slow progress. Standards in art and design are well below average by the end of Year 9. Shortcomings in teaching and in the quality of curriculum and lesson planning prevent appropriate progress being made, especially in important skills.
4. These standards are maintained through to Year 11. Pupils' average points score in the 2001 GCSE examinations was well above average and well above the average of similar schools. In 2000 pupils did better at GCSE than those from other schools at a similar standard in Year 9 two years earlier. The school exceeded its targets in 2000 and nearly met its 2001 target. In 2001, the proportion of pupils gaining at least one GCSE pass at grades A* to G was well above average and well above the average of similar schools. Results are improving faster than they are nationally. In the years since 1998 girls have done better than boys, but by a smaller margin than is the case nationally.
5. Observations made during the inspection indicate that standards in English at present in Year 11 are above average. Standards of literacy are good. Higher-attaining pupils read fluently and are thoughtful and articulate. They give astute answers to questions, which indicates that they think clearly about their work. Low-attainers have made good progress in the quality of their writing though they still have some difficulty with technical aspects of their writing. Standards of numeracy are also well above average and pupils achieve very well in mathematics, though the very highest attainers do not do well enough at GCSE mathematics and there are too few A* and A grades. Standards in science are well above average. Many lower-attaining pupils reach an understanding of chemical reactions that is close to the national average.

Investigative and practical skills are very good.

6. Standards by the end of Year 11 are generally less impressive in other subjects than they are in the core areas of English, mathematics and science. Standards are above average in French, though below average in German, again because of a shortage of time in Years 7 to 9. Standards in music are also above average. In physical education, design and technology, geography and history standards are broadly average.
7. Standards in ICT are well below average because planning to ensure that pupils continue to systematically develop ICT skills through their work across the curriculum are not sufficiently developed. As a result, their exposure to challenging work in ICT is inadequate and they do not make enough progress. In art and design, unsatisfactory teaching and planning continue to depress standards and they are well below average.
8. The achievements of pupils with special educational needs are impressive. In the last two years, with one exception in mathematics, all Year 11 pupils on the special educational needs register were successful in GCSE in English, English literature, mathematics and double science. Much of this success may be attributed to the very strong foundation of achievement in literacy and numeracy. In the last few years, about 75 out of 100 pupils who entered the school with a reading age two years below their chronological age are now able to follow a full curriculum without special support.

Sixth form

9. A significant number of higher-attaining students leave the school at the end of Year 11. Standards of entry to the sixth form are below average. Over recent years students' achievements have been satisfactory, although GCE A level results have been below average for those students entered for at least two subjects. In 2001 though, the results of those students entered for at least two A level subjects were average. Boys did less well than girls. In 2001, although results improved over previous years, they fell short of the ambitious targets the school set itself. A satisfactory number of students went on to further study in higher education.
10. Observations made during the inspection indicate average standards across most courses. Standards in health and social care are above average. In English literature and geography standards are below average, but represent a sound achievement by students whose average GCSE results were lower than is expected on A level courses.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

11. Pupils enjoy school. They are generally courteous with their teachers and visitors to the school. In lessons they pay attention, work hard and concentrate. They ask and answer questions readily and are able to work collaboratively or individually as required. In a physical education lesson, for example, Year 8 boys were able to take responsibility for organising their small group soccer game to concentrate on specific skills, with minimum supervision. In science lessons pupils are industrious and co-operative both with each other and with their teachers, take pride in their written work and carry out practical work carefully and safely. Pupils are interested, involved, and keen to participate in English lessons. These positive attitudes, often fostered by good teaching, help pupils to make good progress and promote learning.

12. Behaviour in and around the school is good as it was at the time of the last inspection. In most lessons, pupils are generally well behaved although some instances of minor distracting behaviour were noted during the inspection. In mathematics lessons, for example, pupils' attitudes were not always productive where teachers were not firm. Occasionally there is some pushing on staircases and corridors. On the whole though, except where teaching is unsatisfactory, standards of behaviour support learning and contribute to the civilised ethos which characterises the school. In the last full year there were no permanent exclusions. Pupils say that there is occasional bullying but that teachers move swiftly to deal with it. Inspectors saw no instances of racist or sexist behaviour.
13. Pupils relate very well to each other and to their teachers. They are friendly and polite. They respect the feelings and values of others. In history lessons these mature attitudes were evident in the very sensitive responses observed during the study of potentially controversial and emotive issues such as women's rights and the impact of the Nazis on the Jewish community in Europe.
14. Attitudes of pupils with special educational needs reflect the attitudes of the school towards them. They are respected and valued members of the school community and are fully included in all aspects of its life. Consequently pupils are confident, highly motivated and enthusiastic to do well. Their ability to remain on task in the one-hour lessons is very good.
15. Attendance is good, though the rate of unauthorised absence is slightly above average. On a typical day 92 per cent of pupils are in school. They are punctual in arriving at school and at lessons.

Sixth form

16. Students are generally positive about the sixth form. They enjoy and are interested in their work and make a good effort in class. They persevere even when they encounter difficulties. Students are quiet, sometimes reticent but they listen carefully, work hard and co-operate well with each other and with the teacher. This was particularly evident in a number of subjects including biology, mathematics and English literature. Students are very motivated in music. Attitudes to learning are complemented by mature and responsible behaviour. Students are polite, respectful, and loyal to the school. They are willing to speak about themselves and the school. Students have several areas of concern. In particular they are concerned about the very crowded timetable that leaves little time for independent study and other activities, the expense incurred through the purchase of essential texts and the quality of and access to careers advice.
17. Students' relationships with staff and with each other are generally purposeful. They recognise the importance of working in an environment where they are known as individuals. They value these relationships which contribute to learning, personal development and the trust teachers place in them although significant numbers feel they are not treated as responsible young adults. They value the new relationships established as a result of the consortium. Students socialise together and support each other well in a friendly and constructive way. Students of minority ethnic heritage are well integrated and say they have never encountered any racism. Students respond well to the greater freedom of the sixth form but feel strongly that time constrains them from participating fully in opportunities to develop their personal and learning skills. Most students feel that teachers are accessible if they have

difficulties with their work.

18. A number of students serve the school and the community through the sixth form council. Some students act as mentors for younger pupils and support pupils with reading difficulties in Year 7. Students take part in an annual and very popular joint musical production with the neighbouring school. They initiate and develop fundraising events to raise money for a number of charities and organise Christmas celebrations for the elderly.
19. Attendance is good.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

20. Overall, the quality of pupils' learning is very good and pupils achieve well. They acquire skills, knowledge and understanding of their subject work as a result of the quality of teaching they receive. Most lessons are intellectually challenging and interesting. Lessons have pace and pupils become involved in the material and respond well. They are interested and concentrate hard. Learning of this intensity was seen in many lessons from subjects across the curriculum. In small group work in music lessons, for example, there is very effective learning arising from challenging and involving teaching. Enquiry-based teaching methods and a rich and challenging history curriculum for pupils from Years 7 to 9 promote interest and concentration.
21. This effective learning arises principally from the quality of teaching. Overall, teaching is very good. Of the lessons seen by inspectors in Years 7 to 11, over three-quarters were at least good and almost four out of ten were very good or excellent. Only about one lesson in 15 was unsatisfactory. With Year 10 and 11 pupils more than eight lessons out of ten were good. The quality of teaching in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science is a particular strength. The teaching of English and science are very good and there is much very good teaching in mathematics.
22. There is challenging and exciting teaching in English which promotes concentration, imagination and a sense of purpose. Resources used in lessons are frequently creative and presented so that pupils can see clearly what is required of them. In Year 11, for example the teacher used a grid that enabled pupils to structure their ideas about a character in *Of Mice and Men*. Then pupils read a letter from the author in which he describes his view of the character so that they were given further insights. In Year 8 the teacher used the board to record pupils' ideas in a brainstorming session and gave help with planning and organising ideas before they began their own writing. Teaching of this quality ensures good learning.
23. Science teaching is similarly impressive, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Questions are used very effectively to check that pupils have understood instructions and scientific ideas. Excellent relationships between pupils and staff foster pupils' self esteem and mutual respect creates situations in which pupils feel secure and can learn effectively. In many lessons expectations of pupils' behaviour and effort are high and the pupils are expected to listen and carry out instructions very carefully. These features of strong teaching allied with very careful explanations, as in a lesson about acidity and alkalinity, ensure that pupils learn successfully and that they do so safely when doing potentially hazardous practical work.
24. Mathematics teaching is good, and much is very good. In the best lessons teachers plan well, have clear aims and involve all pupils with effective question and answer sessions. They challenge pupils with the work and they make good use of time. In

some lessons, however, especially in Year 11, less effective use of question and answer sessions leads to pupils being insufficiently engaged.

25. Throughout the curriculum teachers plan their lessons carefully. They give considerable thought to ensuring that the work they devise is appropriate for pupils at different levels of attainment in their classes. Pupils are managed effectively in lessons and there is rarely any poor behaviour. In physical education, for example, relationships in class and class management are excellent. Very positive relationships between teacher and pupils led to a very productive lesson for Year 11 boys developing their soccer skills. Teachers set appropriate homework, which helps pupils develop a degree of independence in their learning. In English, for example, teachers set purposeful tasks that consolidate learning. Marking is thorough and teachers generally know clearly how well pupils are doing. There is very good assessment and monitoring of pupils' progress in science. Assessment data are used to determine the allocation of pupils to teaching groups and to set and monitor targets. Homework is particularly marked well in mathematics, which supports pupils' further progress. ICT skills, though, are not properly assessed, so planning for pupils' further work and development in ICT is inadequate.
26. Teaching of design and technology though satisfactory overall has some weaknesses. Relationships are generally good and this helps to motivate pupils to learn. Good teaching features a range of ways of encouraging and engaging pupils' interest. Where in a small number of lessons in food technology teaching is unsatisfactory, it is so because teaching fails to command pupils' attention. Pupils become confused or careless about what they have to do and they make unsatisfactory progress. Work remains unfinished in books and practical activities in lessons do little to extend pupils' knowledge of understanding of materials and processes.
27. Teaching in art and design is unsatisfactory. Lesson planning lacks sufficient focus on the systematic teaching of basic skills. Lesson objectives are unclear and pupils lose sight of what they should be doing. The work is not sufficiently well designed to challenge those who have special educational needs or those who are gifted and talented who also make unsatisfactory progress. Classwork and homework are often based on undemanding techniques such as tracing images or collecting pictures from magazines or the Internet and lack any creative or intellectual challenge. As a result learning suffers and standards are unsatisfactory.
28. Teachers across the curriculum seek to ensure that lessons meet the needs of all pupils. Those of minority ethnic heritage and the small number of pupils for whom English is an additional language learn effectively. Specialist teaching of pupils with special needs is in limited supply but is of high quality. It is concentrated on the teaching of numeracy and literacy and is very effective in raising levels of attainment. The pupils concerned are very well known and teaching programmes fully meet their individual needs. Classroom activities are varied to maintain interest and lessons proceed at a demanding pace. Pupils are constantly challenged to produce their best work and are fully involved in their lessons through questions and discussion. Learning support assistants give effective support in class. They know their pupils and are able to ensure that they keep up with the work. There is a need, however, for additional support, preferably teaching support, in some subjects, for example English and science to enable pupils to achieve optimum progress. Higher-attaining pupils are generally served well and set work which challenges and extends them, although this is not always the case in English, geography and mathematics.

29. Subject teachers adopt a wide range of teaching approaches to ensure that pupils with special needs are fully involved and able to follow their courses. Texts are modified to meet the needs of pupils in history and geography. Marking is of a high standard and pupils receive much individual support in science. The setting arrangements in mathematics are effective and teachers in music give helpful support in class. Good learning takes place in a supportive environment. Pupils work hard and productivity is high. They are pleased to talk about the progress they have made and have a good knowledge of their own learning.

Sixth form

30. The quality of sixth form teaching is good, though there are fewer very good and excellent lessons than in the main school. Of the lessons seen by inspectors, more than seven lessons out of ten were good and only one was unsatisfactory. Music teaching, though, is very good. Students respect the very good knowledge that the teachers have in their subject and as a result of this and of good independent and well-planned study they develop a good understanding of the subject, building effectively on previous knowledge.
31. Teaching of the health and social care course is also very good. The level and detail of planning is very thorough and subject knowledge is good. Each lesson begins with a clear statement of objectives, ends with a review of what has been achieved and points the way to the next lesson. Students know clearly what is expected of them. The physical education AS course is taught well. Planning and organisation of teaching are very good, as is the teaching of practical aspects of the course, though there are too few opportunities for independent learning.
32. Teaching is also good in English, mathematics and geography and satisfactory in history, French and biology. The teaching of English history lacks adequate subject knowledge and in some biology lessons instructions are inadequate and students cannot follow them, progress is not regularly checked and some students learn very little. Key skills lessons are not planned well. Overall, though, sixth form teaching is good, pupils learn at a good pace and, as a consequence, their achievements over time are satisfactory.

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

33. There has been a significant improvement in curriculum management and provision since the last inspection.
34. The curriculum management arrangements mean that the deputy head responsible for teaching and learning now has operational responsibility for the curriculum, so that management decisions are now being taken on clearly established criteria which place balance, statutory requirements and pupil entitlement at the centre of the decision-making process.
35. There is now a broad curriculum for Years 7 to 9 that complies with statutory requirements in all respects except in the provision of ICT, where inadequate time is allocated to specific ICT lessons. Other subjects provide too few opportunities for the development of pupils' ICT skills. Curriculum planning to ensure that pupils use ICT in their work is inadequate and access to computers is often difficult.
36. For Years 7 to 9 there is now a common curriculum based on equality of provision and access. Changes to the balance of teaching time since the last inspection have meant that previous criticism that inadequate allocations were impinging on standards and progress have largely been removed, except in ICT. Programmes of study are being provided which are now sufficient to enable pupils to develop adequate levels of knowledge and understanding in most subjects. However, there is concern that the modern language strategy of teaching French and German to all pupils in Years 7 to 9 in an overall time allocation of three hours is affecting standards. The balance of two hours for French and one hour for German means that higher-attaining pupils reach the transfer to Year 10 relatively under-prepared for the GCSE German course. As a result, few pupils opt for German and the GCSE results for German fall significantly short of what is achieved in French.
37. In Years 10 and 11 pupils have a common core of GCSE courses, religious education, physical education, and personal, social and health education. They then select from options which include GNVQ courses at intermediate level in health and social care, leisure and tourism, ICT in Year 10 and business alongside a range of GCSE options. However, ICT provision for all pupils is still inadequate. There are no specific lessons and there are too few opportunities in the broader curriculum for pupils to advance their skills. Pupils' progress in ICT is not assessed and monitored.
38. Although there have been no whole-school approaches to literacy as yet, some subject areas provide good opportunities for pupils to develop basic skills. In science, for instance pupils produced fluent, accurate and logically sequenced accounts of an investigation. There is a very good focus on basic literacy skills in Year 7 English lessons. Opportunities for pupils in all years to develop speaking and listening skills are very good in English and in modern foreign languages, where pupils are trained to listen carefully for key words and gist and to speak in complete sentences. The humanities faculty has a very detailed policy with regard to basic skills and in geography there is much good practice. Pupils are given key words and writing frames to support their work and creative writing is encouraged through the use of project work and carefully structured exercises. A very strong emphasis is placed on the use of appropriate vocabulary in history. Pupils are strongly encouraged to write using high quality, continuous prose. Good use is made of the Internet, both at home and in school for research and pupils in Years 10 and 11 plan and evaluate their work in design and technology. In mathematics and art, however, there is very little use of

key words.

39. The teaching of numeracy overall is satisfactory. Within the mathematics department it is good, but numeracy also features strongly in other departments. In geography there is much good practice. Pupils collect data, construct various appropriate graphs and set and test hypotheses. In science, numeracy also plays a strong part and it is a good feature of the department. Here, GCSE pupils can tabulate data and construct graphs to represent it, they can measure angles accurately and they can calculate velocities accurately.
40. Pupils with special needs are fully integrated in the curriculum. There is very little disapplication from the National Curriculum. The withdrawal arrangements are flexible so that the workload does not fall heavily on any individual subject. Withdrawal concentrates on literacy and learning skills and is very effective in achieving its objective to return pupils to full-time involvement in the mainstream curriculum.
41. A substantial programme of extra-curricular activities also extends curricular opportunities. These include drama, choir and orchestra, including an annual public performance, choir and orchestra tour, individual instrumental musical tuition, a wide range of sporting opportunities and team competitions, spiritually-reflective weeks away, fieldwork in geography, science, art and business, annual exchanges to France and Germany, work experience for Year 11 and various charitable and fund-raising activities for Catholic and other causes.
42. The intention of the curriculum planning is that it should promote equality of access and inclusion, and so disapplication from the National Curriculum only occurs in a very limited range of instances and is avoided where possible. The recent installation of a lift has enabled a wheelchair-using pupil to gain a wider access to a fuller range of the curriculum. A limited number of Year 10 and Year 11 pupils are disappplied from the National Curriculum requirement for design and technology each year to enable them to study a second modern language or music.
43. There is very good provision for pupils' personal development. A programme of personal, social and health education is planned effectively by heads of year and includes effective elements of drugs and sex education. The religious education curriculum also makes a good contribution to personal development in a Catholic context. Much of the personal and social education programme is devoted to a well-planned series of careers education modules. Inspectors were able to observe examples of the personal and social education programme being taught well by form tutors in all year groups. Whole school and supplementary year group assemblies make a further contribution to personal development. These have a spiritual dimension. During the inspection, the whole school assembly was an Act of Remembrance with opportunities for reflection. Its ideas were taken forward by a Year 10 assembly, whilst a Year 7 assembly on bullying introduced the "do unto others" theme to build on the current focus of pupils' work in personal and social education. On other days, registration includes prayers and, for many tutor groups, this is a deeply thoughtful activity which starts the day well.

44. Pupils' spiritual development is good. The religious education department makes a significant contribution, recognising that not all pupils come from a Catholic background. A Year 8 lesson treated the story of the burning bush as a scriptural allegory and pupils were encouraged to reflect on and to empathise with world leaders as they faced their responsibilities. There are retreats that present further opportunities for spiritual reflection and other opportunities for promoting spiritual awareness in the wider curriculum. A Year 7 English class, for example, used close reading strategies to develop an understanding of and close empathy with spiritual issues raised in the novel *Skellig*. Worship, supported by the school chaplain, is central to the spiritual development of pupils and students. The candlelit Christmas Carol Service to which the school's musicians add a spiritual context is an example and, as a celebration shared with feeder primaries, it emphasises the importance of the wider community in which the school participates.
45. Provision for pupils' moral and social development is very good. The school is orderly and pupil teacher relationships are positive. Pupils know right from wrong and generally accept the published code of conduct, acknowledging the example set by staff and respecting a school environment where neither litter, except perhaps in the dining area, or graffiti pose a problem. Many curricular areas contribute to moral development: sportsmanship on the games field, the choice of literature in English, the moral dilemmas discussed in religious education, personal and social education and in the humanities, being typical examples.
46. Interesting and attractive display around the school testifies to the breadth of opportunity for pupils' social development. Pupils relate well to each other and there is much purposeful interaction through group work in lessons and in extra-curricular activities. A wide range of fieldwork and visits includes European links and all pupils are involved in the school's charitable work. Fund raising is related to the church calendar, acknowledging that pupils respond to ritual but it is the nature of the giving: the collection of food by sixth formers for distribution to local needy families, the support for The Good Shepherd Trust and its work with Wolverhampton's homeless population, the preparations for the Christmas Party for senior citizens, which add meaning and value to Christmas and to Lent. Many pupils were involved in *Quadrangle*, this year's major music and dance production. Sixth formers were instrumental in much of the choreography and coaching of the dancers. All pupils have some responsibility for planning Masses.
47. The Catholic culture is deeply embedded in the life of the school and, through English and music in particular, pupils learn to appreciate their own culture and are exposed to it through a range of educational visits and tours. An awareness of other cultural traditions, especially from Europe, comes through geography, religious education and modern foreign languages and through the school's links with other countries, its exchanges and its choir and orchestra tours. Religious education and personal and social education foster awareness of the ethnic and cultural diversity of contemporary British society. Provision for cultural development is good.

Sixth form

48. The breadth of opportunity in academic and vocational courses available to sixth form students arises from the school's consortium arrangements. There are good opportunities for students of differing needs. In addition to shared teaching of some subjects at A level, there is access to technology, electronics, ICT, textiles, business and food technology courses at a neighbouring school on the same site and classical civilisations, home economics and government and politics courses at another local

school. In addition the school uses central city provision for law, psychology and sociology. These partnerships greatly widen the curricular opportunities available. In the wider community there is some liaison with Wolverhampton University, Wolverhampton College of Further Education and the Midlands Leadership Centre, which assist in the development of the understanding and use of broadband communications technology. The school's timetable corresponds directly to those of the other schools in the consortium so as to enable students to pursue courses at all three sites. Overall, the quality of the school's links with other educational providers and with the wider community is effective.

49. The sixth form curriculum is very congested, especially in Year 12. In addition to examination courses, all students in Year 12 take religious education, personal and social education and physical education. There are key skills lessons but the curriculum is poorly planned and they are of limited value. In Year 13 general studies takes the place of key skills. The new arrangements for AS level mean that students taking a combination of four AS levels have a full timetable and no time is available for private study. Students find this workload excessive. In many subject areas, for example the sciences and physical education, the time given to the subject is fully used by direct teaching so that opportunities for personal research work and the development of other learning skills which can be pursued in private study time, are now at risk. There is too little teaching time for students re-taking GCSE mathematics. Extra-curricular opportunities are valued by students but pressure on time results in a limited range of activities. There is little opportunity to develop responsible and adult attitudes through, for example, involvement in the community or for students to fully pursue careers advice. Opportunities for students to meet with and establish good relationships with their tutor are also severely constrained by shortage of time. The daily meeting is very brief and serves only for registration. Tutors see their students again for personal and social education. Although this time was used effectively during the inspection to introduce Year 12 students to the academic review process and in Year 13 to discuss individual targets, overall there is too little time available for tutors to provide good support and guidance.
50. Some opportunities arise in the curriculum for students to participate in a range of additional activities such as field trips, theatre trips, and foreign exchanges. There is an annual production in conjunction with the neighbouring school and students work to raise funds for charity.
51. The school's Catholic heritage, which underpins much of the very good provision made for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development extends to its sixth form students. Religious education is compulsory for all sixth form students. The general studies programme continues the role of personal and social education and the sixth form consortium arrangements enhance opportunities for social development. The multi-faith module delivered to all students as part of the religious education course strengthens the provision for cultural development.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

52. There are good procedures to ensure pupils' welfare. The monitoring of their academic development is good. Careful analysis of assessment data from tests and examinations enables teachers to organise suitable teaching groups based on attainment and to set practical targets for pupils to aim for in all subjects. These targets are regularly reviewed and used in the support of pupils in class. In mathematics, for example schemes of assessment, the monitoring of pupil progress and the setting of targets are very good. Very good use is made in mathematics of data that inform teachers, pupils and parents of progress, attainment and potential through target setting. Pupils are made aware of the targets set and teachers regularly compare the quality of their work with those target grades. Even in mathematics though, the analysis of assessment data does not always lead to the setting of sufficiently challenging work for gifted and talented pupils and the use of targets is not yet completely embedded in the school's routines. The systematic assessment of pupils' skills and knowledge of ICT is poorly developed. ICT work in lessons generally across the curriculum is not carefully tracked so pupils' progress is not checked.
53. Pastoral care is good and there are high levels of care for individuals. Teachers know their pupils. Form tutors are effective and managed well by senior staff. A senior member of staff is designated head of student development and chairs a pastoral care board that meets regularly to consider issues of behaviour or pupils experiencing difficulties. The needs of pupils are addressed with skill, knowledge and consideration and often involve considerable individual work with pupils experiencing difficulties. The school keeps good records of pupils' personal development and monitors individual pupils well.
54. The school takes a very strong stance against bullying which is effectively applied in the few instances that occur and involves parents, pupils and staff working together to resolve problems. Governors are appropriately involved with disciplinary processes, are supportive of the approach to discipline and receive full details in a regular confidential report.
55. Standards of behaviour are monitored and managed well. The school has an appropriate range of sanctions. Permanent exclusion is rarely used as the school tries hard to respond to the needs of pupils and keep them in education. The school funds several college places for pupils who might otherwise have dropped out of mainstream education and works hard to practise inclusive approaches. There is also access to a support worker who regularly visits school. The school chaplain provides a range of support and access to counselling. The local education authority provides further support through programmes for individual pupils.
56. A system of commendations is used to recognise and reward effort and achievement by pupils who respond positively to the scheme. Awards are used equitably and can result in pupils receiving certificates and peer recognition in assemblies.
57. There are very good arrangements within the school for the identification of pupils with special needs and for the assessment and diagnosis of their individual requirements. There are good arrangements for monitoring the academic performance and personal development of such pupils. The special needs co-ordinator visits pupils in Year 6 in their primary schools and attends annual review meetings. Individual education programmes are of a high standard and all teachers are additionally provided with helpful summaries about pupils on the register. The

progress of pupils is rigorously monitored and they have a good knowledge of their own progress. Older pupils contribute at their annual reviews. Annual reviews are up-to-date and are very informative.

58. There are effective procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance. The school complies with legislative requirements on attendance. Form registers are taken at the start of morning and afternoon sessions, using manual registers. The administration of the registers is sound and produces reliable information on overall attendance. This system works, but is time consuming. Analysis of attendance data is accurate, but frequently delayed by the laborious manual transcribing of information. The school works hard with pupils whose attendance record gives cause for concern.
59. There are effective procedures for addressing health and safety issues. The school is a generally secure place for pupils and staff, though the poor maintenance of many flooring areas presents a hazard. There are some stair treads and many floor tiles which are broken or missing and are a danger to users of the building.
60. There are good procedures for child protection. An assistant headteacher has responsibility for child protection issues and is the named member of staff responsible for liaison with external agencies. Not all new members of staff, though, have yet had appropriate training in child protection.

Sixth form

Assessment

61. In the sixth form, procedures in most subject areas for assessing students' attainment and progress are very good and closely linked to the requirements of examinations. Students' progress is closely and regularly monitored. Lessons and resources are well adapted in most subjects to meet the needs of students. The school provides excellent assessment data, which is effectively used by teachers and sixth form tutors to monitor and support students' academic progress. Students meet with their teachers and tutors to discuss their progress towards predicted outcomes in AS and A level examinations. In some subject areas, students feel that marking helps them to see how to improve their work but some students feel that they are not well informed about their progress.

Advice, support and guidance

62. Students are given good quality information about subjects and courses in the sixth form. There are talks for students and parents. Students are encouraged to discuss their subject choices with teachers and the head of sixth form interviews all students. When Year 11 examination results are published, staff are on hand to advise students about their choice of subject in the sixth form. There is a brief induction programme at the beginning of the term. In response to the inspection questionnaire, students indicated that they were helped to settle well into the sixth form. However, in discussion students said they felt poorly prepared for the more rigorous level of sixth form study in terms of, for example, study skills and time management. Most students feel that teachers are accessible and give help with difficulties encountered with work. Students meet briefly each day with their tutors. In addition they have an hour each week for personal, social and moral education with their tutors. This time is used to give guidance on careers and academic monitoring as well as to provide an opportunity for personal advice and support. This arrangement does not provide

sufficient time for students to develop a good relationship with the tutor or to seek advice and students sometimes queue on the corridor at breaks and lunchtimes to talk to the acting head of sixth form.

63. Significant numbers of students are concerned about the provision and quality of careers advice. Provision for careers guidance has been cut back and not all students are interviewed individually. Students do not feel confident about the advice they are given. Some information necessary for university applications is incomplete or out of date and access to the careers office is difficult.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

64. Partnership with parents is good. Parents are strongly supportive of the school, which they rightly believe is improving.
65. The school works hard to ensure that parents are involved and kept up to date with their children's education. Annual academic progress reports and interim reports on pupils are informative and well set out, though many parents would like the school to issue reports more frequently. Heads of year spend a great deal of their time talking to parents by telephone and face to face to ensure pupils make appropriate progress.
66. The school seeks to establish contact with parents of pupils with special needs before they enter the school and to maintain a partnership throughout their time in the school. Parents attend annual reviews and many make a positive contribution to the meetings. The school seeks to involve parents in the learning programme by asking them to consolidate reading. However, the response here is variable. The school has appealed to parents to provide some classroom support but the response has been limited and at present only one parent is involved.
67. Weekly newsletters for all parents are accessible and contain a mix of news and information. There is a helpful and informative prospectus and the school's written material for parents is generally good. Each pupil has a homework planner which parents see, which sets out key policies on such issues as behaviour, bullying and personal development, and which contains a section for parents to comment on issues directly to teachers. A section is included for absence notes to be written by parents. When used well, which is usually the case, homework planners provide for two-way communication between parents and school.
68. St Edmunds' benefits from a very active and supportive parents' association which has raised significant sums of money for the school and enabled a number of projects to be implemented. Some parents have assisted with the re-decoration of rooms. The governing body includes a number of parents who are supportive of and involved in the day to day activity of the school. The governors' annual report to parents is very good in both content and style.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

69. There were serious weaknesses in management at the time of the last inspection. Key issues from the previous inspection had not been tackled, financial planning was unsatisfactory, school staff were not effectively involved in the decision-making process and assessment data were not used adequately to guide decisions about the curriculum and other plans. With gathering pace over the last two years the situation has been transformed. There are no longer serious weaknesses – indeed the vision and determination of senior managers has become a strength of the school. Excellent progress has been made towards remedying matters, though some problems remain to be dealt with. Information and communication technology remains a long-term problem that must now be addressed. Planning for pupils' experience in ICT, routine assessment of pupils' progress and access to modern computers for teachers and pupils across the curriculum are still not good enough. This process of improvement has been assisted by strategies for introducing performance management.
70. The senior team has been entirely re-structured. The new headteacher has gathered around her a strong team who work well together. Roles and responsibilities are delegated effectively. The senior team, under the very good leadership of the headteacher, now offers a clear sense of direction to the school, based on considerable ambitions for raising standards further and improving the quality of provision. Many of the shortcomings mentioned above have now been addressed. In the past, for example, assessment data were not used effectively to inform decisions. This is now a very strong area, due in large measure to the appointment of an assistant headteacher with impressive skills in this work. Assessment data are recorded and analysed very well, and support target-setting for pupils as well as supplying invaluable management information used in annual reviews of departmental performance. Monitoring of the quality of teaching on a systematic basis has been introduced, though more time is needed to embed the process in the customary routines of the school. Teachers now feel they have an appropriate role to play in decision-making.
71. Departmental management is generally effective. In some departments management is very good. In mathematics, for example, there is clear and effective leadership. The schemes of assessment, the monitoring of pupil progress and the setting of targets are very good. Much use is made of data that inform teachers, pupils and parents of progress, attainment and potential through target setting. Pupils are made aware of the targets set and teachers regularly compare the quality of their work with those target grades. The head of department observes and assesses other members of the mathematics staff and the aim is to see each teacher once each term. Departmental meetings are held weekly and frequently address the issue of best teaching strategies. In English too, the head of department has a very clear sense of direction for the department and a strong focus on raising attainment at all levels through the development of teaching and learning strategies. Management of the science department is very good and senior members of the department provide excellent role models. In part, because of this good management, standards in these core departments are maintained consistently at an above-average level. In art, though, there are significant weaknesses in curriculum planning and in monitoring the quality of teaching in the department. As a result, standards suffer.
72. The governing body has also changed substantially in membership and structure. The clear vision and determination of governors to improve the quality of provision has played a considerable role in the reconstruction of the senior management team

in the school and in the successful efforts to secure management and leadership appropriate to the needs of the school. Good appointments have been made and the reorganisation of the senior team has worked. Governors know the school well, have a clear concern for the quality of provision and have played an effective strategic role in shaping the direction of the school through the difficulties of the last two years.

73. Financial planning is much improved. Educational priorities are identified in the school development plan and funds are allocated according to sound principles. Some educational grants for special educational needs, however, are not used for their intended purpose. In spending decisions, due regard is given to securing the best value for money and the day-to-day handling of finance is good. Governors are well informed and play their proper role in the strategic oversight of finance.
74. The limited resources available for special education in the school are effectively managed, as evidenced by the achievement, attitudes and learning skills of pupils. The quality of administration, record-keeping and individual education plans are high. Levels of communication with departments and individual teachers are very good. The school has anticipated the revision of the Code of Practice, in-service training courses have been held and new procedures and nomenclatures are being introduced.
75. Staffing levels are satisfactory. There are sufficient teachers who are appropriately qualified and experienced to deliver the subjects of the curriculum and this has a positive impact on standards. Technical support for teachers is generally satisfactory, but not always. Information and communication technology has good technical support that makes a positive contribution to standards in ICT. There is, however, insufficient technical support in design and technology which means that teachers have to make inappropriate use of their time. One technician is also insufficient for the needs of the science department. These deficiencies remain unsolved from the last inspection. There is adequate dedicated administrative support. There is a sound policy for the induction of new teachers. There are several departments in the school that provide or have the potential to provide high quality initial teacher training.
76. The accommodation for the school overall is unsatisfactory. The buildings are situated in pleasant surroundings and the grounds are well kept. A lift provides access for wheelchair users. Inside, much of the school is in need of refurbishment. Plaster needs to be made good in many areas, and walls repainted. The floors in the dining room and in some corridors are worn and tiles have lifted or been removed from the floor. There is some litter in the dining room and on the stairs but the buildings are cleaned regularly.
77. There are sufficient rooms for the teaching of most subjects in the school but one or two rooms are too small for large classes and activities become restricted in English lessons. Small group work in music has to take place in corridors and in the stairwell. Two science laboratories have been refurbished to a high standard, but the remaining laboratories are in poor condition with splits and graffiti on the benches. In English, geography and modern foreign languages there are more teachers than specialist rooms available, which means they have to work in unsatisfactory accommodation or change rooms often. This restricts the learning activities possible. Access to one of the two ICT rooms is poor and in need of rationalisation. Textiles accommodation is inadequate and there is insufficient space for storage in art. There is only one small sink in each art room and the kiln and storage space for ceramics are situated some way from the department. Many of these deficiencies were noted at the last inspection.

78. Resources in the school are unsatisfactory. Sharing of textbooks is commonplace in history and modern foreign languages and in Year 10 in mathematics. There are no computers in the modern foreign languages department and no language software on the school network. The music department has recently acquired a computer but this is not enough to enable good computer access for music composition. Many departments find access to modern computers difficult and this is part of the problem of inadequate ICT provision.
79. The library is well used by pupils at break and lunchtime and there is heavy demand for Internet access through the library's computers. There is now a librarian in-post and pupils act as library assistants. The library is accessible for most of the day. There are still many old and rarely used books on the shelves and there is an insufficient stock of relevant books to serve the needs of departments.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

80. Overall, the leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory. The relationship with partner schools in the consortium is good and liaison at senior and middle management levels is generally effective. Some departments in the consortium work very closely together, contacting their opposite number regularly often by telephone. In history and biology, however, arrangements for monitoring teaching in the two schools are not working well enough and steps should be taken to ensure that there are systems to ensure high quality provision. The day-to-day management of students' support, guidance and personal development is satisfactory. The acting head of sixth form leads an experienced team of tutors who oversee students' personal and academic welfare within the timetable constraints. The analysis and use made of assessment data to provide predictions of A level results and to calculate added value are very good. There are some areas identified both by students and recognised by senior management as development areas. These include changing the culture of the sixth form by providing more opportunities for students to be involved, for example in the student council, to take greater responsibility in the community of the school and beyond and to be treated as young adults.

Resources

81. The sixth form is cost effective and is resourced from the funding made available for the purpose. Arrangements within the consortium to staff the joint curriculum are satisfactory. Teachers are well qualified and experienced. Accommodation is satisfactory. Facilities in both schools for physical education are very good. Some classrooms are too small for large groups of students in English and in AS level music.
82. Resources to support the students' learning in the sixth form are poor. There are too few books for large groups in science. Limited resources in physical education restrict teaching styles. In English, history and physical education students are asked to buy their textbooks. The languages department has no computer or software on the school network. There are no books for students' free reading and enrichment. The single computer acquired recently in the music department is inadequate for the large numbers of students doing AS level composition.
83. The school library was criticised in the last inspection report. Students have a designated study area within the library that is used during the day but there has been

little improvement in the number of books which is still too small to support independent study at this level. Very few texts are up to date.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

84. The school's senior managers and governors are in a strong position to ensure that the weaknesses identified in this report are remedied. In order to raise standards and improve the quality of provision further, they should:

- (1) improve the quality of provision and raise standards in art and design by:
 - ensuring that teaching successfully focuses on raising levels of basic skills;
 - raising expectations of what pupils can achieve;
 - tackling areas of weakness outlined in the last report;
 - incorporating well-planned use of ICT;
 - improving the management of the department, particularly in respect of planning and of monitoring and improving the quality of teaching.

Paragraphs 120-132

- (2) ensure that all departments systematically plan for and carry through their responsibilities for developing ICT skills and knowledge by:
 - putting in place a comprehensive scheme of work to direct teaching and learning in all subjects;
 - ensuring that there is enough time available to teach adequately the specific ICT course in Years 7 to 9;
 - ensuring that there is effective assessment of pupils' progress in ICT in all subjects.

Paragraphs 3, 7, 5, 35, 36, 37, 52, 69, 77, 78, 93, 110, 118, 119, 129, 130, 131, 144, 155, 157-164, 170, 174, 180.

- (3) improve the level of resourcing for the library and ensure there are sufficient modern computers available for use in lessons to enable departments to carry through their responsibilities for ICT.

Paragraphs 69, 78, 79, 144, 155, 180.

- (4) continue to work in collaboration with the diocese and the local education authority to improve the poor state of accommodation.

Paragraph 76.

Sixth form

- (1) ensure that the monitoring of teaching and learning in the consortium is effective in revealing problems so that action can be taken to make improvements.

Paragraphs 80, 203, 242.

- (2) make time in the curriculum for students' personal development, community work, independent study and individual research.

Paragraph 49.

- (3) ensure that there are sufficient essential books to meet the needs of sixth form students, so that they are not obliged to buy their own and that there are enough computers to meet their needs.

Paragraphs 82, 83, 223.

- (4) improve the quality of care and guidance of students by:

- i. increasing the amount of tutorial time
 - ii. improving the quality of careers guidance
- Paragraphs 62, 63.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7-11	120
	Sixth form	46
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		45

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7-11							
Number	7	38	49	18	7	1	0
Percentage	6	32	40	15	6	1	0
Sixth form							
Number	1	7	25	12	0	1	0
Percentage	2	15	56	26	0	1	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Years 7-11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	769	123
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	72	0

Special educational needs	Years 7-11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	9	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	58	3

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	33

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

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.3
National comparative data	7.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.4
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of 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	63	70

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	53	55	52
	Girls	66	57	57
	Total	119	112	109
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	89 (79)	84 (84)	83 (73)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	65 (34)	62 (54)	48 (29)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	54	50	53
	Girls	66	58	58
	Total	120	108	111
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	90 (79)	83 (82)	85 (76)
	National	65 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	63 (42)	65 (58)	44 (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	60	67	127

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	30	58	58
	Girls	46	66	66
	Total	76	124	124
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	60 (59)	98 (98)	98 (99)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	21	31	52

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	11.1	15.3	13.7	3.1	3.3	3.2
National	17.7	18.6	18.2	2.6	2.9	2.7

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	21
Black – African heritage	2
Black – other	0
Indian	27
Pakistani	6
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	713
Any other minority ethnic group	0

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	4	0
Black – African heritage	1	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	46	0
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: Years 7-13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	45.38
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17

Education support staff: Years 7-13

Total number of education support staff	9
Total aggregate hours worked per week	270

Deployment of teachers: Years 7-13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	75.6
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Average teaching group size: Years 7-11

Key Stage 3	24.5
Key Stage 4	22

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000-2001
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	£
Total income	2,164,958
Total expenditure	2,098,269
Expenditure per pupil	2704
Balance brought forward from previous year	-7,781
Balance carried forward to next year	58,910

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	7
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	6

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	3.0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2.0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	1.0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	769
Number of questionnaires returned	158

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	37	55	6	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	38	53	4	1	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	28	55	4	4	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	24	55	16	4	1
The teaching is good.	25	56	9	0	10
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	16	35	30	6	12
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	33	50	7	4	6
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	44	48	5	1	2
The school works closely with parents.	13	43	28	4	11
The school is well led and managed.	23	53	6	3	15
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	25	58	8	2	7
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	31	47	11	3	9

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 **very good**.

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is very good especially in Years 7, 8 and 9.
- The leadership and management of the department.
- Classroom strategies to develop pupils' confidence as speakers.
- The use of assessment data to guide teaching.
- Improvement in attainment in the national test in 2001.

Areas for improvement

- The quality of marking.
- Access to computers.
- Amount of support for classes with large numbers of special needs pupils.
- The quality of accommodation and the adequacy of resources.

85. When pupils enter the school standards in English are above average. At the end of Year 9, pupils' attainment in the National Curriculum tests in 2001 was well above average. Compared with similar schools attainment is very high. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels in 2001 was also very high; last year two pupils reached Level 8 in the test. Girls do better than boys, though the difference between them is not as wide as the national difference. Attainment at the end of Year 9 was better than in the previous year.
86. The school enters all its pupils for both English and English Literature at GCSE. Results in English in 2001 were better than in the previous year and were above the national average. In comparison to similar schools pupils' performance was well above average. Middle and lower-attaining pupils do well in English. Potentially higher attaining pupils, although performing better than in previous years, are doing less well than might be expected. Girls do better than boys. The difference between them is not as wide as the national gap. Results in English Literature were not quite as high as in the previous year although pupils did better at the highest grades than in English. Boys did less well in Literature than English.
87. Overall pupils' achievement is good. In Years 7 to 9 achievement is very good. By the end of Year 9 attainment is well above average. Many pupils are confident and articulate speakers. They listen carefully and develop their ideas in discussion. They are able to express opinions and make suggestions supporting their ideas with evidence. High-attainers express quite sophisticated ideas. Pupils read aloud fluently and with evident understanding. In Year 7, for example, pupils read parts from the script of *Room 13* quite expressively and in another Year 7 class pupils were able to identify archaic terms in the text of *The Good Samaritan*. High-attainers write very fluently. They use language in a lively way and their work is well presented and technically competent. Some good work was seen on advertising and pupils in Year 7 had produced an excellent survey of reading habits. High-attainers in Year 9 have produced some very good writing in a wide range of styles. They had designed a board game based on the narrative of *Walkabout* and were engaged in writing letters in which the use of language varied according to the target reader, in this case the teacher and children evaluating the success of the game. Following some work on

Shakespeare's sonnets pupils had written their own versions. Writing by low-attaining pupils in Years 7 to 9 is brief and ideas are expressed very simply. Their grasp of spelling, punctuation, and grammar is weak. Some pupils in Year 7 have significant reading and speaking problems. In discussion they give short answers and do not develop their ideas.

88. By the end of Year 11 overall attainment is above average and pupils have made good progress in English. In a high-attaining Year 11 class, pupils read aloud fluently from *Pride and Prejudice*. They have lively and intelligent ideas and are able to interpret and comment on the text and the development of character. Their responses are thoughtful and articulate. They make good notes as the lesson proceeds. In Year 10 when discussing the poet's style, pupils gave astute answers to questions about a poem by Liz Lochhead indicating a very good level of understanding of imagery. Low-attainers in Year 10 have made good progress with writing and, although they still have difficulty with some technical aspects of writing, they develop and sustain their ideas at greater length. Pupils in Year 10 used computers to draft a review and made good progress in recognising how the choice of vocabulary affects the tone and impact of writing on the reader. In Year 11 pupils studying *Of Mice and Men* were able to select appropriate quotations from the text to illustrate character. Many pupils with special needs make very good progress. By the end of Year 11 the standard of their work is much improved and they do well at GCSE, given their prior attainment. Pupils of minority ethnic heritage make good progress.
89. Pupils' attitude to English is positive. They are attentive and concentrate well. There is often a high level of participation in English lessons as a result of the activities and structure imposed by the teacher. Pupils are interested, involved, and keen to participate. They willingly volunteer ideas and opinions and work very constructively together. They are keen to do well and take pride in their work. There are some pupils, many of them with special needs, who find concentration difficult.
90. The quality of teaching and learning is always at least good. A significant proportion of teaching is very good or excellent, especially in Years 7 to 9 where the impact of the National Literacy Strategy has improved the pace of lessons. In all lessons teachers are confident in their knowledge of the subject. Tasks are set that challenge pupils, and make them think. Lessons are well planned and objectives made clear. Expectations are generally high. Teachers know pupils well. They have very good information on pupils' prior attainment and use it effectively. Relationships in the classroom are very good and pupils respond appropriately. There is much warmth, humour, and praise. Resources used in lessons are frequently creative and extremely well presented so pupils can see clearly what is required of them. In Year 11, for example, the teacher used a grid that enabled pupils to structure their ideas about a character in *Of Mice and Men*. Then pupils read a letter from the author in which he describes his view of the character so that they were given further insights. In Year 8 the teacher used the board to record pupils' ideas in a brainstorming session and gave help with planning and organising ideas before they began their own writing. Pupils are given useful tasks as homework. Classrooms are thoughtfully organised so that, for example, boys and girls work together. Pupils with special needs make good progress in English in all years as a result of very good teaching. Information for teachers about pupils' special needs on their individual plans is of very high quality. Tasks are carefully modified so that pupils are working at a level which suits them. The marking of pupils' work is, however not consistently good. The department is improving its practice of giving clear specific targets on pupils' work so that they understand how to improve.
91. There is some very good and some outstanding teaching in the subject which

promotes very good learning. The best lessons are characterised by the clarity and vision of objectives for lessons and the enthusiasm of the teacher. In these lessons, teachers devise excellent strategies to engage all pupils in discussion, develop their ideas and present them to the class so that they grow in confidence and skill in speaking to others. There are carefully varied and structured tasks which sustain pupils' interest and enable them to learn sequentially. Pupils respond very well to lessons where expectations are very high. A few lessons end with a review to help pupils clarify important learning points from the lesson. There is some opportunity for them to evaluate their progress through the use of 'cover sheets' for key pieces of work.

92. The English department is very well led and managed. The head of department has a clear sense of direction for the department and a strong focus on raising attainment at all levels through the development of teaching and learning strategies. Several members of the department are very experienced teachers and hold senior posts in the school, including the head teacher. Curriculum planning is very good and the department has recently introduced core units of work for Years 7 to 9 to ensure consistency of assessment. The National Literacy Strategy is firmly established in Year 7 and is beginning to modify teaching style in subsequent years. Assessment data enables teachers to set targets for pupils and effectively monitor their performance. A number of strategies have been successfully employed in Years 7 to 9 to raise attainment, though progress in this respect is less well developed for Years 10 and 11. The department should develop similar strategies to ensure that the most able pupils in Years 10 and 11 are more rigorously challenged. There is some monitoring of teaching by observation of lessons. The department would benefit from opportunities to discuss classroom strategies and from sharing the high level of teaching expertise. There are some extra-curricular opportunities for pupils. These include theatre trips, a workshop on *Macbeth* for Year 9, and visits from a local storyteller and writer.
93. This is a very good department. Planning for improvement is good. The head of department has a clear view of priorities. Some areas are in need of development. Time should be given to consideration of marking techniques. Additional support is necessary in those classes where there are large numbers of pupils with special needs. Although the department has made considerable effort in planning the use of ICT in English, further development is hindered by lack of access to computers. Some classrooms are too small and prohibit a desirable range of activities. The stock of books for the subject is inadequate and many are in poor condition.
94. Attainment at the end of Year 9 has improved since the last inspection. There is some improvement in attainment by the end of Year 11. The overall profile of teaching has improved. Marking still requires some attention. The difficulties with accommodation raised by the last report remain.

Drama

95. All pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 study drama. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Attainment in drama in Years 7 and 8 is average. In the lessons seen there were some good demonstrations by the teacher which pupils enjoyed and which supported learning but, despite this, lessons provided too little challenge and pace. Teaching lacked clear focus and direction. In Year 8, for example pupils choreographed a stage fight as part of some work on *Romeo and Juliet*. They worked quite well on the task, read fluently from the text and showed a good level of control and understanding of the scene. Clear instructions from the teacher and the use of demonstration enabled pupils to make sound progress. However, too much time was allowed for the task and pupils could have achieved more.
96. Results at GCSE in 2001 were above average. All pupils achieved a grade in the A* to G range and 90 per cent of pupils achieved grades A*-C. Standards in Year 11 seen during the inspection were above average.
97. In Years 10 and 11 where pupils have opted to take drama at GCSE teaching and learning are good. Pupils' response to drama is very good. In the lesson seen they built on their previous work on *Bouncers* through good discussion about non-naturalistic dramatic techniques. This informed their reading of *Teechers*, also by John Godber. Pupils read well and girls, in particular, were able to characterise the changes of role necessary in the text. As a result practical work on staging the scene went well, especially by one group whose work was both convincing and entertaining.
98. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' extra curricular experience. Pupils in Year 8, working with a visiting children's writer, stage an annual adaptation of a Shakespeare play.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Teachers have high expectations of pupils, which leads to very good progress and high attainment in examinations.
- The monitoring and assessment of pupils' work and the setting of targets is very good.
- Teaching is good.
- The proportion of pupils entered for the GCSE examination is very high and almost all pupils gain a grade.
- The department is a strong team and is well led.

Areas for improvement

- There is inadequate access to computers, especially in Years 7, 8 and 9.
- There are not enough top GCSE grades.

99. Standards on entry to the school in Year 7 are above average. At the end of Year 9 results in national tests are well above average and very high when compared to schools with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. At the end of Year 11 GCSE results in terms of grades A* to C are well above average. Achievement overall is very good but particularly impressive over the first three years. There are, however, too few A* and A grades. This was very noticeable in 2000 but the situation has improved with the 2001 results. The department is aware of the

problem and is seeking to remedy it by switching to a modular GCSE course. Scrutiny of work suggests that higher-attaining pupils are being appropriately challenged. For example, Year 10 pupils can understand and apply the laws of indices and can rearrange formulae. They can also construct histograms with unequal intervals. The attainment of boys and girls was about equal in 2001, although girls out-performed boys in 2000.

100. Scrutiny of work completed in the school shows that almost all pupils achieve well in terms of work covered and standards reflect the test and examination results of recent years. Exercise books are generally neat and tidy and show that pupils take pride in their work. GCSE coursework in Year 11 is of an appropriate standard and some is of a high standard showing confident use of algebra. Other pieces of coursework show confident and independent use of ICT facilities. This is an improvement on the situation at the time of the last report when some coursework was inadequate.
101. The teaching seen during the inspection was almost always good. In all lessons teachers showed very good knowledge and understanding of the subject. In the best lessons teachers plan well, have clear aims and involve all pupils with effective question and answer sessions. They challenge pupils with the work and they make good use of time. In some lessons, however, especially in Year 11, less effective use of question and answer sessions leads to pupils being insufficiently engaged. In such cases teaching is unsatisfactory, leading to unsatisfactory learning and unsatisfactory attitudes. Pupils' work is marked thoroughly and the marking contains both helpful and encouraging comments. Homework is set regularly and marked appropriately.
102. The teaching of numeracy within the department is good: Year 7 lessons follow the national numeracy strategy and this promotes good learning of basic skills. However, there is no cross-curricular numeracy policy to enable the mathematics department to influence the teaching of numeracy in other departments. Numeracy is an important part of the work of other departments like science and geography and it is important that a common school strategy be developed and implemented.
103. Pupils' interest and concentration varies but is mostly good, largely due to good classroom management by teachers. Many lessons have very strong teacher control so truly independent work really only occurs in coursework in Years 10 and 11. However, the tight control of most lessons means that concentration levels are usually maintained for the duration of the lesson. The positive ethos of the department means that pupils respect property and generally do not abuse equipment. Pupils work well singly or in pairs.
104. Gifted and talented pupils do not make good enough progress. They are identified through performance in the classroom, in tests and by teacher-assessment. The department monitors the progress of these pupils but currently takes no further action and lacks strategies for challenging such high-attaining pupils adequately to increase the number of higher grades at GCSE.

105. Pupils with special educational needs are sometimes helped by learning support assistants in lessons. These classroom assistants are used effectively and help low-attaining pupils to make good gains in knowledge. Even without classroom support, pupils with special educational needs make very good progress in mathematics during their time in the school, as is shown by the very high levels of entry for GCSE.
106. The department offers extra-curricular opportunities for pupils. Year 7 pupils have voluntary classes at lunchtimes and there are revision classes to help Year 9 pupils prepare for national tests. Year 11 pupils can attend extra sessions for coursework or for revision after school. Each year, the local education authority runs a *Girls into Maths* activities day.
107. The leadership of the department is very good. The scheme of work is comprehensive but accessible and the departmental development plan is clear and relevant. Important issues such as the continued implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy are addressed appropriately. The department has experienced teachers and constitutes a strong team, with a capacity to build on success.
108. The schemes of assessment, the monitoring of pupil progress and the setting of targets are very good. Much productive use is made of data that inform teachers, pupils and parents of progress, attainment and potential through target setting. Pupils are made aware of the targets set and teachers regularly compare the quality of their work with those target grades. The reports to parents are good – they contain relevant information and are mostly word-processed. Comments are direct and pertinent. Parents are also contacted if a pupil misbehaves or fails to complete work. The support of parents in this regard is very strong.
109. The monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching in the subject follows a school format and is in the early stages of development. The head of department observes and assesses other members of the mathematics staff and the aim is to see each teacher once per term. Departmental meetings are held weekly and frequently address the issue of best teaching strategies. This represents an improvement from the situation at the time of the previous inspection when there was inadequate debate about teaching strategies. However, the development of common, high quality, learning resources remains to be tackled.
110. The use of ICT is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and barely satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. The main problem is a general lack of access to computer facilities. This is a weakness highlighted in the previous report and must now be addressed. The use of calculators in maths lessons is appropriate.
111. The standard of accommodation has improved. Now there are sufficient classrooms and sufficient space for pupils. The standard of wall display, including pupils' work, and the decoration of some rooms, however, is unsatisfactory. Some classrooms have key words displayed on the walls but the use of them in lessons is too infrequent. There is little multi-cultural reference in wall displays. Learning resources overall are barely satisfactory. There are insufficient textbooks to meet the needs of the new modular course for Year 10. Textbooks are somewhat battered and there are few other extra resources.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Teaching is very good.
- Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- There are very effective procedures for assessing and monitoring pupils' progress.
- The department is very well managed.

Areas for improvement

- The planning for and use of ICT.
- Planning for and use of investigative work.
- A small proportion of teaching is unsatisfactory.

112. In national tests at the end of Year 9 pupils' attainments in science are well above the national average and well above those of pupils in similar schools. Their performance was above average between 1996 and 2000 and pupils' results show the same pattern of improvement as the national results, with boys doing very slightly better than girls. In the GCSE examinations in 2001 nearly two-thirds of the pupils gained an A* to C grade compared with the national figure of close to a half and girls did better than boys. These results are well above the national average and significantly better than the results gained in other subjects in the school. Pupils' standards in science improve between Key Stage 3 and 4.
113. In Year 9 the standard of pupils' work in lessons is well above the national average. Pupils have a well-developed understanding of the difference between elements and compounds and as early as Year 7 they have a very good understanding of the effect of air resistance in slowing down a falling object. In Year 9 their knowledge of the things that affect plant growth is satisfactory and they showed very good practical skills in a lesson about magnetic fields. In the same lesson pupils were able to make predictions and create hypotheses about the effects of a magnetic field. Boys and girls do equally well and the achievements of pupils with special educational needs are very good although there are times when some of these pupils need support to make the most of their work in the classroom.
114. By Year 11 the standard of pupils' work in lessons is also well above the national average for girls and boys and pupils with special educational needs continue to achieve very well. Pupils have a very good understanding of the mathematical relationship between speed and time and the way in which these relationships can be shown in graphs. Many lower-attaining pupils reach an understanding of chemical reactions that is close to the national average. Investigative and practical skills are very good. In a lesson about a chemical reaction, for instance, and in one about slowing down, pupils understood the reasons for the scientific methods they were using. Pupils of minority ethnic heritage do as well as all others during both key stages. Standards of literacy and numeracy in science lessons are good throughout the school. Pupils readily and accurately use calculators and they draw accurate graphs. Most can describe their work fluently both verbally and in writing. Extensive accounts of practical work are particularly good.

115. In Years 7 to 9 the quality of learning in lessons is very good. Pupils learn to calculate the pressure they place on the floor they are standing on using scales and calculators accurately. They learn about the difference between elements and compounds and how to use chemical symbols to represent a reaction. In Years 10 and 11 progress continues and the achievements of pupils in lessons are very good, as shown in a lesson in which explanations of the increase in the speed of a reaction as the temperature increased were made using scientific theories. In other lessons pupils learn very effectively how to measure the rate of a reaction and the difference between speed and velocity. Rarely, during both key stages, are pupils' achievements unsatisfactory and this happens when teaching is unsatisfactory. Practical and investigative skills develop very well in many lessons.
116. Overall the teaching of science throughout the main school is very good. In Years 7 to 9 teaching is good or very good in eight lessons out of ten and during Years 10 and 11 it is excellent or very good in six out of ten. Questions are used very effectively to check that pupils have understood instructions and scientific ideas. Excellent relationships between pupils and staff foster pupils' self-esteem and mutual respect creates situations in which pupils feel secure and can learn effectively. In many lessons expectations of pupils' behaviour and effort are high and they are expected to listen and carry out instructions very carefully. These features of strong teaching allied with very careful explanations, as in a lesson about acidity and alkalinity, ensure that pupils learn successfully and that they do so safely when doing potentially hazardous practical work. Lessons are well planned and teachers make good use of investigative and other problem solving activities that motivate pupils to do well. Many of these activities, for instance in lessons about pressure and speed and time, are demanding and promote high standards. Datalogging equipment is used with computers to measure changes during work about physical fitness. A few unsatisfactory lessons were seen. In these lessons teaching was undemanding, the lessons were too tightly steered by the teacher and the pupils had no opportunity for independent learning. These lessons were slow and progress made by pupils was unsatisfactory. Teachers ensure that pupils with special educational needs and from minority ethnic backgrounds are fully included in lessons.
117. During science lessons attitudes and behaviour are very good. Pupils are industrious and co-operative both with each other and with their teachers; they take pride in their written work and carry out practical work carefully and safely. They listen carefully and understand the reasons behind the instructions they are given. Pupils have a great deal of respect for their teachers, for books and equipment and for each other. During investigative work they are willing to offer predictive or tentative answers, their approach to their work is critical and they are interested in explanations for the things they see or find out. In Years 10 and 11 many pupils are well motivated and confident learners, because of the quality teaching which fosters confidence and leads to high levels of attainment. In a very small number of lessons, some silly behaviour distracts other pupils and prevents them from making good progress.
118. Management of the science department is very good and senior members of the department provide excellent role models. The curriculum clearly becomes more demanding between Years 7 and 11 and the methods that are used to assess pupils' work and to monitor their progress are very effective: teachers have a very good knowledge of their pupils' abilities. The scheme of work for science facts and principles is very thorough and is being reviewed following changes to examination requirements. Some parts of these plans contain examples of the use of ICT but better consistency is needed in this aspect of planning although good progress is being made in using more ICT in science lessons. In some lessons investigations or

parts of investigations are carried out but the scheme of work is inconsistent in its planning for work of this nature. The condition of some of the laboratory furniture is poor: splits and deep marks in the surfaces are potential safety hazards. Technical support is excellent and clearly makes a strong contribution to the success of practical science teaching.

119. Progress made since the last inspection has been good. Standards have risen at both key stages, work provided by teachers is more demanding and pupils are given opportunities to work independently. Few lessons are now entirely teacher led, open questions requiring explanatory answers are used frequently and pupils show a good degree of initiative during their lessons. Assessment procedures are greatly improved and a consistent marking strategy is used. Investigative work and use of ICT has increased but still needs to be used more often and more consistently. Sharing of good practice is much improved but there is still a little inconsistency in the quality of teaching. Laboratory accommodation is satisfactory and resources are adequate for the needs of the curriculum. There is sufficient time for science but the time available for technical support is insufficient.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- The quality of pupil-teacher relationships.
- Teachers' knowledge of elements of the design process.

Areas for improvement

- Standards of attainment.
- Teaching of basic skills, including ICT.
- Low expectations of teachers and pupils.
- The failure to tackle weaknesses identified in the previous report.
- The use of sketchbooks for personal research, investigation and experimentation.
- The planning for and use of ICT.
- Management, especially planning and the monitoring of teaching and learning.

120. Standards of attainment in art are well below average. Teacher assessments for pupils aged 13 in 2001 indicate that above average numbers of both boys and girls are exceeding expectations. These assessments were not borne out by observations made during the inspection and suggest that teachers are overestimating the standards being reached.
121. Fewer than a quarter of pupils aged 16 in 2001 were awarded a GCSE pass between A* and C, less than half of the national average. Just over two-thirds were awarded a grade between A* and G; again, well below the national average. In both cases the girls were more successful than the boys. These results were less good than 2000 when a third of the pupils gained a pass between A* and C and just over two thirds were awarded a pass between A* and G, once again well below average. There has been no appreciable improvement in standards of attainment since the last inspection.
122. The work seen during inspection indicates that standards remain well below average. Pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 are unable to observe and analyse the world around them through drawing. They lack any real understanding of how to gather information or

portray space, texture, distance or tone. Most of the pupils draw with pencil and rely heavily on an eraser. There are few opportunities for pupils to work with chalk and charcoal, crayon or ink.

123. Pupils are given a sketchbook in Year 7 that they quickly come to regard as a homework book, rather than a device for investigation into the world around them, or for experimenting with methods and materials. Too much of their work is unimaginative and lacks substance, giving few clues that pupils draw on their own environment for stimulus. Pupils have insufficient knowledge of art and artists, both from Europe and beyond, which they might use to influence and improve their work. The great majority of their work is two-dimensional painting and drawing.
124. The girls have better attitudes towards their work and are usually more conscientious than the boys. Marking is generous. Pupils' work is marked in a very positive way but without guidance as to how to improve. There is evidence of progress from Year 7 to Year 8 but little evidence of progress thereafter.
125. Standards of attainment by the age of 16 are also well below average. By now, pupils' inability to draw from observation and their failure to maintain a working sketchbook is preventing them understanding how well they are doing, and how they might improve their work. There is little independent learning and pupils are heavily dependent on their teachers for guidance and direction.
126. Even allowing for the varied and often limited experiences of art the pupils may have had when they arrive in Year 7 their achievement by the age of 16 is unsatisfactory and reflects the lack of challenge in much of the work. The emphasis on imaginative work and use of imagery from books, magazines or photographs, rather than from personal research, slows progress. The work is not sufficiently designed to challenge those who have special educational needs or those who are gifted and talented who also make unsatisfactory progress. Classwork and homework are often based on undemanding techniques such as tracing images or collecting pictures from magazines or the Internet and lack any creative or intellectual challenge. Insufficient opportunities to work with more advanced print-making techniques, creative textiles or computer generated imagery, all common enough in art education today, limits the ways pupils might develop their skills and increase their knowledge.
127. Teaching and learning in art are unsatisfactory and reflect the low expectations of teachers and pupils alike, though there is good teaching in the sixth form and some good teaching in Years 7 to 11. In a very good Year 8 lesson, the teacher's explanation of the origins of lettering, supported by an excellent, skilful demonstration of gothic lettering with a brush ensured that pupils made good gains in knowledge. The teacher shared considerable knowledge with pupils and they responded eagerly with pace and productivity. Their learning was less rapid than it might have been, as the practical activity required the pupils to trace letters from a worksheet rather than construct them by hand. Standards in this lesson were broadly average. In a good Year 7 lesson, pupils were instructed in colour theory and the use of watercolour to produce a high quality colour wheel. Once again the teacher's demonstration was clear and informative; the task was demanding and the pupils responded with urgency and direction. The lesson was well planned and the teacher's expectations were clear. The pupils were keen to please their teacher and made good gains in knowledge of the properties of the three primary and three secondary colours, as well as improving their painting skills.
128. Much teaching, though, was not of this quality. The activities and learning objectives

were unclear and less demanding in a poor lesson when the pupils were asked to make drawings of facial expressions to create a cartoon strip illustrating a story they had written themselves. The task was inappropriate as few of the pupils had a grasp of the rudiments of drawing. The teacher's management of the task was unsatisfactory and the pupils soon became bored. The behaviour of both boys and girls became unacceptable and the quality of their learning was poor. Pupils in a Year 11 lesson were completing research that should have been done as homework instead of using the lesson time to develop their research into a travel poster. The research material was of poor quality and many pupils made poor use of the posters produced by artists and designers that the teacher had spent the beginning of the lesson showing them.

129. Teachers fail to raise their own expectations and those of their pupils by taking advantage of the good relationships they enjoy. Too many pupils say, "I can't draw". The teaching of basic skills, including the use of ICT is neglected. Too much of the work allows pupils to make personal responses to a starting point without their having a firm understanding of line, colour, composition and the methods employed by European and other artists.
130. The curriculum in art is unsatisfactory. There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to work with ICT. The range of processes available to pupils is narrow. Critical studies play too small a role in the work of the department. The numbers of pupils who opt to follow GCSE art in Year 10 are much lower than average. Data gathered from the assessment of pupils' work is not used for setting targets or for modifying the curriculum.
131. The leadership and management of the department are unsatisfactory. The head of department provides leadership for the staff in the department but there are weaknesses in the monitoring of teaching and learning, while strategic planning for the short, medium and long term lacks details for implementing the plans. ICT provision does not meet the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum. The staffing of the department is satisfactory although a non-specialist teacher teaches one of the lessons. The accommodation is unsatisfactory and one of the two rooms is too small for larger groups to carry out practical work. Resources for learning are unsatisfactory, particularly in terms of computers, materials for printmaking and creative textiles. The books in the library are inadequate to support learning at each stage.
132. There has been poor progress since the last inspection though resources and time allocation have improved. Teaching was poor, and is little improved. Attainment is still well below average. Progress in lessons and over time continues to be unsatisfactory. Too many pupils who opt for art are allowed to drop the subject just before the GCSE examination. The accommodation is still unsatisfactory and the pottery equipment remains remote from the department.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- GCSE results in resistant materials, graphic products and textiles have been above average in two of the last three years.
- Teaching in these examination courses is good.
- There is very good technician support.
- The head of department has a clear understanding of what needs to be done to improve

provision and raise standards.

Areas for improvement

- Food technology remains an area of concern. Standards are lower than in other design technology related subjects and the teaching of the food technology varies from good to unsatisfactory.
- The very good resources for computer-aided design and manufacturing are not used at present due to lack of staff expertise.
- The recording of work in folders needs to be better organised so that pupils can more clearly follow the progress they make through projects.
- Some good practice in assessment in Years 7 to 9 is not shared throughout the department.

133. In the 2001 teacher assessments Year 9 pupils were awarded National Curriculum levels that were above national averages, though observations during the inspection suggest that teachers overestimated standards. Standards of attainment observed in the workshop and workroom in Year 9 during the inspection were average. The assessment of pupils' performance in Years 7 to 9 is an area of concern already identified by the recently appointed head of design and technology.
134. By Year 9 pupils are demonstrating sound practical skills across the range of materials. They safely handle a range of tools and small machinery such as pillar drills, cookers and sewing machines. In resistant materials lessons they are safely introduced to larger machines such as a router. They successfully use templates and other means of ensuring accuracy in their measuring, cutting and finishing. Pupils' grasp of the areas of knowledge and understanding required by the National Curriculum is satisfactory. Where there is good teaching in food technology, pupils gain a fair understanding of the contribution that sensory analysis and customer surveys make in evaluating food products. In resistant materials they gain a basic knowledge of ergonomics when they design tool handles that conform well to their own hands. The use of sketching to communicate design ideas is satisfactory across the materials areas though these sketches and the commentary that accompanies them do not stand out well in folders that are often poorly organised. Technical drawing skills are well developed.
135. In the 2001 GCSE examinations the average percentage of pupils gaining an A* to C pass across all the examinations offered was above the national average. The results in resistant materials and in textiles were well above average though results in graphic products were average and in food technology were well below average. Over the last three years the aggregated design and technology results have varied with two years being above average and one year below.
136. Overall standards achieved by the present Year 11 are average. In resistant materials, pupils are successfully generating a range of ideas for their projects, although the initial research tasks they conduct are often too simplistic. There is increasing use of the Internet for research though this is not yet well developed. Graphic products pupils demonstrate sound technical drawing skills and folders often feature good creative presentational techniques as well as the sound development of design ideas. Standards in food technology are below average. Pupils have a below-average grasp of necessary areas of knowledge and understanding such as food packaging. Their planning for practical work and their recording of outcomes are unsatisfactory. In the textiles course pupils use surveys well to research customer preferences. They communicate their findings successfully using bar charts. Their knowledge and understanding of the role of ICT in improving industrial practice is

satisfactory.

137. Teaching is satisfactory and has a number of strengths as well as some weaknesses. The best teaching features brisk introductions to lessons and the provision of a good balance of practical and theoretical approaches. In introductions teachers share the lesson objectives to give pupils more responsibility for their own learning. Lessons are generally well planned and are part of a framework that provides pupils with a coherent programme that builds on learning that has gone before. Teachers' subject knowledge is generally good and this ensures relevant help and guidance is given as pupils progress their work. One area of subject knowledge that is currently lacking concerns the operation of computer-aided design and manufacturing resources owned by the department. These offer great potential which teachers and technician need to harness. Relationships with pupils are generally good and this helps to motivate pupils to learn. Good teaching features a range of ways of encouraging and engaging pupils' interest. Where in a small number of lessons in food technology teaching is unsatisfactory, it is so because teaching fails to command pupils' attention. Pupils become confused or careless about what they have to do and they make unsatisfactory progress. Work remains unfinished in books and practical activities in lessons do little to extend pupils' knowledge of understanding of materials and processes. Where teaching in food technology is good it features enthusiasm for the subject, an energetic classroom presence and a conscientious approach to preparation and marking. The department shares the school's approach to the teaching of pupils with special educational needs. All teachers share information from the special needs co-ordinator and use this to plan lessons that cater well for pupils of all levels of ability. The graphics room features displays of high quality that inform and inspire pupils' efforts. Teachers plan well for opportunities to develop literacy and numeracy skills.
138. Pupils' attitudes are good in most lessons though in the small number of lessons where teaching fails to engage their interest they are unsatisfactory. They respond well to teachers' good humour and to the expertise they show in expert demonstrations. They are happy to get down to work when they are clear about what they have to do and help each other to make progress.
139. The department is led well by the recently appointed head of faculty. He has a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the department and is energetically pursuing improvement where it is necessary. He has, for example, identified a need to develop schemes of work for pupils aged 11 to 14 that provide full cover of the systems and control strand of the National Curriculum Programmes of Study and is working to develop them. The department has identified the need for training in the use of the computer-aided manufacturing machinery.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Standards are rising.
- Teaching is good.
- Resources have improved.
- The subject makes a useful contribution to literacy and numeracy.

Areas for improvement

- Providing higher attaining pupils with sufficient challenge, especially in Years 10 and 11.

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Access to and use of ICT.• Accommodation. |
|--|

140. Standards of attainment in geography are average. Aided by a progressive and well-structured syllabus, pupils make good progress through to age 14. Year 7 pupils gain geographical skills rapidly many of which make a useful contribution to the development of numeracy. They have reasonable fluency in direction and distance and a sound awareness of place and location. Through Years 7 to 9 they acquire a broad geographical knowledge of contrasting human environments so that attainment at the end of Year 9 is slightly above average.
141. A declining number of pupils continue the subject into Years 10 and 11. They make satisfactory progress. GCSE results in 2001 were broadly in line with national averages in terms of grades A*-C. Whilst two candidates achieved A*, high grades were fewer than average and lower-attainers, especially those whose coursework was of poor quality, tended to perform less well in geography than in the other subjects they took. These results, however, were significantly better than in 2000. Whilst girls continue to outperform boys as in the national picture, the gap between their attainment was much narrower than had been the case previously. This reflects the success of departmental strategies to address the gender difference both in terms of attracting more girls to the subject and of raising boys' achievement. Attainment in Years 7 to 11 is rising, reflecting much improved resources for the subject and, in particular, the much higher percentage of teaching by specialists.
142. Teaching is good and occasionally very good. Lessons that avoid a heavy reliance on textbooks and worksheets have the greatest impact on learning. The appearance of plastic models and aerial photographs brought a Year 10 lesson on glaciation to life, giving real meaning to the geomorphology of the Lake District as seen through text book case studies and strengthening pupils' already fairly secure understanding. Traditional class teaching built around question and answer sessions is well handled, as observed with Year 7 pupils reviewing their homework as a prelude to an exercise on villages acting as service centres in Cambridgeshire.
143. Lessons are generally well paced and structured so as to provide variety and sustain interest. Teachers' expectations of average and low-attaining pupils are well matched to the challenge they are set. Pupils with special needs are served well because these needs are understood. However, especially in mixed ability classes in Years 10 and 11, not enough thought is being given to extending challenge for higher attaining pupils. Matching the difficulty of the work to pupils' individual needs is largely achieved through open-ended tasks and pupils sometimes need further direction when the task has been completed. The department is aware of its role in developing literacy. There is much creative writing, often in the form of empathetic letters, writing frames are used, pupils read and comprehend and key words are highlighted.
144. Classroom management is good and generally equal to the challenge posed by some lower-attaining pupils in Year 9. Relationships between teachers and pupils are productive and pupils willingly participate in lessons. Their written work is orderly but a minority struggle with homework and the quality and depth of project work varies. Last year's Year 11, for example, generated some incisive and perceptive coursework of very high quality but there was a long tail of shallow attempts, hurriedly produced, which lacked real geographical understanding and revealed a lack of capacity for independent working. Coursework was rarely word-processed and the use of spreadsheets was sporadic. Schemes of work increasingly identify opportunities for using ICT and this is an area that the department recognises for

further development. Access to computers can be difficult.

145. Resourcing has significantly improved since the previous inspection but too many geography lessons continue to be taught in unsuitable rooms. A Year 7 teacher needed a wall map that wasn't there: on another occasion the teacher struggled with an unfamiliar video recorder. Such shortcomings continue to affect standards. The library remains deficient in terms of appropriate and modern texts although a reasonable range of sixth form books is held in the department. Procedures for monitoring standards have improved but assessment criteria in Years 10 and 11, though satisfactory, still lacks some rigour. The department is ably led by a committed and conscientious teacher and the rapport between the two teachers is a strength. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Encouraging and positive teaching.
- Assessment strategies.
- Positive pupil responses.
- Support for moral, social and cultural education.

Areas for improvement

- Greater use of ICT in the curriculum.
- Greater consistency in subject-specific target setting, in marking and reporting.

146. Standards in history by the end of Year 9 are well above average, and by the end of Year 11 standards are average – a fair reflection of the prior attainment of those pupils who choose history as a GCSE subject.
147. In 2001 the GCSE results at higher grades A and B were close to the national average, confirming a consistent pattern since the previous inspection. However, girls achieved results above the national average for girls whereas the boys were significantly below the national average. It is also clear that, whilst the school has been successful in securing a proportion of A* to C grades near to the national average and is exceeding the national average for overall passes with a 100% pass rate, the proportion of passes at A* to B was significantly below the school and national averages.
148. Classroom observations and scrutiny of pupils' written work confirm that the 2001 standards are being maintained in the present Year 11. However, in Year 10, standards are very high and the evidence indicates a very good improvement in attainment levels. Pupils throughout Years 10 and 11 are able to assess historical evidence and draw valid conclusions but in Year 10 a considerable number of pupils are demonstrating that they can extend this process into the interpretation of evidence and the consideration of similarities and differences across different historical periods.
149. Teachers' assessments of standards at the end of Year 9 in 2001 recorded that about three-quarters of pupils were at Level 5 or better. These results are in line with the school's overall performance in core subjects and above the national standard. They also explain why the present Year 10 are now demonstrating such high levels of

attainment. This high standard is being maintained throughout Years 7 to 9 where attainment is generally well above average.

150. Pupils with special educational needs succeed well in history because the curriculum has been designed to promote access by a blend of carefully constructed open tasks, by the use of appropriate materials and by teachers' energetic support of individual pupils. The evidence from the Year 9 assessments is that gifted and talented pupils also succeed well because the same blend of support enables them to explore historical ideas and to easily reach Level 7 requirements.
151. The increasingly good levels of attainment have come about through the encouraging and supportive learning environment which captivates the pupils and enables them to move forward swiftly given their initial capability on entry to the school. The good Year 9 assessments reflect very good achievement against initial potential. This improving situation has now reached Year 10 and reflects a very systematic and active response to the critique offered by the previous inspection report.
152. Attitudes in history lessons are generally very positive and this is characterised by the very sensitive responses observed during the handling of potentially controversial and emotive issues such as women's rights and the impact of the Nazis on the Jewish community. Behaviour is generally good and arises from the positive atmosphere engendered in the classrooms. There is a degree of stubbornness amongst lower attaining pupils in Year 11 but their behaviour is not disruptive and their response to the teachers is always respectful. Relationships within the classrooms are also generally very positive. These arise from the encouraging atmosphere and are characterised by a very constructive two-way dialogue between pupils and teachers in which pupils clearly understand that the teacher's role is as much to be a resource and guide as to provide direct teaching.
153. The quality of teaching is a strength. It is always good, often very good and sometimes excellent. Teachers have good subject knowledge; they plan well, both in the medium-term and in the short-term; they have high expectations; and their experience leads them to apply very effective teaching methods, including the promotion of enquiry-based work. Because teachers plan carefully, encourage pupils to be enthusiastic learners and have high expectations, most pupils behave well. Time is well used and some activities have inbuilt timetables to ensure that pace is maintained, and pupils' enthusiasm adds to this momentum.
154. Assessment in history is very good. Extremely detailed records are maintained on pupil performance and these are used to inform the general teaching strategy and the direction of individuals' learning. Subject-specific target setting is in place but could be applied with greater consistency. Marking and reporting are thorough and generally identify strengths and weaknesses very clearly, but they are less consistent in identifying subject-specific areas for improvement.
155. The rich and challenging curriculum in Years 9 to 11 is designed to be exciting. It has particular strengths in moral, social and cultural education, where themes such as the Black Peoples of North America and aspects of women's history are studied, in promoting access for pupils with special educational needs and in encouraging gifted pupils. However, there is insufficient use of ICT within the regular curriculum, although some good work arising from a variety of ICT approaches was observed. Access to ICT resources is inadequate.
156. The management of history is good and thoughtful and has responded very

systematically to the critique of the previous inspection report. Monitoring and evaluation are now fully established and this provides consistency in teaching and learning. This is a secure base from which to develop a culture of subject-specific target setting. This is a department which has demonstrated that it has the capacity to secure further improvement in the future.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- The recently appointed ICT co-ordinator has a clear view of ways to improve standards in ICT.
- A GNVQ ICT course has been successfully introduced.
- The school is developing a sound basic skills course for pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9.
- Teaching in dedicated lessons is sound. Lessons are satisfactorily planned and managed.
- There is good technical support for teaching.

Areas for improvement

- Standards in ICT across the school are below average by Year 9 and well below average by Year 11.
- There is no comprehensive scheme of work to direct teaching and learning in information technology across the curriculum
- Time allocation for lower school IT courses is inadequate, particularly as the opportunities in other subjects to develop and consolidate skills are few.
- Procedures for the assessment of standards in ICT across the curriculum are inadequate.

157. Overall, the quality of provision in the courses that are dedicated to the teaching of ICT is satisfactory. The cross-curricular provision of ICT is unsatisfactory. For pupils aged 14 to 16 it does not comply with statutory requirements.
158. In the 2001 teacher assessments for 14-year-olds, the ICT department awarded levels that were above national averages. These judgements were not reflected in the standards of work observed during the inspection, which were below average. The difference is due to the lack of soundly based procedures for the assessment of performance in discrete and cross-curricular ICT.
159. The ICT department provides a sound basic skills course for pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 which gives all pupils including those with special educational needs the opportunity to develop skills in all the areas required by the National Curriculum. This is rarely developed further in the other subjects of the curriculum and this adversely affects the progress pupils make. Few teachers outside of the ICT department use computers regularly as a tool to enhance learning. The basic skills course comprises approximately twenty lessons each year and this is insufficient to ensure satisfactory progress.
160. By Year 9 pupils use word processing though their use of desktop publishing software is not well developed and their work does not often show an awareness of audience. A lot of work across a range of subjects is produced using home computers and this enhances general standards of presentation. Pupils are encouraged in a number of

subjects to use e-mail to communicate with others and many do so successfully. Pupils have created simple databases using a spreadsheet package, but do not have adequate knowledge of database structure and basic information retrieval procedures. They are developing skills to retrieve information from the Internet though few pupils are using advanced search techniques. At this time in Year 9 pupils have not been taught how to write simple programmes to control events such as the movement of a cursor across a computer screen. Most have an understanding from design and technology lessons of how computers can be used in the manufacture of products.

161. A GNVQ ICT course was introduced for the first time this year. Only a small number of Year 10 pupils are able to follow the course because of limited access to hardware. Pupils successfully use word processing, desktop publishing and other industry-standard software packages to create a range of business documents. They cover the areas of knowledge and understanding required by the examination.
162. Other Year 10 and 11 pupils, including those with special educational needs, do not experience a planned programme of information technology. Their ICT experiences are not tracked and the school has no systematic procedures to assess attainment. Pupils do not develop further expertise in control technology, in the modelling of information or in the creation of databases and consequently the standards they attain are well below average. Keyboard skills are often weak and this also hinders progress. There is no provision for the teaching of the impact of information technology on society.
163. The teaching of ICT is satisfactory in the dedicated courses. Teachers of these courses have adequate subject knowledge that they impart effectively in introductions and in the support and guidance to individuals that are a feature of the ICT teaching. They are supported in this by the ICT technician who has a good knowledge of the software. The department produces effective support materials, which are under a process of continuous development. The materials do not yet give effective guidance and support to pupils to allow them to be more independent in their learning. In these courses, learning is sound and pupils demonstrate satisfactory concentration and application. Teachers have reasonable expectations and so lessons proceed at pace, with an adequate level of challenge. The control and management of pupils is good.
164. The management of ICT is satisfactory and the ICT technician provides valuable support. There has been improvement since the last inspection in the resources made available to pupils though this has not yet had sufficient impact on the standards they attain. There is still some way to go to improve standards for all pupils. There is no whole-school scheme of work for ICT, backed up by systematic monitoring and recording of pupils' progress in the subject to make sure that the programmes of study set out in the National Curriculum are followed in full in all subjects.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Overall, provision for French is **good**. In German it is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Teaching of French and German is good
- Standards in French are above the national average.
- Pupils of all levels of attainment achieve well in French.

- The large majority of pupils behave well and have positive attitudes.
- The well-established annual programme of foreign exchanges adds greatly to the experience of those who take part.

Areas for improvement

- Too little time is allocated for the teaching of German in Years 7, 8 and 9.
- The department has insufficient resources to allow the development of ICT and other activities for enriching pupils' language learning.

165. In 2000 and 2001 the proportion of pupils gaining grades A* to C in the GCSE French examination was above the national average. Girls did particularly well in both years. Boys' results in 2000 were below the national average and well below those of girls, but in 2001 they did much better with well over half of them achieving a grade A* to C. In German, GCSE results in the past two years were well below those in French, reflecting in part the very low proportion of time given to German in Years 7, 8 and 9. Again, boys did much less well than girls and by a greater margin than nationally. Pupils of lower attainment and with special educational needs were also entered for the GCSE examinations and did especially well. All of them achieved at least a GCSE pass grade G in either French or German.
166. Work seen during the inspection, both in class and from looking at pupils' books, shows that standards in French are above the national average overall in Year 9 and Year 11. The highest-attaining pupils in both years are pushed hard by strong teaching and are achieving results that are well above those expected at their stage of learning. In Year 11, for example, pupils doing both languages speak and write fluently in French about events in the past using advanced points of grammar and adapting them to form new sentences. Similarly, in Year 9, high-attainers understand French spoken at near native speed and show in their writing that they have a wide vocabulary and a good grasp of verb tenses. Pupils of middle attainment are also achieving to their potential, in line with the national average. They understand spoken French well and write with fair accuracy in simple guided contexts about themselves and their family life. Low-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs, the majority of whom are boys, are achieving particularly well because of teaching that recognises their needs and at the same time is vivid and challenging. All pupils would benefit from even more practice in speaking and reading in French than they are currently getting.
167. In German standards overall are below the national average in both Years 9 and 11. Teaching of German is as good as it is in French, but pupils have only one lesson a week, half the time given to French, which is not enough to bring most pupils to an acceptable standard by the end of Year 9. The result of this is that many pupils who continue with German to GCSE are not achieving the results of which they are capable. Those in Year 11, for example, are making strong progress and beginning to make up the lost ground, but they are not yet confident in expressing themselves using past and future tenses.
168. The teaching of French and German is consistently good and much of it is very good or excellent. All teachers are very competent speakers of the languages they teach, even in the case of their second foreign language. Lessons start in a brisk orderly way with a clear statement of what pupils will be learning. This sets the scene well and creates anticipation. In many lessons too, teachers set a fast challenging pace which involves everyone and leaves no room for inattention. Planning is often imaginative and ensures that pupils can practise new language thoroughly and thus learn and consolidate well. Teachers have a wide and engaging repertoire of

methods and materials for capturing pupils' attention and enabling them to take part. Pair work, for example, is used skilfully to encourage pupils to rehearse what they have learnt and experiment with adapting language. In several lessons pupils made strong headway in speaking French or German while working in pairs and were entirely used to collaborating independently in this way. Much of the teaching appeals to boys as much as to girls, with clear achievable tasks, firm but humorous management, lots of praise and encouragement, but only where it is deserved. This leads naturally to a strong working ethos in which pupils make swift progress and relish their learning.

169. Some of the best teaching is with the highest and lowest-attaining pupils. In a Year 11 French lesson, for example, the teacher got the most from a group of high-attainers by challenging them persistently to use more complex and idiomatic language. As a result of this most of them could speak and write more confidently by the end of the lesson. Equally, in a Year 8 German lesson, pupils of very low attainment, some of them with special educational needs, learnt to describe television programmes in correctly pronounced German. The teaching built subtly on small successes, taking away support gradually so that, by the end, pupils were able to put German words to pictures without prompting. Learning was secure and seamless.
170. In a few respects the quality of teaching could be even better. In some lessons teachers do not use French or German enough in the classroom or insist that pupils themselves use it to ask for things routinely or apologise for being late. In such cases pupils make less progress because they hear too little of the language. A small amount of teaching centres too heavily on the teacher and does not allow pupils enough opportunity to drill and rehearse new language. The ends of lessons are often not as orderly or well focused as the beginnings. The marking of pupils' work is regular and encouraging, but is not linked to National Curriculum levels and does not make pupils aware enough of what they need to do to improve and achieve a higher level. Little use so far is made of ICT or reading schemes for the teaching of languages and much scope remains for motivating pupils, especially boys, through greater use of visual images.
171. Pupils respond positively to the engaging and well-managed teaching. They listen attentively, answer questions eagerly, concentrate well and, when given the opportunity in such activities as pair work or role-plays, they work independently without losing focus. Pupils have a respectful relationship with their teachers and each other. Behaviour overall is very good, even in the case of a few difficult pupils in Year 9 who, by virtue of firm but good humoured teaching, are kept busily involved.
172. The very low allocation of time to German in Years 7, 8 and 9 - one period a week as against two periods for French - is not enough to provide a suitable grounding in the language before pupils embark on the GCSE course in Year 10. This is especially true in the case of lower-attaining pupils who have difficulty retaining new language from one week to the next. It also partly explains why GCSE results in German have been lower than those in French and the smaller number of pupils who opt for German in Year 10.
173. The modern foreign languages department benefits from supportive leadership and the enthusiastic commitment of four well-qualified specialists who share ideas and communicate frequently with each other. The head of department encourages staff to observe each other's teaching informally. Although this has worked well, there would be benefits from more formal and systematic observation of teaching. Assessment of pupils' progress and the recording of their results are very thorough,

encouraging them to evaluate their performance and set targets for future effort.

174. The well-established annual exchanges to France and Germany have benefited many pupils and helped create lasting friendships. These events and pupils' work - much of it engagingly presented using pupils' own computers - are vividly celebrated in the fine displays in classrooms and corridors. Apart from this, however, there is little opportunity to use ICT for learning languages. The department has none of its own software and cannot make enough regular use of the computer suite to ensure that all pupils have access to it. Resources in the department are currently unsatisfactory. Although the department has recently invested in new course books, there are not enough of them to allow each pupil to have one. There are also no graded reading schemes to give pupils regular opportunities to read freely and at their own pace in French or German.
175. The department has responded positively to the previous inspection report and has put right many of the reservations expressed in it. Most important, the quality of teaching, and as a result the standards of attainment and pupils' achievement, have improved. Given the effectiveness of its staff and the positive attitudes of most pupils to language learning, the department is well placed to make further improvements.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Standards are rising particularly in Years 7 to 9.
- Teaching and learning are very good, supported by pupils' very good behaviour and attitudes.
- There is very good extra-curricular provision and the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development remains very strong.
- Group work is particularly well organised to enable pupils of differing attainment levels to work together and learn from each other.
- The teachers monitor pupils' progress very well and the department uses data very effectively to monitor its progress.

Areas for improvement

- The department does not make the pupils sufficiently aware of their National Curriculum levels.
- There are insufficient computers in the department to support composition work.
- One music room is too small for the number of pupils in many classes.

176. In 2001 GCSE results were slightly above average for grades A* to C when compared to all schools nationally. All pupils achieved a grade between A* and C. The average points score overall was above the national average. In comparison to the schools average for grades A* to C the subject did well. Girls achieved better results than boys and by a much wider margin than is seen nationally.
177. By the end of Year 9 standards are above average. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 perform interesting and demanding music as a class and in small groups. They develop good ensemble skills as they move through this stage. Pupils in Year 7 play music from the Gamelan using glockenspiels. When individual parts are securely known, pupils make good headway with playing together and listen carefully to each other. Pupils in Year 8 play *Carillon* by Poulenc using very good printed materials. Most pupils manage to link the various sections together well, achieving a good measure of success by the end of the lesson. In Year 9 pupils play *Time Lapse* by Michael Nyman. Most play the glockenspiels and a few pupils play their own instruments. In this piece they build up a good ensemble using several distinct parts. Their workbooks show that they compose a variety of pieces and listen to a wide range of music, linked to their performing unit. Their listening tasks, again linked well to their other work, range over a wide variety of styles.
178. These standards are achieved because of very good teaching and learning in lessons. In three-quarters of the lessons seen teaching was very good and was never less than good. A particular strength is the very good direction of small group work where individual parts are chosen for pupils to play in order that each one is challenged appropriately. In a Year 9 lesson, groups achieved a good standard with some pupils playing chords using two beaters. One boy led the others in his group by directing and counting them in. In another lesson a flautist played a far more difficult part than the rest of the group and they eventually achieved a good standard of performance by listening carefully. Groups are carefully chosen by the teacher to enable all pupils to work with others of differing standards. Sometimes those with special educational needs work together in one group and at other times they work with those of differing attainment, from whom they receive good support. They are

successful in practical work and enjoy what they do. Teachers monitor the work of each group and they know the pupils' strengths and weaknesses very well. Pupils make good progress because of this and because there is a good strategy for target setting for each unit of work. These targets challenge the pupils at each stage. Pupils could, however, be more involved in evaluating performances achieved in each lesson and would benefit from being able to relate this to the levels of attainment in music by becoming familiar with them.

179. The majority of pupils behave very well in lessons and those few that present some challenging behaviour in class, especially in Year 9, are very capably managed by the teachers. A supply teacher working in the school for the first time during inspection week quickly and calmly established a good working atmosphere in which pupils learnt at a good pace. Teachers use a variety of different teaching methods in lessons to motivate pupils, such as good questioning, performing and listening, class and group work. Demonstrations are particularly well used. By singing or playing an appropriate part for the pupils to hear, or by urging them on by playing or singing with them, teachers help pupils to achieve more quickly. Standards by the end of Year 9 are now average and have improved since the last inspection. Because some pupils come to the school with little experiences of music, this represents good achievement. This improvement is partly due to the increase in the amount of lesson time. Pupils now have a regular hourly lesson each week. This measure has helped to raise standards by Year 9.
180. Average standards observed during the inspection are borne out by the teachers' assessments for 2001. Boys do not achieve as well as girls and the department has put in place a series of strategies to counteract this, including some positive discrimination in favour of the boys in lessons and encouraging boys to take up brass instruments. The use of ICT for composition work would especially help motivate boys and raise the standards of composition generally. There is at present only one computer in the department, acquired only recently. It is insufficient for the needs of the department and for the delivery of the National Curriculum at this stage. Good use is made of the school computers for research homework, however.
181. In Years 10 and 11 standards observed in lessons are above average and this represents good achievement. Pupils compose in a variety of styles and their standard in practical performance is strong. They listen well when playing together. They have a good knowledge of musical composition techniques including serialism. They learn to write for a good variety of instruments including clarinets and saxophones for which they have to transpose the music. They have respect for the teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject, which is itself very good. They also make very good use of each other's expertise in lessons, which they are encouraged to do by the teacher. In a Year 10 lesson pupils consulted each other about piano styles. In Year 11 they advised each other on transposing instruments. This, together with good use of recommended Internet and other forms of research, leads to good independent working habits. Pupils work very well in lessons at a lively pace are well motivated and concentrate to achieve their objectives. Pupils' strengths and weaknesses are well known by the teacher and regular assessment using the examination criteria helps them to set new targets for their achievement. The teacher regularly and rigorously monitors these.

182. The department is very well led and organised with great dedication and energy. The thrust of the management of the department is raising standards by improving the quality of teaching and learning. The rigorous approach to monitoring the undoubted success of the department is evident in the way that theory and practice are strongly linked. The senior management of the school fully supports the subject. Funding has been increased. However, the department still suffers from lack of space. In some lessons held in the small music room, the space is overcrowded which restricts learning activities. Pupils have to rehearse their groups in corridors and the stairwell. More small rehearsal rooms are required for more effective group work.
183. The quality of instrumental teaching is good, financed by the school and provided by the local education authority. These lessons support a good range of high quality extra-curricular activities that enrich the lives of the pupils participating and the life of the school generally. The department regularly performs concerts in and out of school. The choir and orchestra annually visit European countries. Music continues to make very good provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Overall the improvement in music since the last inspection has been good.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Standards of teaching are always good and there is much very good teaching.
- Standards of learning are good; pupils are acquiring learning skills that they apply consistently.
- The attitudes of students to the subject and their behaviour are very good.
- GCSE examination results are much better than the national average.
- The department is very well managed and all areas of weakness referred to in the last report have been adequately dealt with.

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient time is provided for the teaching of pupils in Years 10 and 11 who are not following the GCSE course.

184. Standards as measured by teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were below average. The standards reached by boys were better than those of girls. In 2001 all pupils were successful in the GCSE examination and the proportion obtaining the highest grades A*- C was much higher than average. The average points score of pupils was significantly higher than the average points score of other subjects. Standards were maintained in 2001 but whereas in 2000 boys did better than girls, girls outperformed boys in the A*- C grades in 2001. Boys did very well when their results are compared with their attainment at the end of Year 9. Girls did better than boys in the academic component of the examination. Many individuals and teams reach high standards in a wide range of district and regional sporting activities.
185. Standards of work of current pupils in Years 7 to 9 are above average. Overall standards of swimming of pupils in Year 7 are good and a significant proportion have highly developed skills. They maintain good style in the four main strokes throughout a lesson. Year 8 boys have a good understanding of positional, defence and attack play in soccer. They have well-developed control and passing skills which they can apply in small game situations. Boys and girls in Year 7 show confidence in gymnastics. They perform a range of rolls and balancing skills with good control and

body tension. They understand the elements of good performance and analyse their own work and that of others. They show imagination and increasing confidence in the sequences they devise and perform in pairs.

186. The quality of practical work and standards of academic work of GCSE pupils are above average. The standard of soccer skills and knowledge of Year 11 boys in their practical assessments are very high indeed; they can sustain their skills in very pressurised situations. Pupils have a good knowledge of the elements of a good diet, where they are found and how they impact upon health, growth and fitness. Standards attained by pupils in Years 10 and 11 not following the GCSE course are average. There are many strong swimmers in Year 10 and no non-swimmers. Several pupils show good technique in a limited range of strokes. Year 11 girls have a limited range of trampoline skills but most perform with good style and body tension. Overall standards of work in badminton and soccer are average. Levels of achievement by boys and girls in all years are always at least average and are often better. Pupils following the GCSE course achieve well and those with special needs are fully integrated in teaching groups and are making good progress.
187. Standards of teaching overall are very good. They are always at least good and often very good. There is an experienced well-qualified team of teachers, enthusiastic about their work and committed to pupils and high standards. Lessons are very thoroughly prepared and organised. Teachers make good use of the available time, which is allocated well between a progressive range of activities. Very good attention is given to analysis and evaluation of performance by pupils. Pupils are constantly challenged to consider how their work might be improved. Those pupils who were studying the dietary effects of various foods were stimulated by the teacher to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding and relate them to health fitness. Pupils are strongly supported by encouraging feedback. Relationships in class and class management are excellent. Very positive relationships between teacher and pupils led to a most productive lesson for Year 11 boys developing their soccer skills. Teachers work well together; they know pupils very well and organise them into teaching groups that ensure that all pupils have good access to the work and are able to make progress. This arrangement works especially well in swimming where the expertise of the teachers is ably supplemented by that of an effective swimming instructor. Pupils have confidence in their teachers and respond to them very well. They listen carefully, readily discuss their work with each other and the teacher and work productively in small groups and teams. The attitudes of Year 8 boys who organised their small group soccer game to concentrate on specific skills, with minimum supervision, was very impressive. Pupils are anxious to improve; they stay on task and work hard on their set objectives. They respond very well to the confidence shown in them by teachers. They accept responsibility for their work and are not afraid to show initiative and imagination. In the dance club many pupils show initiative, imagination, skill and excellent teamwork in devising their own routines. The quality of teaching and the enthusiasm and well-developed learning skills of pupils combine to ensure that good learning takes place in all years.

188. The department is very well managed. Assessment, record keeping, target setting and monitoring are very soundly established. There are very good arrangements for teacher development based on observations of teaching followed by feedback. Documentation is well maintained, although the development plan needs refinement so that it clearly distinguishes between the aspirations of the department and what it plans to achieve. The curriculum is broad and balanced and fully reflects the objectives of the National Curriculum.

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 2000.

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	7	57	63	0	17	1.00	1.56
Physics	2	100	53	0	8	1.00	1.08
Sports /PE Studies	5	80	91	0	25	3.60	4.99

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	19	89	89	16	45	4.53	5.99
Chemistry	7	71	89	14	42	2.57	5.87
Biology	14	71	88	21	34	3.57	5.28
Physics	5	80	89	0	41	3.20	5.72
Business Studies	1	0	91	0	30	0.00	5.34
Computer Studies	1	100	85	0	23	4.00	4.57
Art and Design	1	100	96	100	45	8.00	6.42
Music	3	100	93	33	35	7.33	5.72
Economics	6	67	88	0	36	1.33	5.41
Geography	9	100	92	11	37	4.67	5.73
History	8	100	89	38	34	6.50	5.43
Religious Studies	5	100.0	91	0	35	4.00	5.57
Sociology	4	50	88	0	37	1.00	5.46
Other social studies	2	50	88	0	35	2.00	5.34
English Literature	17	100	96	18	36	4.00	5.90
English Literature and Language	3	100	92	0	31	4.00	5.38
Communication Studies	5	80	93	0	30	2.80	5.42
French	4	50	91	0	39	1.00	5.74

Intermediate vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		Average point distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Business	3					16.00	10.78
Leisure and Tourism	1					12.00	10.54

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

189. The focus was on mathematics and biology but physics, chemistry and a certificate course in science were also sampled.
190. In chemistry, grades obtained in A level examinations between 1998 and 2000 show that results are well below the national average except in 2001 when they improved somewhat and are now below the national average. A comparison with other subjects shows that students do as well in chemistry as they do in their other A level subjects. They did as expected considering their GCSE results. Girls often do better than boys and high-attaining students are able to reach the highest grades. In AS level examinations students' results are close to the national average and able students are able to gain the highest available grades. In the two lessons observed teaching was good overall. Lesson objectives were clear and students were given clear instructions about calculations. The teacher had a good command of the subject and checked students understanding regularly and effectively during the lessons.
191. In physics grades obtained in A level examinations between 1999 and 2000 show that results are well below the national average except in 2001 when they improved considerably. A comparison with other subjects shows that students do a little better in physics than they do in their other A level subjects. They did as expected considering their GCSE results. Very few girls study physics and higher-attaining students are able to obtain the highest grades. In AS examinations in 2001 very few candidates took the examination. Those who did gained low grades as expected considering their GCSE results. Teaching is good.
192. Two students are following the ACVE course in science. Their progress is good; teaching is sympathetic to their needs and clearly focused on the demands of the course. Standards achieved by the students are broadly average: grades D and E have been awarded for modules so far completed in the course. Sixth form numbers are small and, in the light of this, the uptake of science courses, with the exception of the AVCE science course, is good.
193. The department offers opportunities for students to repeat GCSE courses but half of the lessons are taught after school. This means that some students can only attend one lesson each week because their timetables are so congested. These arrangements are unsatisfactory because of the lack of teaching time. As a result, in 2001, none of the five candidates improved their grades to a grade C.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good overall. Students' achievements are satisfactory.
- Students have positive views and value the subject and the teaching.
- Management of the department and liaison with the mathematics department in the consortium are good.

Areas for improvement

- There is too little teaching time for students retaking GCSE mathematics

194. Results at A level over the last few years have been either close to or below national averages. When students start the A level course their attainment is generally below average, so that these A level results represent satisfactory achievement. Results in AS level mathematics in 2001 also suggest that progress is satisfactory. About twenty per cent of students who start the course do not continue with it – these are mostly students who start the course with GCSE Intermediate grade C and who find it difficult.
195. The standards of work seen during the inspection suggest that standards are also broadly average although there are clear technical weaknesses in algebra. This is apparent also in lessons where students sometimes have difficulty in applying new ideas.
196. Teaching is good overall. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject at A level or AS level. Lessons are well planned and teachers have a sound understanding of the syllabus. There are good relationships between students and teachers which support effective teaching. Students enjoy the subject and they make good efforts in class, although the weaknesses in algebra highlighted earlier hinder progress. In a well-taught Year 13 class, for example, students could understand the general principles of differentiating trigonometric functions but had difficulty in making headway because of frequent algebraic mistakes. Students speak well of teachers and value the additional help they are given outside lessons.
197. Management of the department is very good and there are strong links between the two schools sharing the teaching of A and AS level mathematics. The department makes productive use of regular and informative testing. Marking of work is thorough and helpful for students. The standard attained in work and the potential A level grade is made explicit. Targets expressed as A level grades are set at the beginning of the course and are made clear to students.

BIOLOGY

Provision for biology is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- The good quality of some teaching.
- Relationships are good.
- High attaining students do well.

Areas for improvement

- Improving the pass rate.
- The quality of some teaching.
- Support with course requirements for new or temporary teachers.

198. Between 1998 and 2000, the A level biology results were well below the national average but in 2001 they improved considerably and are now at the national average. Girls do consistently better than boys and the highest-attaining students do well. In both 1998 and in 1999 a large proportion of the students who were entered for the A level examination failed. This situation improved greatly in 2000 and 2001 and now only a small number of students do not pass. Comparison with other subjects shows that students do less well in biology than in other A level subjects but their performance is as expected considering their GCSE results. In the AS level examination in 2001 five students gained the highest grades. Half of those entered, however, failed the examination. Most of these students had low grades at GCSE but a number of them failed to reach their pass level target grade. Overall, standards attained in examinations are below average but students' achievement is satisfactory when taking GCSE grades into account.
199. In lessons the standards reached by students following the A level and AS level courses is broadly average. In half of lessons students reached a good standard of knowledge about bacterial cells. Their practical skills were good when transferring bacteria for a broth culture to a Petri dish. In one lesson, however standards were well below average. Students' knowledge about root tips and the cells in them was poor, as were their practical skills when making and drawing microscope slides.
200. Teaching is satisfactory but variable. In half of the lessons seen it was good or very good but in one lesson was poor. In the best lessons, instructions and explanations are clear and consequently students are successful, for example when using cultures of bacteria. They are given responsibility for a part of their learning in, for example, researching ideas about cell division or enzymes. In these lessons relationships are good and students are encouraged to do their best. Expectations are high and work is well planned and meets students' needs. A brainstorm activity about enzymes was an effective way of revising and building on work done earlier in the GCSE course. In poor lessons instructions are inadequate and students cannot follow them, progress is not regularly checked and some students learn very little. Their drawings of cells were very poor.
201. Overall progress is satisfactory. In some lessons it is good. Year 13 students for example learned about the features of bacterial cells and improved their practical skills. In a very good Year 12 lesson, students successfully related the function of enzyme molecules to their structure. However, students made poor progress in a lesson about cells. Progress is clearly related to the quality of teaching.
202. Students' attitudes to biology are good. They persevere with their work and are

interested in learning about the subject. They are often quiet but are usually confident that they understand the work. In practical work they listen to and follow instructions carefully and co-operate well with each other and with their teachers. They work hard and consistently to complete all of their tasks. In Year 12 where teaching was unsatisfactory students were satisfied with a low standard of work but in other lessons where teaching was stronger motivation was much better. In a lesson about cell division and inheritance students showed that they are able to take responsibility for their work and progress and are willing to contribute ideas to a lesson.

203. The quality of provision is not being monitored satisfactorily. The course teacher, who is temporary, does not have adequate information about the resources needed for teaching the course and needs better supervision and support. The academic review process is well organised and appreciated by the students as a good source of information about their progress and targets for their courses. A new scheme of work has been produced in response to the new syllabuses that have been introduced recently. The scheme of work provides for thorough coverage of the knowledge and understanding specified for the course but details of practical activities need to be added. Group sizes in the A/S classes are too large during practical activities in particular. At these times it is not possible for teachers to ensure that all students, especially the weaker candidates, receive the support they need. Collaboration between the two schools in which the students are taught is good and students feel confident that they will do well.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The focus was on physical education.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- The overall quality of teaching is good. Some is very good.
- Students have very good attitudes to their work and their achievements are good.
- The management of sixth form work, involving close co-operation between three schools, is very good.

Areas for improvement

- The excessive demands of the curriculum and sixth form timetable provide very little opportunity for students to work outside the taught syllabus to consolidate new knowledge and develop and apply their understanding.
- Academic teaching is too teacher-dominated and the range of teaching resources is limited.

204. In 2000 four of five students were successful in the A level examinations. No student obtained a pass in the higher grades A or B. The average points score per student was below the national average and below the overall average of the school. Results were much improved in 2001. All six students were successful at A level and one student attained a grade A pass. Five students obtained grades which were better than their predicted grades. In 2001 in the first year of the AS examination, six out of seven students were successful.
205. Standards of attainment are average among the present cohort of AS and A level students. Much of the practical work is of good quality and students have a good knowledge of and level of attainment in their chosen areas. The standard of girls'

netball in Year 12 is high; students know the game well, have a good grasp of tactical play and well-developed individual and team skills. AS and A level students are in the early stages of their courses. Last year's AS students found the transition between GCSE and AS work very difficult and demanding. The current students have settled in well, they have sound knowledge of bones and muscles but are just coming to grips with the application of their new knowledge. At this stage of the course, achievement by A level students is satisfactory in psychology and history of sport although some students do not handle their new knowledge confidently. Progress in the history of sport is hampered because students do not have an historical background to give them an understanding of social, political and economic trends in the nineteenth century. Students are hard working and some of the written work is of a good standard. At this stage achievement is satisfactory.

206. The overall quality of teaching is good. It is very good in practical work. Some aspects of teaching are very strong. Teachers have a sound grasp of their subject and lessons are well planned and organised. Lesson content is directly related to the examination syllabus and much emphasis is placed on the expectations of examiners. Lessons proceed at a strong pace and teaching is very challenging. Teaching styles in practical work are very effective. The teacher takes a tutorial role; feedback is clear, analytical, and encouraging. Students respond well and good learning occurs. At this stage in sixth form classroom-based work, teachers are very concerned to ensure that students have a sound grasp of the course work. Teachers are working with large classes and feel constrained by the very heavy content of A level and AS level courses. A common teaching style is for the teacher to talk to and raise questions on notes projected by an overhead projector. Teachers constantly check knowledge and understanding and invite students to extrapolate from their new knowledge. Some students respond enthusiastically but many do not have the confidence at this stage to venture their views and join in discussion. Some students are more concerned to copy down the notes. Much learning is taking place but on occasions students are stretched to absorb, understand and apply new knowledge at the same time. Lack of teaching resources limits the teaching strategies available for some subjects. The teaching of anatomy and physiology would be enhanced if models and videos were available. Overall, teachers are coping well with a difficult situation, but students would benefit from taking more responsibility for covering course content so that valuable teacher expertise can be applied to a much greater extent to understanding and application of knowledge. The attitude of students to their work is very good. They are well motivated and work hard. Teamwork in practical sessions is very good; netball teams are very effective in planning and implementing their tactical plays. Work folios are well maintained; students stay on task and work output is good.
207. The management of sixth form work involving close co-operation between three schools is very effective. The programme runs very smoothly. Students feel well supported. They have examination targets that are closely monitored and feel they have a good understanding of how well they are doing. Students say that teachers always find time to give help and advice when required. The timetable is especially demanding in Year 12. The demands of the syllabus require that all available lesson time is given to covering course content and there is no time for students to extend their experience and consolidate their knowledge through involvement in activities such as the Sports Leadership Awards. This is unsatisfactory.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

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

Strengths

- Standards of attainment are above average in the advanced course.
- Teaching is very good.
- Students have a very positive approach to their work and learn by sharing their experiences.
- Relationships are good and accelerate learning.
- Leadership and organisation of the subject are strong.

Areas for improvement

- There are too few opportunities for formal work placement.
- Too many students do not complete their courses.

208. Overall, standards of attainment are above average, though the number of students completing the advanced course in the past three years is too small to make truly valid comparisons. Most students begin their studies with modest average points scores at GCSE. Two students completed the course in 2001 gaining grades that represent a considerable achievement over the two years. Students' work in both Years 12 and 13 shows that most are achieving well. Folders contain detailed, accurate and well-presented records of work. The very good practice of sharing case-study notes broadens students' experience and understanding of a wide range of topics such as cystic fibrosis, cerebral palsy and Down's syndrome. Specialist terminology is confidently and competently used in written work and in the classroom indicating a good understanding of the physical aspects of health. Students made good use of their knowledge and understanding in their confident and competent analysis of a range of case studies.
209. Teaching of the subject is very good. The level and detail of planning is very thorough and subject knowledge is good. Each lesson begins with a clear statement of objectives, ends with a review of what has been achieved and points the way to the next lesson. Students know clearly what is expected of them. The enthusiasm of the teacher is reflected in their approach. Most students respond eagerly and engage readily in discussion of case studies. Students' contributions often relate to their personal experiences and are shared openly because of very positive relationships and the caring and supportive environment. Many of the issues relating to the Health and Social Care course are of a sensitive nature and are handled expertly by the teacher. Students have opportunities to reflect on and discuss important social, moral and cultural issues, for example racism and care for the terminally ill.
210. There are currently eleven students on the advanced course in Year 12. No male students are taking the course. Only three students are continuing into the second year of this course. Students enjoy their work although Year 13 students say there is too little study time allocated to the subject. There is no opportunity for gaining experience in a workplace setting.
211. The subject is well led and organised. The range of texts and case study materials is too narrow though the quality of existing materials is good. Access to computers is largely satisfactory.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

212. The focus of the inspection was on music but theatre studies and art were sampled. All theatre studies students achieved a grade at A level in 2001 although the average points score is not as good as most other subjects in the school. The single AS candidate failed to gain a grade. Standards varied in the Year 12 lesson seen but

overall were below average. Teaching and learning are satisfactory and students' response although satisfactory overall is rather immature and unfocused. Lesson planning is not strong and the time set aside for evaluation and reflection means that students do not recognise what is being achieved and what can be improved. In A level art, considering their GCSE results, students did better than expected. Two lessons were observed and teaching and learning in both were good. Students were developing individual styles based on improving technical skills and personal views of the work of famous artists.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Independent learning is encouraged and supported.
- Students' strengths and weaknesses are analysed and regular academic reviews enable them to set targets for improvement.
- Opportunities to play a wide range of interesting and stimulating music are very good.

Areas for improvement

- There are too few computers available for music composition in the department.
- The very heavy AS timetable does not allow students time to develop important, practical skills.

213. There were no A level candidates in music in 2001. In 2000 one of the three students taking the examination achieved grade A and two others grade C. Given students' prior attainment at GCSE this represents very good achievement. Results, however fluctuate from year to year. In 2001, students taking AS level gained C grades as expected, representing satisfactory achievement.

214. Standards in Year 12 are above average. Students have a wide range of knowledge about music and this was particularly evident in a Year 12 lesson on Weelkes' madrigal *Sing we at Pleasure*. Students' responses to questions from the teacher were ready and accurate showing good background knowledge and listening skills. Well-designed worksheets support students and provide key words for further research and the development of independent learning. In the same lesson, students were helped to develop their score-reading and performance skills through learning their own vocal line and singing the madrigal in five parts. Work on various musical genres in preparation for composition tasks also fosters independent learning. Students research and give an analytical presentation to the remainder of the group about a specific aspect of music. Those presented during the week of the inspection were on popular music of the 20th century. The standard of these was variable, with the best confidently presented from word-processed notes and including an analysis of the influences on the style of pop groups. Others were less proficient. Work was unevenly distributed between members of the group and the presentation lacked confidence though the activity was very useful as an exercise in preparing work together. Teacher and students were able to draw on their experiences in the evaluation, noting the importance of time management and planning when working together. Students in Year 12 have made a sound start on the study of harmony and students' workbooks show that they are making good progress with more extended phrases. One student in particular has been given more demanding exercises to do. Written harmony uses primary and secondary triads. A lesson on the dominant seventh showed that most have grasped the use of this chord, its resolution and inversions. Students on the AS

course have a very demanding timetable with little time for the development of instrumental skills so important to their success. Several students have computers at home but there is only one within the department – this is inadequate for the development of ICT for composition.

215. The consortium's A level music group contained only one student from the school. Standards are average. In a harmony lesson there was good learning of the use of the Neapolitan sixth because the teaching was concise and clear. Progress in this and all aspects of the course is monitored closely by the teacher, who provides useful and appreciated feedback, enabling the student to move forward. Students as a result have good knowledge of their strengths and weaknesses. There is a strategy in place for improving extended prose writing as necessary preparation for the *Music in television and film* unit. Good examples written by the teacher provide useful models for students' notes on style and genre.
216. Students learn very well in lessons as a result of very good teaching. In all lessons teaching was at least good and in three out of the five lessons observed it was very good. Students respect the knowledge that the teachers have in their subject and as a result of this and of good independent and well-planned study they develop a sound understanding of the subject, building well on previous knowledge. Most students are very well motivated, have mature attitudes, and work hard in lessons. Provision is enriched by opportunities to play music of many different styles. Students take part in extra-curricular activities in the school, and make a valuable contribution to the choir, the orchestra and to other groups.
217. The department is very well organised and managed. The department's improvement plan places emphasis on the development of teaching and learning at this level. Students' strengths and weaknesses are carefully analysed and assessment data are used effectively to adapt and improve provision. Each student has regular academic reviews to monitor progress. Teachers in both schools maintain careful contact with each other.

HUMANITIES

The focus of the inspection was on geography and history.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Students enjoy the subject.
- Teaching is good.
- Assessment arrangements are good. Students are well informed of their progress.

Areas for improvement

- Standards.

218. Only a small number of students have followed sixth form courses in recent years and therefore comparisons of results with national standards are not very reliable. In 2001, seven of nine A level candidates were successful and two students obtained grade B passes. In 2000 all students were successful at A level but their average points score was below the national average. Standards have fluctuated over the last four years but overall they have been a little below national standards. Girls have done better than boys at A level. Only one student was entered for the first AS level examination in 2000.
219. Levels of achievement of present students are satisfactory. Students enjoy geography, find it interesting and work with enthusiasm. Some lack confidence to play a full part in oral work but at the time of the inspection they had a satisfactory grasp of work covered thus far.
220. Only a small proportion of sixth form teaching within the consortium is carried out by staff of St. Edmund's school. It may be that the apparent diffidence of St Edmund's students in oral work is associated with unfamiliarity with some of the teachers. Students are well supported by teachers however, and have a good understanding of how well they are doing. Assessment arrangements are secure and teachers provide good feedback to students. The quality of teaching is good and there is a very good match between the specialist knowledge and interest of teachers and the areas they teach. A range of effective teaching styles is employed so that the interest of students is maintained. Lessons are well planned and delivered at a lively pace. Relationships are good. Good learning took place in a Year 13 lesson that used a case study of oil exploration in Alaska to develop knowledge and understanding of the natural environment. Students made good use of the Internet to research information, which allowed them to fulfil the roles of advocate and opponent in a class debate. They were able to empathise with those who faced real life situations. A more traditional approach in a Year 12 class tackling coastal deposition was equally effective in stimulating good learning. High teacher expectations of a depth of learning and understanding matched by challenging and incisive questioning drove the students' learning forward at an impressive pace.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Standards at A level.
- Opportunities for independent learning.
- Collaborative preparation and delivery of presentations.
- Students' positive and enthusiastic attitudes.

Areas for improvement

- The monitoring and evaluation of teaching in the consortium.
- Teachers' knowledge of the subject.
- The English history element of the AS course.
- The use of ICT within the curriculum.

221. Standards in the sixth form are average. There are, however, marked variations in the standards attained in European and in English history. Standards in European history are above average but there are weaknesses in English history because of teachers' insecure knowledge of this part of the syllabus.
222. At A level in 2001 students achieved results well above the national average with a 100% pass rate. Three of the six students entered secured the higher grades, thereby continuing the improving trend since the last inspection. At AS level in 2001, however, the pass rate was seventy per cent with only ten per cent securing a higher grade. Results at this level showed marked variations in standards between the European and English elements of the syllabus. Since the last inspection achievement in history has generally been good in relationship to prior attainment but the first AS results upset that trend.
223. Students' written work in Years 12 and 13 indicates that attainment in European history is being maintained in line with the previous level. Students are, however less confident in their study of English history and their notes reveal that their knowledge is less secure.
224. Students find the potential for independent study in the course very attractive and the supportive framework to monitor their performance and provide targets is very helpful. They are concerned about resources to enable them to progress from GCSE to full A level expectations.
225. Teaching is of variable quality, ranging from generally good or very good to satisfactory. Overall teaching is satisfactory. The quality of notes made by students in various elements of the course is inconsistent. The consortium monitoring system has not identified these variations which reveal some significant weaknesses in the knowledge and understanding required to teach effectively at this level. At its best, teaching promotes independent enquiry to a high level and leads to very positive attitudes to the subject. Students indicated that they relished the opportunities for independent study.
226. Curriculum planning is appropriate but further work is required to ensure that the detail contained in schemes of work is sufficiently well researched. There is too little use of ICT as a regular component of the curriculum. Resources are inadequate and students have to purchase some of the textbooks necessary for their studies.

227. Relationships in the sixth form between students and teachers and between students are good. Collaborative work on the preparation and delivery of presentations in mixed gender groups is a very positive feature of history lessons.
228. Most students in both years say they have chosen history for very positive reasons - they have enjoyed the subject at GCSE. Significant numbers in both years say they are on an academic pathway to the further study of history.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

229. The focus of the inspection was on English Literature and French. The Literature and Language course was sampled. In 2001 four of the five students entered for the Language and Literature A level examination gained a low grade and all students taking Language and Literature at AS level at the end of Year 12 gained a grade. Three students gained the highest grades and all passed. In the lesson seen teaching was good - the teacher's strong presentation focused well on the use of imagery in a Wilfred Owen poem.
230. German was also sampled. In German very few students have been entered for the A Level examination in past years. In 2001 the two candidates gained above average results and did as expected considering their GCSE results. One Year 12 lesson was observed and teaching was satisfactory, although it gave students too little opportunity to practise and develop the language orally. Year 13 students are taught entirely at a partner school nearby. Their written work is of an above average standard and they speak highly of the rigorous teaching they receive.

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good.
- Students achieve well given their prior attainment.
- Opportunities for students to express their ideas and challenge others are good.
- Liaison with the partner school is good.

Areas for improvement

- Provision of books for the course.

231. The number of students entered for A level English literature has been steadily increasing except in the most recent year. In 2001 there were fourteen candidates. Nearly all passed, two at the highest grades. The average points score attained by students is below average. Fewer boys than girls take English at this level. Girls' performance is better than boys. Fifteen students took the new AS course at the end of Year 12 in 2001 and four gained the highest grades. Nearly all passed.
232. Overall attainment is below average by the end of Year 13. There are few students in Years 12 and 13 with high grades at GCSE, since significant numbers of high-attaining students do not choose to go on to the sixth form in the school. Given students' prior attainment their achievement over the course is good. By the end of Year 13 students are able to write critically and in an appropriate style. They can develop and sustain their ideas in their essays and draw on the text for quotation to illustrate and support their points. Although in a Year 13 class, for example, students were fluent, perceptive

and showed good understanding in their comments about character in *1984*, very few achieve the highest levels in their written work. A few students have a very weak grasp of spelling and punctuation. Oral skills are generally good and in most lessons students are lively, interested and engage in discussion with enthusiasm.

233. Teaching is good. Some teaching is excellent. Teachers have very strong knowledge of the subject and present it sensitively and with enthusiasm, thereby injecting energy and pace into lessons. Students' thinking is extended because teachers have good and detailed knowledge that they use in careful questioning to draw themes together and so focus students on the language and content of the text. Students learn well when they engage with the text in pairs or whole-class discussion. They mostly respond confidently but sometimes teachers have to work hard to involve all students in discussion and to challenge and extend their thinking. In Year 13, for example, in a lesson on *The Canterbury Tales* students were asked to describe the Pardoner's character by illustration from the text. Their initial response was diffident but their confidence grew as a result of careful questioning.
234. Expectations are high. In the best lessons, opportunities for students to express their own ideas, challenge others and present their conclusions to the class are good. Objectives for lessons are clear and are made explicit to students. In an excellent Year 12 lesson, the teacher had identified important objectives and carefully structured the lesson to achieve them. All students were involved in well-sequenced activities that first reminded them about a range of critical theories. This knowledge was then used to match the kind of questions and interpretations that might stem from the different approaches. Finally students chose one approach to apply to one of the dreams in *Wuthering Heights*. Lessons are very thoroughly prepared and some very effective strategies and resources are used. For example in the lesson on critical theory, students used a sorting exercise, drew a diagram to reinforce the key points and then completed a grid to record quotations from the text against the range of interpretation. Relationships in the classroom are very good. Assessment is used effectively to set targets for students and to guide teachers' planning.
235. Management and leadership of the subject are very good. There are good working relationships with the head of department and staff at the partner school. Despite the difficulties of working in two schools communication and arrangements for the subject work well. There is a strong commitment to improving standards. Planning is efficient and the department has adapted well to the new course arrangements. Some well-prepared and structured materials support and guide students. They are taught techniques to help them plan and organise their own work. The structure of the course and what is expected are made clear to students through an excellent handbook produced jointly by the two schools. Marking of students' work is very good and provides constructive comment and targets for improvement. Assessment data are used in setting targets. However, the subject is badly resourced. Students are obliged to purchase the texts they need for the course and the school library is poorly stocked for study at this level, although students may use the library at the partner school.

FRENCH

Provision in French is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Standards in Year 12 are above average, particularly in the quality of written work and students' good comprehension.
- Students have mature, positive attitudes.
- Liaison with the partner school for sharing the teaching of foreign languages is very good.

Areas for improvement

- Students do not have enough opportunity to develop their spoken French in class.
- The independent use of ICT to extend students' experience.

236. The French A level examination results in 2001 showed a marked improvement over those in 2000, although the number of students taking French to this level has been too small to make useful comparisons with the national average. Students in the current Year 13 did not achieve as well in the AS level examinations of 2001 as had been predicted. This may be attributed in part to the long-term absence through illness of one of their teachers.

237. The evidence from work seen in lessons and in students' files during the inspection shows that standards overall are in line with the national average. Students in Year 13, however, are still attaining at below average levels in writing, where their work lacks depth or a secure grasp of the more complex aspects of French grammar, such as the use of the subjunctive. When speaking in French, also, they are not very confident in expressing themselves on the topic at issue, homelessness. However, they have good understanding of French spoken at native speed and gather the gist of spoken or written French at a high level. These students are now achieving closer to their potential after a long period of instability.

238. Attainment in Year 12, by contrast, is above average. In spite of an early drop-out of a small number of students, the group is now settled in and much larger than in previous years. Most students have cleared the very large divide between GCSE and the much greater intellectual demands of AS level. They write fluently, for example, on such contemporary issues as the gap between the generations and high-attainers have a good command of French vocabulary and idiom, as well as an understanding of more complex grammar. Their comprehension of spoken and written French is better than expected at this early stage in the course. When given the opportunity students speak quite well in French. However, the teaching they receive does not give them enough chance to practise their spoken French, either as a whole class or in small groups, and as a result they lack confidence in expressing themselves.

239. Teaching is satisfactory overall. Teachers are very competent speakers of French and use the language consistently in the classroom so that students improve their listening skills well. Lessons have clear aims and are well planned. Teachers have a friendly but professional relationship with their students. Explanations of new points of grammar are clear and illustrated well. Students' written work is marked with encouraging and thoughtful comments that offer good advice on how to improve.

240. In some respects, however, teaching relies too much on the teacher and the textbook and does not give students the copious practice in developing their spoken French that

they need. As a result of this students are currently better at understanding and writing in French than they are at speaking it. There is little evidence so far of students making independent use of ICT to extend their experience. These are important areas for improvement.

241. Students learn well and in all areas but speaking they are achieving to their potential. Teachers have helped them to develop new ways of understanding complex tapes and texts, such as through tape transcripts or by listening again in small groups. This is having a beneficial effect on their ability to understand advanced French. Students are mature and attentive and show real interest in the subject. When given the opportunity they work independently and complete the work set for them carefully and on time. Year 12 French students benefit from working alongside students from another consortium school and together they are a lively and dynamic group.
242. Most sixth form foreign language teaching currently takes place in the other consortium schools. All teaching of Year 13 French and German and more than half of the Year 12 work is done by teachers outside St Edmund's. This is partly due to the changes made as a result of a long-term illness of a teacher earlier in 2001, and partly to the relative lack of experience in German among St Edmund's staff. This means that the department cannot play its full part in the consortium arrangements in modern foreign languages. Liaison with one of the schools is very close and frequent, but there is scope for much greater communication with the other school involved.